Final Report

Study of RMU Efforts on Supporting EOL Grantees in Promoting Learning Culture, Learning Exchange and Capacity Building Efforts

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Final Report

Study of RMU Efforts on Supporting EOL Grantees in Promoting Learning Culture, Learning Exchange and Capacity Building Efforts

EDUCATION**OUTLOUD**
advocacy & social accountability

GP**E** Transforming Education

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1 Executive Summary

This report presents the main findings and conclusions from an assessment of learning practices among grantees in the Asia Pacific region supported by Education out Loud (EOL), Global Partnership for Educations' (GPE) funding programme for civil society advocacy and social accountability in education. The analysis focused on notable learning practices strengthened or developed among the grantees, approaches to supporting learning provided by EOL, and the building of organizational, thematic, and advocacy capacities.

Main Findings

1. Notable Learning Practices: Grantees prioritize learning through action, engaging in activities such as networking, capacity building, and policy advocacy. Reflection activities, although beneficial, are often facilitated externally, indicating a need for more intentional self-reflection practices. Trainings, action research, and peer learning emerged as effective learning methods, facilitating knowledge dissemination and innovation.

2. Approaches to Supporting Learning: EOL's support for learning through experience, collaboration, networking, and capacity building has been instrumental in enhancing grantees' learning efforts. Timely mentoring and coaching, collaborative learning initiatives, and targeted capacity building have empowered grantees to address organizational and thematic challenges effectively.

3. Capacity Building: Grantees have demonstrated growth in organizational capacity, reflected in heightened confidence and practical skills development. Thematic capacity has expanded across various areas, including social accountability, tax, and inclusion. Advocacy capacity has been strengthened through community advocacy and engagement with decision-makers.

Recommendations for 2024 Onwards

- Facilitate structured interactions among grantees to prioritize learning exchange.
- Offer professional training sessions on an opt-in/opt-out basis to accommodate diverse schedules.
- Continue providing mentoring and coaching support to foster grantees' learning and development.
- Be intentional about in-person activities to optimize resource utilization.
- Address repetition of participants and promote knowledge dissemination within organizations.
- Encourage diverse learning approaches and provide tools for reflection and knowledge sharing.
- Clarify roles and mandates of stakeholders involved in the learning process.
- Establish report-based appraisal mechanisms to ensure accountability in the grant process.
- Analyse leadership dynamics within organizations to promote a culture of learning and exchange.
- Focus on follow-up actions to enhance the impact of learning initiatives.

Overall, the assessment highlights the importance of continuous learning and capacity building in achieving sustainable development goals and advancing social change agendas. By implementing the recommended actions, EOL and its partners can further strengthen learning practices and maximize their impact on communities and societies.

2 Introduction and Background

The Education Out Loud (EOL) program, managed by Oxfam Denmark and funded by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), is a global initiative that focuses on advocacy and social accountability to promote education as a fundamental human right. Operating in the Asia Pacific region, EOL aimed to enhance civil society capacity to influence education policies and practices, with a particular emphasis on inclusivity and gender responsiveness. Through three operational components, EOL supports civil society organizations (CSOs) in engaging with education policy formulation and implementation, promoting transparency, and creating an enabling transnational environment for advocacy efforts.

The Regional Management Unit (RMU) is playing a crucial role in supporting EOL grantees in the Asia Pacific region by fostering a learning culture, facilitating capacity building, and promoting collaborative learning exchange. As EOL approached the end of its second phase, there was a need to reflect on the effectiveness of learning efforts and identify strategies for greater impact in the next phase. To address this, Oxfam Denmark initiated a call for proposals among learning partners to conduct a comprehensive review of RMU's support mechanisms.

This review aimed to assess the relevance, appropriateness, and impact of RMU's initiatives in facilitating learning exchange and capacity building among EOL grantees. It sought to document good practices, identify lessons learned, and provide recommendations for future strategies. The review process was guided by a participatory approach, encouraging stakeholder involvement and emphasizing constructive feedback.

The scope of the review included designing and conducting a research study to evaluate learning efforts by EOL, drafting a report with key findings and recommendations, developing communication materials to disseminate learnings, and organizing virtual sessions to present major findings to stakeholders. By adopting an appreciative inquiry approach, the review focused on highlighting successes and promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Given the diverse nature of EOL grantees in the Asia Pacific region, with varying organizational capacities and contextual challenges, the review acknowledged the evolving nature of learning needs and aimed to provide flexible recommendations that could adapt to changing circumstances.

Overall, the review of learning efforts by RMU is essential for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of capacity-building initiatives within the EOL program. By fostering a culture of learning and collaboration, EOL aimed to empower CSOs to advocate more effectively for equitable and inclusive education policies in the region.

The scope of the learning partner review of learning efforts includes:

a. Designing and conducting the research study to review learning efforts by EOL in relation to the relevance, appropriateness, and impact in facilitating learning and experience exchange, and capacity building of EOL grantees in the region.
b. Draft report with the good practices and lessons learned from the past learning efforts and recommendations for the future strategies.
c. Develop brief communication material that can be used for EOL webpage or other relevant platform to inform and communicate on the learning efforts and lessons learned. This should include change stories on the impact of EOL learning efforts on the practices of civil society.
d. Organize two virtual sessions one for RMU and one for EOL in general to present the major findings from the study.

The deliverables include:

1) Final study report
2) Communication materials
3) Virtual sessions for RMU staff, and presentation materials used for the virtual session

3 Approach, Methodology and Tools

3.1 Defining Learning

EOL's learning approach champions collaboration, peer learning, and experience exchange as foundational values, recognizing their potential to maximize resource utilization and build capacity within collaborating organizations. During the inception phase of this review, MDF reviewed materials from EOL, and spoke with the Oxfam RMU as well as learning partners such as ASPBAE and PRIA, to understand more about the learning approaches. These were used for formulate semi-structured questions for the online survey as well as the online interviews.

3.1.1 The Action Learning Cycle

The Action Learning Cycle was used as the main guiding prompt for data collection, and for the analysis of findings, in the section: **What have been the notable learning practices strengthened or developed among the grantees?**

We asked them about their practices according to this cycle, and we encouraged them to describe a concrete example to substantiate this. Each of the practices was further assessed in terms of what/ which worked well and what needed to be considered to make the learning efforts more beneficial for the grantees in the future. This section described emerging outcomes. Their responses could be on the organizational or individual level, but they should have been applied within their organization.

3.1.2 EOL main approaches to support learning

The three approaches were used as the main guiding prompt for data collection, and for the analysis of findings, in the section: **Which main approaches to supporting learning provided by EOL were helpful in contributing to the learning?**

We asked how they received support which contributed to their above learning, and we encouraged them to describe a concrete example to substantiate this. Their responses could be on the organizational or individual level, but they should have been applied within their organization.

EOL's three main approaches to support learning

- The approaches are interrelated and complementary.
- It is not a 'one size fits all' approach. It is based on thorough learning needs assessment and strategic considerations.

Learning from experience

Supporting grantees to develop as strategic learning organisations. Distilling learning with grantees and across the EOL portfolio and ensuring that lessons learnt are used for improvement to adapt strategies and approaches.

Collaboration, Networking & Peer Learning

Supporting collaboration, coalition-building, knowledge, and experience exchange, development of learning collaboratives, joint platforms, and joint action on common advocacy agendas.

Capacity Building

Learning through targeted capacity building initiatives and efforts to address learning needs in organisational or thematic areas and in methods of working within the field of education advocacy and social accountability.

3.1.3 Defining Capacity

The three types of capacity were used as the main guiding prompt for data collection, and for the analysis of findings, in the section: **Has Organisational Capacity, Thematic Capacity, or Advocacy Capacity been built among grantees?**

Based on the Oxfam CHANGE TRIANGLE; we asked them what they had learned about, and we encouraged them to describe a concrete example to substantiate this. Their responses could have been on the organizational or individual level, but they should have been applied within their organization.

DEFINING ...

THEMATIC CAPACITY

The concept of thematic competences refers to the professional focus of an organization, in this case education sub-themes:
- Education system transformation
- Education financing/budget monitoring
- Gender Transformative Education
- Education in fragile contexts/emergencies
- Technical Vocational Education and Training
- Early Childhood Development
- Education Monitoring and Information Systems
- Climate Education

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

Elements of organisational capacity include, but are not limited to:
- Organisational Assessment
- Strategic Planning
- Leadership development/governance
- Participation/inclusion
- Internal democracy
- Internal/external communication
- Gender equality
- Transparency
- Legitimacy and constituency building
- Financial Management
- Fundraising

ADVOCACY CAPACITY

Advocacy processes are composed of several of the following steps/elements:
- A clear alternative proposal for change
- Rights-based and evidence-based
- Mapping and analysis of power relations
- Short and long-term objectives
- Alliance building
- Building ownership
- Support from research & international institutions/organisations
- Influencing and use of media
- Interface with state and private actors
- Negotiation

3.2 Review Process

During the Inception Phase in December 2023, the assignment commenced with a desk review to analyse key project and organizational documents, including reports from grantees on their learning activities and RMU information about conducted learning events. This aimed to provide insight into program trajectories, key stakeholders, and available quantitative data, guiding the development of research tools and primary research design. Following this, the Planning and Inception Meeting facilitated the conceptualization of the overall approach, work plan,

methodology, and key questions. MDF engaged in dialogue with stakeholders to ensure mutual understanding and collaboration, documenting discussions and detailing methodologies in the inception report. Close collaboration with RMU was essential for communication with grantees, coordinating interactions for subsequent phases.

In the Primary Data Collection phase, MDF designed and administered a perception survey in December 2023 and January 2024 to gather perspectives from EOL-supported civil society organisations on learning efforts. Concurrently, virtual consultations were held with representatives from targeted organizations, focusing on programmatic perspectives of learning. These consultations utilized semi-structured questions to facilitate rich data collection and immediate documentation of opinions.

In the Analysis phase from February to March 2024, MDF clustered collected data according to research questions to formulate initial findings. This laid the groundwork for structuring the Draft Final Report, organized according to operational components and research questions. Additionally, one-page stories or excerpts summarizing key lessons learned were prepared for publication on EOL's website or other media platforms.

In February 2024, MDF presented the study results to representatives from EOL and RMU, submitting the draft report thereafter. Comments and feedback on the final report and communication materials will be incorporated before finalization. In the meantime, presentations and interactions with partners and GMU are being prepared as needed.

4 Main Findings

Overall, we find that the agreeableness of the respondents was spread fairly evenly across all of the 3 sections below. In other words, it would be difficult to say that any one learning type or learning intervention is good or not. It would be more about the mechanisms of offering learning, applied to different grantees, that may allow the grantees to access the learning which is most appropriate, satisfying, and effective for them.

4.1 What have been the notable learning practices strengthened or developed among the grantees?

- ● Reflection (using the monitoring... 8
- ● Learning (getting to know abou... 10
- ● Planning (deciding on how to c... 8
- ● Action (implementation and doi... 7

4.1.1 Action

a) **Grantees highly prioritize learning through action, considering it their primary activity.**
b) **Activities include networking with national and local CSOs, developing documents, and shaping national agendas.**
c) **Grantees extend capacity building to other CSOs and marginalized groups to share knowledge gained from EoL events, such as social accountability training.**
d) **Engagement in national and regional policy advocacy forums and dialogues is common among grantees.**
e) **Some grantees conduct community-based evidence collection to inform local and political decision-making.**
f) **Collaboration with CSOs and local representatives involves providing evidence-based data to governments, ultimately improving service delivery.**

Grantees prioritize experiential learning as a central activity, engaging in diverse initiatives such as crafting documents, designing training curricula for early childhood education, offering policy inputs, collaborating with the government to refine procedures, and shaping national education agendas. Post-training, grantees internally discuss newly acquired concepts and disseminate knowledge to other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), particularly within their networks and community groups with whom they collaborate at the grassroots level. Furthermore, grantees extend their capacity-building efforts to benefit other CSOs and marginalized groups, sharing insights gained from training and learning events.

Active participation in national and regional policy advocacy forums, dialogues, and community-based evidence collection demonstrates their commitment to informing both local and political decision-making processes. Collaborating with CSOs and local representatives involves providing evidence-based data to governments, ultimately contributing to enhanced service delivery. Additionally, grantees organize a range of training sessions, covering participatory budgeting, procedural engagement, social mobilization, and interactions with officials. These endeavours significantly contribute to the widespread dissemination of knowledge and skills within their communities.

The increased organizational capacity of numerous grantees has garnered trust from previously less engaged government entities, particularly ministries and departments of education. Grantees actively collaborate with these government bodies, actively contributing to the revision of education policies and procedures. A key element of this collaboration is the grantees' adept use of their enhanced capacity to analyse government-provided data. This capability enables them to share valuable insights with communities, empowering both community members and CSOs to present findings in ways that prove beneficial to the government. This collaborative approach not only strengthens the trust between grantees and the government but also positions grantees as invaluable partners in advancing educational initiatives.

Grantees and learning partners emphasised the importance and the preference of mentorship and support from the RMU and from learning partners while implementing their projects, and while conducting advocacy as well as policy influencing actions.

OC1 example

In 2023, we introduced learning by doing for the first time. First, the members took part in a 3-day training "Participation of civil society in the formation of public policy" and after the training, the participants, united in groups, analysed the policy and developed recommendations for changing it. At the same time, mentoring support for these groups has been organized.

OC2 example

Through active engagement in activities and dialogues facilitated by our constituent members, we've gained firsthand insights into the dynamics of inclusive discussions. For instance, stakeholders have shared instances where certain perspectives were withheld due to concerns about authority figures being present. This experiential learning has underscored the importance of carefully considering stakeholder dynamics in future dialogues. Additionally, as we navigate daily operations, we've identified moments of adaptive learning and application from past experiences. While external feedback is invaluable, these internal realizations serve as powerful reminders of the need to systematically document and reflect on our actions and experiences through the learning collaborative.

4.1.2   Reflection

a) **While some respondents acknowledged participating in reflection activities, it was mostly initiated or facilitated by external consultants or the RMU.**

b) **There's a lack of intentional self-reflection practice among respondents, with many relying on external facilitation.**

c) **However, those who engaged in self-reflection found it valuable, often crediting facilitators for creating the necessary space, protocols, and platform.**

d) **Strong responses came from those who had opportunities to present their reflections to others, such as during NEC visits or workshops.**

e) **A minority of grantees conducted internal reflection, identifying successes and challenges, such as adjusting community engagement approaches based on reflections.**

Certain grantees noted the organization of internal reflection sessions, a commendable practice despite having small teams. Occasionally, these sessions involved network members, fostering discussions on project implementation successes and challenges, as well as strategizing for the future. However, other grantees mentioned constraints such as limited time and busy schedules, preventing them from engaging in structured reflection sessions. For those who did manage to reflect, the outcomes were not always clear in terms of how the reflection influenced their approach to work or led to adjustments in their plans. Those grantees who did engage successfully in reflection exercises, cited the importance of these to their learning. They

emphasised that even though it is challenging and not always part of their existing culture, the RMU emphasis and push to conduct reflection is very important, and should be continued. Notably, it was the organisations who conducted or actively took part in reflection, that also had the strongest self-reported learnings from action. In other words, *we can conclude that learning from action only really happens when it is followed by reflection.*

OC1 example

> *We conducted a team reflection on TOC implementation. Representatives of Board, member organizations, branches, staff members were involved in the reflection. Changes to specific marginalised groups have been identified and reflected on their experiences and practices of last 2 years of policy advocacy and project implementation. It was held on 26 December, 2023 in Ulaanbaatar. Guiding questions were developed using INTRAC tools for monitoring of advocacy impact.*

> *On 26 May, 2023 Midterm evaluation of EOL project was organized a workshop involving representatives of Board, member organizations, branches, staff members and beneficiaries of the project, including representatives of students, teachers and parents . OECD DAC tool questions were used to reflect on relevance, validity, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of project and policy advocacy. Also we reflected on lessons learnt.*

OC1 example

> *Reporting template guides us through reflections and collect lessons learnt through consultative process of staff members and helped to do things differently.*

OC 2 example

> *Another significant improvement has been in our documentation practices. In our spontaneous culture, note-taking has historically been ad hoc, occurring sporadically during discussions. In contrast, the learning collaborative and EOL report mandates formal recording and note-taking processes, ensuring comprehensive documentation of insights and discussions throughout the action. Moreover, our learning culture underscores the importance of experiential learning, recognizing that valuable insights often emerge from hands-on experience. This acknowledgment has led to the development of our five-R policy, aimed at systematically capturing and leveraging learning experiences as they occur. Despite the initial challenges posed by the formal aspects of the learning collaborative, it has proven to be an invaluable tool for promoting structured learning and knowledge sharing, guiding us towards a more proactive and documented approach to organizational learning.*

OC 2 example

> *In our journey, reflection has been pivotal. We've developed a structured process to ensure that every learning opportunity is maximized. Initially, we recognize these opportunities, often during interactions with partners or through training sessions. Then, we ensure that these insights are promptly recorded. This step is crucial as it lays the foundation for future action. Next comes relaying the knowledge gained, sharing it with relevant stakeholders within our organization and network. This fosters a culture of collective learning and growth. Subsequently, we reciprocate by applying these insights to our projects and initiatives. Finally, we emphasize the importance of*

reusing this knowledge, integrating it into our organizational practices and strategies. This five-step reflection model serves as a continuous loop: recognize, record, relay, reciprocate, and reuse. Driving our learning process forward and ensuring that each experience contributes to our collective evolution.

OC 3 example

We're generally satisfied with our current approach to learning and knowledge retention, but we're always open to improvements. It seems like establishing a system to document spontaneous insights could greatly benefit us in ensuring we capture all valuable lessons. Additionally, we're actively working on prioritizing structured learning sessions in advance and integrating them into our schedule. This way, we can allocate dedicated time for reflection and knowledge sharing, making it easier for all of us to incorporate new learnings into our workflows. Continuous improvement is key for us.

4.1.3 Learning

a) **Trainings were perceived as tremendously useful by many organizations, especially smaller or newer NECs in Central and Southeast Asia. Participants appreciated the introduction to new concepts and the professionalism of the training sessions.**
b) **Action Research, viewed as a form of analysis, was found to be highly beneficial by those involved. This participatory approach, utilizing empirical data, yielded valuable insights for several grantees who conducted studies.**
c) **Developing new tools or models, such as GAPSHED, proved to be useful for organizations seeking innovative solutions.**
d) **Understanding the importance of social accountability emerged as a key learning point for many grantees.**
e) **Peer learning was highlighted as an effective learning method, both through formal learning collaboratives among grantees and through spontaneous sessions with other CSOs, learning partners, local groups, and fellow grantees.**

Many grantees have actively participated in workshops and meetings, engaging with the government to provide input and collaboratively refine national education policies. They have also collaborated with other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the education sector, as well as with their own members, to propose improvements to existing education policies. While these interactions contribute to their overall learning, the most common type of learning mentioned by grantees is derived from two main sources.

Firstly, grantees acquire new concepts and theories through the training sessions conducted by the program's learning partners. These sessions serve as a foundational source of knowledge, equipping grantees with the theoretical frameworks essential for their work. Additionally, learning from the experiences of fellow grantees in applying specific approaches is emphasized. This learning occurs through organized learning and sharing events facilitated by the program, fostering a collaborative environment for knowledge exchange.

Secondly, a significant form of learning follows learning collaboratives events. During these events, grantees identify peers with successful practices in specific issues. Subsequently, they initiate follow-up sharing sessions, creating a platform for in-depth discussions and observations. These comprehensive sessions go beyond theoretical knowledge, incorporating on-site observations of the host grantees' activities and interactions with their key stakeholders. This multifaceted approach enhances the depth and applicability of the shared knowledge, contributing to a more robust learning experience for the grantees.

OC1 example

There is an NEC in Nepal, another implementing partner. They visited us in Bangladesh from December 21 to 25, 2023, to learn from our stakeholders. During their visit, they interacted with selected stakeholders, including local partners and government officials, especially the Bureau of Non-Formal Education, to understand how we conduct effective advocacy with the government.

I mean stakeholders, mostly at the government level, accountable in education. These (social accountability) tools also were quite effective, providing strategies for utilizing them mainly in the local education planning process. Additionally, they offered insights on how to follow up on implementation, holding the government accountable for their commitments. These tools proved to be a best practice in ensuring accountability and facilitating the process easily.

4.1.4   Planning

a) **There were some instances of strategic planning among the grantees, though such examples were relatively few.**
b) **Grantees collaborated with various organizations to develop educational agendas. These agendas serve as planning guides for CSOs, outlining future targets, engagement strategies with stakeholders, and the support needed to realize their goals.**
c) **The practice of hiring local staff as field officers was noted for its effectiveness in understanding and communicating within the local context, as well as liaising with local decision-makers and social leaders.**
d) **A common challenge mentioned by many grantees was the lack of staff, resources, and time, which hindered their capacity-building efforts.**
e) **While there were opportunities for staff capacity improvement, financial constraints often limited grantees' ability to take full advantage, either by not being able to afford participation or by sending the same individuals to multiple sessions without broadening the opportunity to others within the organization.**

The Planning section highlights both successes and challenges faced by grantees in their capability to *apply* the new knowledge, skills, and motivation actively and consciously from learning about new concepts and approaches. While some instances of strategic and action planning were reported, they were relatively few, indicating potential areas for improvement in this aspect of organizational development. Grantees from the South Pacific reported not knowing how to make new concepts relevant or apply to their specific context. However, grantees demonstrated effective collaboration with various organizations to develop educational agendas, serving as comprehensive planning guides for future activities. This collaborative approach enables CSOs to outline clear targets, engagement strategies, and resource needs to achieve their goals. Additionally, the practice of hiring local staff as field officers proved effective in fostering understanding and communication within the local context, facilitating meaningful engagement with decision-makers and community leaders. Despite these positive efforts, grantees commonly faced challenges related to limited staff, resources, and time, which hindered their capacity-building initiatives. Financial constraints often restricted their ability to fully leverage opportunities for staff capacity improvement, highlighting the need for increased support in this area to enhance organizational planning and development efforts. Overall, grantees demonstrate strength in jumping to action, but not necessarily planning how to include more stakeholders in their action or how to make it strategic or actionable.

OC1 example

The program proposed received ample feedback from both the GMU and the RMU team from OXFAM, which has prompted us to think through different scenarios even before we have started the program. The cross-learning session with other OC2 grantees was a good exposure as to what kind of responses could be expected during the EOL Learning session facilitated by M&ESURE.

OC1 example

SEN and its members successfully leveraged member feedback and workshop learnings to achieve three key improvements:

Enhanced Planning: They likely incorporated member insights to refine project planning, making it more targeted and effective.

Boosted Adaptive Management: Feedback likely helped SEN develop a more flexible and responsive approach to project implementation, adjusting to unforeseen circumstances.

Upgraded Staff Skills: Workshops likely equipped staff with valuable knowledge and tools to better execute projects based on member needs.

Overall, SEN demonstrably used member engagement to strengthen their project cycle, leading to better outcomes.

OC2 example

Working with EOL's learning partners, including Priya, ACR, and MDF, has significantly enhanced our project planning. Collaborations with these partners led to a deeper understanding of concepts like social accountability and social change metrics. Through this process, we refined our Theory of Change (TOC) and project proposals, rethinking stakeholder engagement strategies and impact assessment methods. Feasibility studies and field consultations enabled us to identify specific stakeholders and tailor engagement approaches accordingly. Recognizing the value of these insights, we're now developing training modules and curricula to share knowledge with other organizations and networks, contributing to broader capacity-building efforts within the community-based organization (CBO) and civil society organization (CSO) networks.

OC1 example

So during the strategic planning meeting, we recently conducted the same exercise after the year-end for an update meeting on the strategic plan. Every year, we review our objectives and engage in exercises among the members to evaluate what went well during the year and what needs improvement. We discuss various strategies that we need to apply, considering the policy, political, economic, and social contexts.

4.1.5   Challenges to experiencing learning

a) **Allocating time for training sessions remains a significant hurdle.**
b) **The recurrence of the same individuals attending training, limiting the spread of new knowledge within organizations.**
c) **A culture of performance that prioritizes positive outcomes may hinder honest reflection and reporting.**

d) **Language barriers restrict participation, with often only a few members able to engage, though this necessitates training-of-trainers (ToTs) sessions, which can help in cascading knowledge.**
e) **Grantees often found it challenging to contextualize learnings from different regions to their specific environments.**
f) **Diverse attitudes towards the importance of organizational development versus direct activism and policy influence were observed.**
g) **Some organizations focus more on immediate activism and policy goals rather than on long-term organizational development.**
h) **The delivery method of learning content was sometimes perceived as dull and overly time-consuming.**
i) **Financial constraints impact the ability to organize effective in-person reflection sessions.**

The findings on Challenges to Experiencing Learning sheds light on various obstacles encountered by grantees in their learning journey. These challenges underscore the complex landscape in which organizations operate, Addressing these multifaceted challenges will require collaborative efforts and targeted interventions to foster a more conducive learning environment for all stakeholders involved. The root cause of several of these challenges seems to be related to organisational structure. The organisations with higher and deliberate turnover and promotion of new leadership, tend to have a healthier attitude and tangible mechanisms towards learning. These organisations also tend to see the benefit of wider organisational learning, towards their advocacy and policy influencing success. Another notable point is that the organisations are not necessarily typical 'CSO' grantees, but complex political organisations with power dynamics, varied internal and external interests and relationships.

OC1 examples

Accessibility: Not everyone has equal access to safe and enriching experiences. This can be due to financial constraints, geographical limitations, or personal circumstances.

Reflection and analysis: Transforming raw experience into meaningful learning requires critical reflection and analysis. This can be difficult for some learners, especially if they lack guidance or support.

Emotional challenges: Experiential learning can sometimes involve uncomfortable or challenging situations. Learners may need support to navigate these emotions and process them constructively.

Transferring learning: Applying lessons learned from one experience to a different context can be tricky. Learners may need help identifying transferable skills and knowledge.

OC1 example

In the first phase of the EOL program, the training programs, though of high quality and very useful, were quite intense given our busy daily schedule. It was not always possible to connect and follow the program, and at times it seemed to proceed at a rapid pace.

OC2 example

In reflecting on our mistakes and openly discussing them, we find valuable opportunities for learning and growth. However, in multi-country or

collaborative settings, such as the BFID project involving various countries and organizations, a reluctance to admit weaknesses often prevails. Participants may fear that acknowledging mistakes could reflect poorly on them in front of donors or partners. This reluctance parallels the tendency in job interviews to present strengths as weaknesses. Unlike this dynamic, within our own organization, there exists a culture of transparency where individuals feel comfortable sharing their mistakes and the lessons they've learned. This openness fosters a constructive environment for collective learning and improvement.

OC3 example

The end-of-project review conducted last year revealed a significant realization: we underestimated the time required internally to fully grasp the diverse themes we were addressing. Effectively engaging with these topics and conducting capacity-building efforts for external partners demanded more time than initially anticipated. Particularly crucial was the learning process surrounding the connection between tax justice and education, especially within the context of education finance work. This recognition underscores the critical importance of allocating sufficient time and resources for comprehensive learning and capacity building to ensure effective engagement and impactful outcomes.

4.2 Which main approaches to supporting learning provided by EOL were helpful in contributing to the learning?

🔵 Learning from experience (bein…	9
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🟢 Capacity Building (learning abo…	8
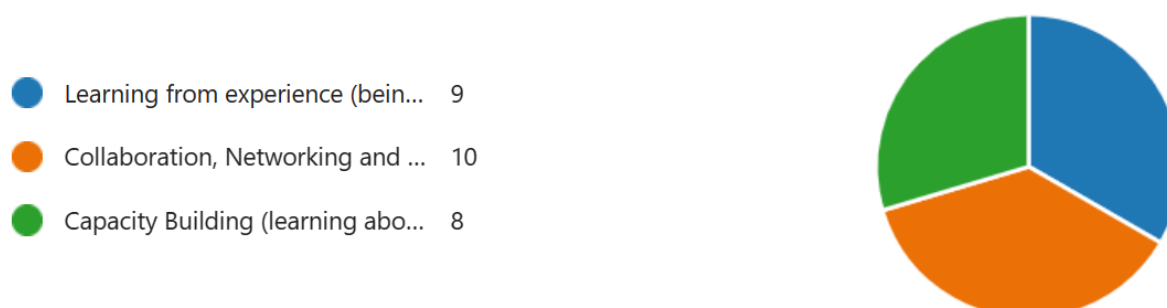
4.2.1 Learning from Experience

a) **Reflective practice is highly valued but underutilized. Effective learning requires integrating reflections into strategies and capacity building.**
b) **Timely mentoring and coaching from ASPBAE, RMU, or consultants are crucial and highly appreciated for immediate application.**
c) **Demand-responsive support during project implementation is preferred; immediate post-training coaching may not be as effective.**
d) **Successful grantees organize reflection sessions to learn from failures, feasible with adequate planning or sufficient staffing.**

The Learning from Experience section highlights key insights into how grantees have leveraged their experiences to foster learning and growth within their organizations. Reflective practice emerges as a highly valued yet underutilized tool, indicating a potential area for further development in the learning process. Successful grantees demonstrate a proactive approach by organizing reflection sessions to extract valuable lessons from failures, underscoring the importance of adequate planning and staffing to facilitate this process effectively. These findings underscore the need for tailored support mechanisms and structured opportunities for reflection

to maximize the learning potential of grantees and enhance their overall impact in the field. Similarly to our findings on 'Action' in the section above, learning from experience is only effective if accompanied by reflection, feeding back improvements into planning for the next time, and making the benefits of the experience available to more members.

OC1 example

For membership based organization it is important for members to see their contribution and success to policy advocacy. It was new practice.

We have realized that to reach higher level objectives we should change ourselves based on the past experiences and reflections of our practice.

OC2 example

The most impactful learning experiences often arise from spontaneous incidents that prompt us to reflect and adapt our practices. Despite their effectiveness, these spontaneous learning moments can sometimes be overlooked or not formally recorded, especially within the context of structured learning collaboratives. While we recognize the importance of formal documentation for project reporting, we prioritize genuine learning and improvement over paperwork. To address this challenge, we are striving to integrate both formal and spontaneous learning practices into our organizational culture. Creating an organizational memory and fostering a culture of continuous learning have been pivotal in ensuring the smooth functioning of our operations, even in the absence of key individuals. We are currently developing a five-step learning module to further enhance our learning culture, aiming to strike a balance between formal processes and spontaneous learning opportunities. Though we are still refining our approach, we are optimistic that this integration will lead to more effective learning outcomes in the future.

OC2 example

Both within our organization and among consortium members, spontaneous learning occurs, often prompting us to address previously unrecognized issues. One recent example involved a curriculum oversight regarding transgender individuals. When approached by the transgender community to participate in our program, we realized our lack of knowledge and immediately sought their guidance on inclusion and management. This led to important lessons in communication and accommodation, highlighting our need to adapt. Seeking external expertise, we revised our curriculum to better address diversity and empathy, fostering a more inclusive environment from the outset. Reflecting on these experiences, we've come to prioritize recognizing and learning from unexpected lessons, a principle integral to our ongoing development efforts.

4.2.2   Collaboration, Networking & Peer Learning

a) **Most beneficial when coordinated by others, enabling participants to benefit without deep theoretical knowledge or intentional planning, highlighting the importance of guided engagement in learning.**
b) **Engagement often exploratory rather than problem-driven, with networks crucial for uncovering solutions, indicating that learning is discovery-oriented, not always purposive.**

c) **Effective collaboration requires coordination or dedicated funding, especially when seeking to learn from peers with valuable experiences, underscoring the need for resources in collaborative learning.**
d) **Initial exposure to peer projects through formal presentations at events sparks interest for further exploration in specific contexts, showcasing the value of structured introductions to peer learning.**
e) **Collaboratives facilitate learning across various levels, enriching the experience from national to local involvement, demonstrating the inclusiveness and diversity of learning collaboratives.**

Grantees highly valued the peer learning experience stemming from their active participation in learning collaboratives and sharing sessions, which were both facilitated by the program and initiated independently by the grantees themselves. These opportunities proved particularly advantageous for those grantees with limited experience or encountering challenges in implementing specific activities. The collaborative setting allowed them to extract valuable insights and practical knowledge from grantees in other countries who had successfully executed similar strategies. In fact, many grantees would like to have more sharing events with different grantees from different countries to learn about their practices and get connected to a wide community. It is not only for them to learn from others but also that they will be happy to share their experience that might be relevant to different grantees.

Learning collaboratives were mostly used to share experience and practices among different coalitions operating in different country contexts and therefore were not so much based on the specific needs of the participating grantees. These events still provided knowledge to help the participating grantees related to the topics shared. Most said they were able to contextualize the learning from the events, and some others expressed their interest in learning from other grantees from the countries with similar contexts so that they can much more easily adapt the learning to their context. They hoped more learning events could be organized in the future with different grantees.

A notable example of this cross-country collaborative learning occurred when a partner from Nepal visited CAMPE in Bangladesh to gain insights into effectively advocating with the government, a crucial stakeholder in the education sector. This instance exemplifies the program's commitment to fostering knowledge exchange and capacity building among grantees on an international scale.

Moreover, the effectiveness of in-country peer learning was evident, providing a platform for grantees to share experiences and discuss how various organizations within the same country could collectively contribute to addressing education issues. For instance, three grantees implementing different Operational Components (OCs) in Bangladesh organized a session where they deliberated on implementing social accountability, gender inclusivity, gender equality, and youth engagement in advocacy. Subsequently, they agreed on a joint advocacy action during the workshop, showcasing the program's role in facilitating collaborative efforts among grantees within a country.

While the shared experiences during the sessions were specific to each context, numerous grantees highlighted their capacity to adapt and contextualize the acquired knowledge to align with their individual needs and the unique circumstances of their countries. This adaptability was particularly evident in technical areas like leveraging social media for advocacy. However, some partners pointed out challenges in implementing the experiences of grantees from different countries, suggesting that learning collaboratives might be more effective if participants share similar contexts and challenges. For instance, a grantee from Afghanistan cited an example wherein they successfully applied the experience of a fellow grantee from Pakistan on influencing politicians and developing education strategies. Another grantee said, "*I want to see more of such Pacific island groupings, such as Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu… as we have similarities among Melanesian countries in the Pacific.*"

Grantees have put forth valuable recommendations to enhance the utility of learning and sharing sessions. They suggest the program establish a comprehensive list of grantees along with their specific areas of expertise, enabling fellow grantees to easily identify sources of assistance or potential collaborators for collaborative learning sessions. Additionally, grantees propose a shift from merely discussing thematic topics to engaging in joint problem analysis during sessions. This approach would foster collective brainstorming to identify alternatives and solutions for specific challenges, providing a more dynamic and problem-solving-oriented learning environment. One grantee said: "*So that we can conduct joint analyses or similar activities, providing stronger evidence and facilitating comparisons between countries. This approach allows us to learn without necessarily ranking ourselves as doing poorly or well, but rather to understand our position in the region.*"

They also would like the sessions to be in-person and involve field visits because this will allow the visiting organizations to also meet with different stakeholders, including the beneficiaries of the host organizations. Such an event has been organized by some grantees, for example by a grantee in Bangladesh who was visited by a grantee from Nepal. During the duration of the event, it was not only discussion between the two grantee organizations, but the visiting organization met the host organization's stakeholders, local partners, and other CSOs in the host country."

Some grantees faced challenges attending certain learning and sharing sessions due to a lack of an adequate number of staff available for participation. This limitation stemmed from the need to prioritize the implementation of their program activities. Additionally, some grantees, like those from Afghanistan, reported difficulties obtaining visas to enter the countries where the events were hosted, further hindering their ability to attend. They expected the program to organize in-person activities in countries where visas should not be an issue.

OC1 example

Education Out Loud (EOL) facilitated collaborative initiatives, networking opportunities, and peer learning sessions involving various National Education Coalitions. The focus was on creating a platform for shared learning, collaboration, and networking among different coalitions working towards common goals in the education sector. We have got support from GCE, RMU, and ASPBAE.

EOL likely organized collaborative initiatives such as workshops, conferences, or forums where representatives from different National Education Coalitions could come together. These events may have included interactive sessions, panel discussions, and collaborative activities aimed at sharing experiences, best practices, and challenges related to strengthening civil society engagement in education policies.

EOL provided networking opportunities that facilitated connections and relationships among National Education Coalitions. This might have involved structured networking sessions, informal gatherings, or online platforms where participants could engage in meaningful discussions, build relationships, and explore potential areas for collaboration.

The collaborative support from EOL played a crucial role in fostering a sense of community and shared purpose among National Education Coalitions. By providing a platform for collaboration, networking, and peer learning, EOL facilitated the exchange of knowledge and strategies. This support helped your organization and others involved to gain insights into successful approaches, overcome common challenges, and build a collective strength for effective advocacy in 12-year compulsory education policies. The shared experiences and collaborative efforts contributed to a more robust and interconnected civil society engaged in education initiatives.

OC2 example

In my experience, the least functional aspect has unfortunately been the (RMU or learning partner organised) formal learning collaborative. It seemed more focused on project requirements rather than genuine demand for learning. We've had only two meetings in several months, both hastily scheduled just before reporting periods, which limited meaningful engagement. This inflexibility in scheduling hindered our ability to learn effectively.

OC2 example

Ensuring regular review and reflection on our progress is crucial, and we aim to conduct these evaluations at least once a month, if not more frequently. The learning collaborative serves as a valuable tool in fostering this culture of continuous learning and improvement. Despite challenges in establishing such a culture, recent meetings have demonstrated its potential to facilitate open discussion and problem-solving. Reflecting on these experiences reinforces our commitment to integrating learning opportunities into our routine practices, even if informally labelled.

OC2 example

The multi-country learning collaborative, particularly our experience in Nepal, highlighted a common challenge faced by partners: a sense of disconnection and the overwhelming demands of individual project responsibilities upon returning home. Despite the initial enthusiasm and passion during collaborative meetings, the reality of day-to-day project commitments often overshadowed the perceived importance of follow-up discussions. This resulted in infrequent meetings, with only two occurring over several months, reflecting a pattern observed across both Nepal and Bangladesh. However, amidst these challenges, one aspect stood out as particularly impactful: the willingness to openly discuss failures and lessons learned. This candid sharing of experiences fostered a sense of unity and purpose within our organization and consortium members, as it underscored the collective need for improvement and growth in tackling shared challenges.

OC2 example

It's fascinating to observe how learning can take various forms, even outside the formal structure of learning collaboratives. While some may hesitate to openly share their challenges within such settings, there are alternative avenues for learning from peers. For instance, I've gleaned valuable insights from our Filipino partners, not through formal collaboration sessions, but through their success stories and innovative approaches. One notable example is their "garbage can policy" model, where solutions are presented first, attracting those with corresponding problems to connect with the solution. Inspired by their approach to maintaining youthful leadership, we've adapted similar strategies within our own youth unit, ensuring a continuous influx of fresh perspectives and ideas. Additionally, their method of monitoring politicians' promises has influenced our social accountability program, demonstrating how impactful stories and positive examples shared within collaborative spaces can inspire learning and innovation. This underscores the potential for learning collaboratives to incorporate more of these inspiring tales and positive twists to foster learning and adaptation among participants.

OC2 example

The example shared by the partner from Africa highlighted the significant impact of their approach when engaging with government representatives. Initially, presenting themselves as external monitors focused on ensuring accountability led to hesitancy and reluctance from the officials to collaborate. However, by shifting their approach to that of supporters who aimed to assist the government officials in their work, they experienced a more positive response. This example underscores the importance of understanding how to effectively engage with government stakeholders, emphasizing the need to approach interactions in a supportive rather than monitoring capacity. While this example may not directly relate to specific activities, its insights into structuring engagement experiences remain highly relevant and memorable, serving as valuable guidance for similar contexts.

OC2 example

In terms of support from the RMU or the learning partners team, there's been a strong emphasis on connecting with partners both locally and internationally. However, amidst the busy project activities, finding common times for meetings can be challenging. One suggestion for improvement is for the RMU team to coordinate periodic common times for partner meetings, encouraging regular communication and learning sharing. Another effective practice shared during a session with Dorte involved monthly virtual sessions where partners each share updates and learnings via allocated slides. This streamlined approach allows for efficient knowledge exchange without requiring extensive time commitments, fostering a culture of shared learning and collaboration among partners.

OC2 example

We received excellent support from the RMU, particularly through networking and peer learning opportunities. We got two chances to participate in learning collaboratives and networking sessions held in Nepal. During our time there, we gained valuable insights from other grantees, such as those from the Philippines and Bangladesh. Networking and plenary sessions allowed us to learn from different perspectives, such as the end-to-end monitoring system demonstrated by the Philippine grantee and the advocacy forums showcased by Bangladesh.

One significant outcome of these learning sessions was the establishment of learning collaboratives, not only in Pakistan but also with other grantees from OC2 and OC1. In Pakistan, ISAPS organized joint events and experience-sharing sessions, along with comprehensive training sessions for capacity building. For example, we conducted training sessions for district and field staff, focusing on community mobilization, scorecards, and community agendas. These efforts have enhanced our collaborative approach and enriched our capacity to drive positive change at the local level.

OC1 example

"It's a great opportunity to collaborate with each other. In this situation, we can organize a (learning collaborative) workshop focusing on best practices, lessons learned, education on facilitating learning, collaboration, and knowledge sharing."

OC1 example

> *For recommendations, there's a need for increased collaboration among OCs organized and funded by the RMU. Perhaps, a thematic presentation of each National Education Coalition's (NEC) activities could be automatically represented in future magazines and profiles. This way, we would be aware of each other's initiatives, facilitating requests for help or collaborative learning within the system.*

4.2.3   Capacity Building

a) **Targeted capacity building proved beneficial, especially for those needing specific subject knowledge, highlighting its tailored impact.**
b) **Development of modules by grantees from EoL partner training, like PRIA and MDF, for use within their networks, showcases the cascading effect of capacity building.**
c) **Thematic topics such as social accountability, proposal writing, and inclusion were particularly valuable, with grantees applying and disseminating these concepts in their work.**

The capacity-building activities facilitated by the program's learning partners have proven highly beneficial for several reasons. The chosen topics were notably relevant to the specific needs and capacity gaps identified in the pre-training capacity needs assessment for participating grantees. The learning partners, all experts in their respective fields with experience in working with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), ensured the training's practical applicability. Some subjects, like proposal writing and project design and management, were easily implemented, leading to grantees successfully crafting effective project proposals using tools such as Theory of Change (ToC) and monitoring frameworks learned from the sessions. Many grantees reported securing funding from different international donors due to their improved knowledge of project design and proposal writing. For instance, a grantee from Solomon Island mentioned securing funding from donors in Australia and New Zealand, attributing it to their enhanced proposal writing skills acquired through the program's training. Furthermore, grantees found Theory of Change (ToC) and stakeholder analysis to be particularly accessible topics, applicable not only in the context of proposal writing but also in their day-to-day management operations. This was especially beneficial given that some of their network members were new to these concepts.

Some partners mentioned that they not only used the newly learned knowledge and skills internally but also shared them with their members, CSOs, and relevant community groups. One grantee said, "*The middle and lower management of our Members CSO's were capacitated to write effective proposals and get grants to contribute to addressing issues related to education problems in their respective areas, and it was very successful (OC1)`.*" With the support of the program, some grantees organized training for their members, such as on organizational capacity, delivered by skilled trainers, proving crucial for strategy development.

However, certain topics, such as social accountability, required additional time for grantees to fully grasp their application in their work. This led to a recognized need for program assistance, including individual mentoring and coaching, to effectively apply these concepts. Mentoring has been identified as a key component in capacity building and has been included in the capacity-building plan for grantees and their members, covering topics such as social accountability, advocacy, inclusion, using media for advocacy, and policy monitoring. One grantee said, "*Participating in a training, you may understand some concepts and ideas, but when trying to put them into practice, especially in a context you are not familiar with, it's not always easy. You find different difficulties and challenges, and you really need someone to support you. Otherwise, all the knowledge you've gained may not be that useful (OC1).*"

Grantees highlighted that the understanding and application of new concepts and approaches are closely tied to the quality of the trainers and their training approaches. Notably, the diverse approaches of different learning partners, despite their expertise, created variations in how

grantees comprehended the training content. The incorporation of participatory methods by some partners was particularly emphasized, helping grantees understand the training topics more easily and apply them according to their needs.

Additionally, most grantees acknowledged the necessity of online training due to the Covid pandemic but highlighted limitations such as limited interaction or challenges in asking follow-up questions, given the time constraints and the large number of participants. Another issue with the online modality is that sessions require more time for grantees to participate compared to in-person sessions, which would be significantly shorter. Online training necessitated grantees to allocate a few hours a day, several days a week, and this was difficult for some of them given their other commitments. Despite acknowledging the high quality of the training provided by the program, not all grantees felt comfortable attending online sessions. A grantee expressed, "*I was surprised by the quality of this training (e.g., project design and management) because it was really at a high level... The trainers were very, very good... This was a bit difficult for us because it was the first time we had this kind of training online (OC1).*" This sentiment highlights the mixed feelings among grantees regarding the transition to online learning, underscoring the need for continued adaptation and support in this evolving educational landscape.

Some grantees were unable to attend some trainings because the timing of some collided with the grantees' other training schedules. Given the lack of staff, some grantees had to miss the opportunity and felt there was a bit too much for them at times. Balancing between participating in the training and doing other program activities with limited human resources was difficult. The fact that the trainings were conducted in English made some grantees either send the same persons to attend different trainings from time to time or could not involve their members in the training because they do not speak English.

Some grantees expressed concerns about the length of the training sessions and noted that certain content was not always closely aligned with their focus on education advocacy. They recommended tailoring the training content to their specific needs identified in their proposals or reports, where capacity gaps are highlighted. Furthermore, recognizing funding challenges as a common issue for sustaining the program's impact, grantees suggested that the Results Management Unit (RMU) should provide training sessions, such as resource mobilization training, to address this aspect.

OC1 example

> *As one grantee said, "since we have been talking about limited funding, maybe a special training in resource mobilization would really help because we know that EoL will not be there forever."*

OC2 example

> *We depended on multiple learning partners to expand our knowledge in various areas aligned with our objectives. This not only facilitated our learning but also inspired us to redesign our programs and approaches. We were eager to share this knowledge with our consortium members and other local NGOs, even organizing events to facilitate knowledge transfer. However, the effectiveness varied depending on the topic. For example, topics such as engaging with parliamentarians were more elementary for us due to our extensive experience in working with the Parliamentary House.*

OC2 example

> *It's evident that the feedback received from both the Regional Management Unit and the global team has been instrumental in shaping our program's development. The opportunity to participate in learning sessions and cross-*

> *sharing sessions facilitated valuable insights into the context and experiences of other partners, enriching our understanding during the design process. EOL stands out as one of the few partner organizations that prioritizes focused learning initiatives. The visits from global team representatives, particularly during OC3 and OC2, underscored their emphasis on learning methodologies and approaches. As an organization with a background in engineering and design, we've undergone a significant evolution, necessitating a relearning process in pedagogy and lesson design. The concept of "failing fast" resonates with our approach, and it's encouraging to see parallels between our organizational learning cycle and EOL's framework. The shared measures and learning approaches emphasized during partner interactions have provided valuable guidance for our project's trajectory.*

OC3 example

> *EOL and RMU's emphasis on learning is definitely a positive aspect. It's important to support learning at various levels and to facilitate knowledge exchange between different OC implementations. While structured learning sessions are valuable, it's also essential to recognize the dynamic nature of the learning process. Sometimes, the most valuable insights come from spontaneous learning moments or informal discussions. Therefore, it's crucial to remain flexible and open to capturing learning in various forms, whether it's through structured workshops or spontaneous interactions. By embracing this dynamic approach to learning, we can ensure that valuable insights are captured and incorporated effectively into our work.*

### 4.2.4   Additional findings/conclusions

a) **South Pacific NECs:** Exhibit varying preferences in engagement modalities, reflecting diverse attitudes towards learning approaches.

b) **Capacity-Based Learning Experiences:** Disparities observed based on organizational capacity, encompassing large/established NECs, small/emerging NECs, and contexts influenced by political landscapes.

c) **Learning Participant Diversity:** Some organizations repetitively send the same individuals for training, while others lack a structured plan for disseminating acquired knowledge throughout the organization.

d) **Organizational Values Influence:** Attitudes, values, and organizational self-perception vary significantly, impacting the prioritization of activism, capacity building, inclusivity, and relationship-building.

e) **Knowledge Sharing:** Grantees disseminate insights gained from EoL learning partners to other CSOs and community groups within their networks.

f) **Knowledge Products Development:** Some grantees produce knowledge products integrating program learnings into their organizational outputs.

g) **Leadership and Organizational Growth:** Leadership transitions and organizational expansion, including leadership rotation, influence learning dynamics within organizations.

h) **Knowledge Management for Growth:** Emphasis on knowledge documentation facilitates institutional learning and growth.

i) **Value of Mentoring and Coaching:** Grantee organizations recognize the value of mentoring and coaching during action learning and planning phases.

Grantees, on the whole, find the funding support from the program instrumental in facilitating their activities. However, some grantees express the need for increased funding due to the multitude of planned activities and a shortage of human resources. In certain countries, accessing

funding from development donors poses challenges, attributed to the high number of organizations vying for limited resources. Furthermore, donors have shifted their priorities away from education to other pressing issues. Securing funding is pivotal for grantees to fulfil the program's objectives, sustain their efforts, and effectively implement activities across their target locations through their Civil Society Organization (CSO) members.

Grantees highlight the effectiveness of regular communication with the Regional Management Unit (RMU) and the learning partners. This communication avenue proves crucial for grantees to express concerns, seek support, and receive prompt responses from the RMU. A grantee affirms, "Once we send them an email, they responded spontaneously, and when we request something, they try to address it. We are happy with the way we communicate with both [the RMU] and ASPBAE." This positive interaction underscores the responsiveness and supportive nature of the RMU, reflecting the overall satisfaction of grantees with the communication process.

4.3 Has Organisational Capacity, Thematic Capacity, or Advocacy Capacity been built among grantees?

🔵 Thematic Capacity (Education)	11	
🟠 Organisational Capacity	8	
🟢 Advocacy Capacity	11	
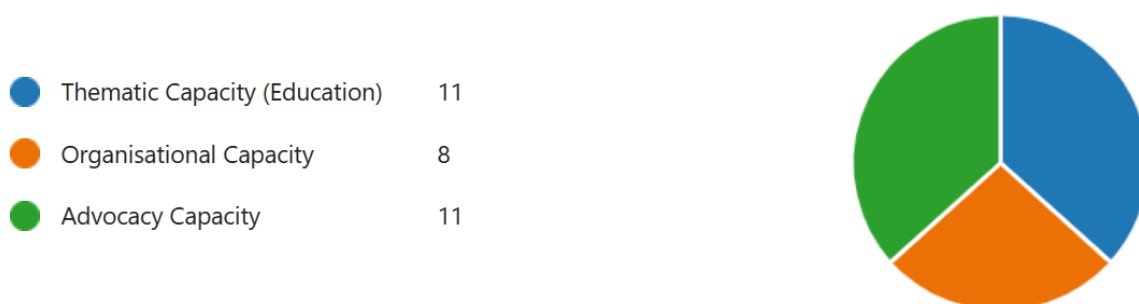
4.3.1 Organisational Capacity

a) **Grantees report heightened confidence, such as in approaching ministers, alongside improved practical skills like report writing, reflecting enhanced organizational capabilities.**

b) **While not universally expressed, several grantees observe quantitative growth in their membership base attributed to the support received, underscoring the positive impact on organizational expansion.**

c) **Exposure to diverse organizational experiences enables grantees to identify potential new approaches, showcasing their evolving adaptability and innovation.**

Some grantees have experienced increased recognition from their governments, actively participating in government meetings and sessions, providing valuable inputs, and collaborating as partners in refining education policies. This enhanced engagement has not only extended to external entities but has also garnered internal acknowledgment, particularly from their boards. Grantees showcased their strengthened capabilities in writing compelling proposals and preparing thorough project and program reports. The program's support has not only bolstered the grantees' capacity but has also empowered them to provide impactful capacity-building assistance to their members through training sessions and periodic meetings.

Grantees specifically described how trainings by learning partners on **project management, proposal, and report writing** were very useful and contributed to their capacity in terms of knowledge and skills, and several described how they had put this new capacity into practice and got positive feedback that their outputs had improved. However, they mentioned there was still a need to expand this capacity within others in the organisation.

The heightened capacity of both grantees and their members, facilitated by the program, has led to a clearer understanding of their objectives and activities. This increased clarity has translated

into stronger support from various stakeholders, including government bodies and network members, emphasizing the positive impact of the program on the grantees' overall effectiveness and influence.

OC1 example

Transformation on expansion of the representation of marginalized groups in the coalition organization. This is instrumental for effective advocacy and policymaking. Inclusivity in decision-making processes ensures that the unique needs and perspectives of marginalized communities are considered, fostering a more comprehensive and equitable approach to education initiatives. By creating space for marginalized to express their concerns, priorities, and aspirations within the coalition, it will amplify marginalized voices. And also, amplifying marginalized voices provides a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the issues at hand, fostering a more responsive and culturally sensitive approach to education initiatives.

OC1 example

During the pandemic, our work shifted to online mode, and we focused on strengthening our capacity for digital advocacy. We enhanced our abilities to conduct advocacy through blended methods utilizing online resources and tools such as curated infographic content, animated videos, live chats, webinars, online meetings, and surveys. We devised innovative approaches to deal with the challenges posed by the pandemic and floods. During the initial phase, we shifted to online mode and explored new advocacy strategies, primarily focused on digital advocacy, to keep education at the forefront during these difficult times.

We delved deep into building capacities to ensure resilient education. The knowledge we gained was used to advocate for policy reforms that would make education resilient to disasters. We organized capacity-building sessions on climate change, resilient education, and digital advocacy to enhance and equip our team, members, and partners. Challenging but transformative period for the organization as it explored new tools and ways of advocacy through blended strategies. The consultative processes with members and partners helped to better understand on-ground issues and challenges.

OC3 example

The learning process often unfolds organically, fitting into structured stages only in hindsight. Implementation takes precedence, with learning occurring in real-time alongside action. Reflecting and reviewing happen later, sometimes revealing unexpected insights gained along the way. While there may be intentions to structure learning from the start, the dynamic nature of projects makes it challenging to adhere to a predefined schedule. Despite efforts to integrate learning into the calendar, the fluidity of project demands often takes precedence.

OC2 example

As an organization, we've developed a significant capacity to engage with government officials in a supportive and collaborative manner. We've honed our ability to approach accountability as a partnership, focusing on empowering officials rather than simply holding them responsible. One of our notable strengths lies in our adept use of government data, which we analyze

> *thoroughly to provide evidence-based insights to officials. This strategy effectively utilizes their own data, making our findings more compelling and actionable for them.*
>
> *Furthermore, our organization has invested heavily in community mobilization efforts, particularly emphasizing the involvement of women and females in civil society education networks. This concerted approach has yielded a highly positive response from government officials, leading not only to the provision of essential facilities to schools but also to a heightened sense of ownership of the project among officials. This capacity we've gained as an organization underscores our commitment to fostering collaborative relationships and addressing the genuine needs of the communities we serve.*

OC2 example

> *One of the key factors contributing to ISAPS's success is the careful selection of program staff who are locally available and rooted in their communities. We have deliberately engaged all project staff from their own districts, ensuring that our social mobilizers, district coordinators, and other team members are familiar with and connected to the intervention communities.*
>
> *This approach allows us to gain close insights and valuable information from the field. We maintain constant and permanent interactions, engaging with local elites, religious leaders, political figures, civil society organizations, and various community associations and networks. This strong liaison and interaction with the communities at the local level provide us with deep insights into the persistent constraints faced by the organization.*

4.3.2   Thematic Capacity

Grantees described building thematic capacity in the following areas:

a) **Social Accountability**
b) **Tax**
c) **Inclusion**
d) **Disability**
e) **Gender**

Social accountability emerged as a valuable topic for many grantees, although its practical application may require some time for full integration into their work. The significance lies in its effectiveness for monitoring government plans and the corresponding commitments made for implementation. Governments frequently agree to a set of commitments, yet there are instances where these commitments go unfulfilled. Social accountability serves as a powerful tool for grantees to hold the government accountable and assess the extent to which their commitments have been honoured. Note that grantees often mentioned project management, proposal, and report writing topics as part of 'thematic capacity', but this has been included in the findings for that section.

Grantees have enhanced their knowledge and skills in project design, management, and the utilization of planning and monitoring tools. As detailed in other sections of this report, most grantees successfully crafted commendable proposals and reports, drawing on the knowledge acquired through the program's training sessions. The impact extended to their network members, as grantees actively shared the outcomes of these training sessions. Additionally, grantees highlighted the application of adaptive management principles in their projects, emphasizing the importance of learning from mistakes and integrating new approaches to ensure more successful project delivery.

OC1 examples

Representatives from CAMPE and OC2 and OC3 partners (grantees), engaged in discussions on social accountability, inclusivity, gender equality, and youth engagement. These topics were pertinent for advocacy in the planning workshop. The participants explored joint actions

We receive various forms of support from the coalition, both at the regional level and from ASPBAE. This includes funding to set up of numerous learning collaboratives, such as those focused on gender, fundraising, and other relevant topics. These collaborations are beneficial for us to continually update and enhance our knowledge. Additionally, they provide opportunities to engage with other coalitions and organizations.

We started face to face capacity building trainings, on writing proposal, writing on monitoring and evaluation and reporting, and from 2022 to 2023, we launched this capacity building program in five provinces of the country. It was very successful.

OC3 example

There have been several notable changes that have emerged throughout the first phase of our initiative. Firstly, there has been significant thematic learning, as individuals and organizations initially focused on specific areas, such as education advocacy or tax justice, have broadened their understanding across different themes. For instance, education advocates have gained insights into tax justice issues, while tax experts have delved into education processes and the right to education. This cross-pollination of knowledge has helped demystify the perceived technicality of tax issues, with tax justice actors learning to simplify concepts for broader accessibility.

Additionally, our review and learning meetings have provided valuable opportunities for in-person reflection. During one such meeting last October, a participant from the Tax and Fiscal Justice Alliance for Asia shared their transformative experience. As a CPA with a background in numbers and accounting, they initially viewed tax as a highly technical domain. However, their involvement in the alliance shifted their perspective, emphasizing the connection between tax policies and people's lives. They now advocate for a more accessible approach to tax justice, recognizing its profound impact on individuals and communities. This personal journey underscores the importance of bridging technical expertise with a deeper understanding of human rights and lived experiences in our collective efforts.

4.3.3   Advocacy Capacity

Many grantees described building knowledge, skills, and confidence in the following areas:

a) **Community and research advocacy, gathering story or qualitative data**
b) **Experience approaching decision-makers**

In terms of Advocacy Capacity, some grantees demonstrate significant advancements in building knowledge, skills, and confidence essential for effective advocacy efforts. They highlight their progress in community and research advocacy, showcasing their ability to gather qualitative data and personal stories to amplify their impact. Moreover, grantees report gaining valuable experience in approaching decision-makers, indicating a heightened level of confidence and proficiency in engaging with key stakeholders to advocate for change. However, it is still a question of whether this capacity was built among a wide base of members, or only a few. In

addition, there is a question about whether the advocacy achievements are the result of the NEC secretariats, or whether it represents efforts and reporting from the local partner members.

OC1 example

Lobbying at the parliament, planned advocacy, results-based management, adaptive management strategic partnership building with academics, lawyers and research institutes have been learnt newly and now we can do them as a coalition.

We could reach project objectives by the end of the project lifetime. Leadership of the Coalition has been renewed and ownership of the results and impact of the project activities has been built among members.

OC3 example

The regular bi-weekly meetings with all country coordinators, including myself as the overall coordinator, have proven to be incredibly valuable for sharing updates and learnings across different contexts. For example, Nepal recently shared their progress in engaging with duty bearers such as the Ministry of Finance and members of Parliament, highlighting their increased interest and willingness to make commitments to the cause. Colleagues from Senegal, in turn, shared strategies they've used to cultivate and maintain these crucial connections, offering valuable insights and approaches that can be adapted to different contexts.

These meetings serve as a platform for sharing tips and approaches, with each country coordinator committing to trying out new strategies and sharing their outcomes in subsequent meetings. For instance, through consultative advocacy efforts, a commitment was secured from the Ministry of Finance in one country to increase the allocation to education. This success demonstrates the effectiveness of tailored advocacy strategies in achieving tangible outcomes.

However, it's important to acknowledge that each country faces unique challenges and successes. For example, while one country may successfully increase its education budget, another may struggle due to external factors such as debt repayments. By sharing these diverse experiences and lessons learned, we gain a deeper understanding of effective advocacy strategies and how they can be adapted to different contexts to drive meaningful change.

OC2 example

Under this approach, we've focused on enhancing the capacity of civil society education networks to effectively engage with government officials, particularly at the district and community levels. This involves three key components: localized and context-specific evidence, networking, and capacity development for policy engagement at the local level.

A significant objective within this framework is the use of citizen scorecards. These scorecards are developed collaboratively by civil society members, community stakeholders, and school authorities using government data. They provide valuable insights into the facilities available at the school level, identifying any deficiencies or missing resources. Through this process, stakeholders can prioritize their needs and provide evidence-based data to government officials, facilitating more informed resource allocation and

decision-making at the grassroots level. This localized evidence empowers civil society members to advocate for their communities' needs effectively.

OC2 example

Another significant aspect is the development of educational agendas, which serve as guiding documents for the civil society education network. These agendas outline their goals, targets, and strategies for engaging stakeholders and obtaining the necessary support to realize their objectives. For example, during the recent elections in Pakistan, over 110 districts worked on crafting their agendas for local elections. These agendas were then presented to contesting political parties, with more than 36 candidates endorsing and incorporating them into their election manifestos.

This achievement demonstrates the success of engaging political parties and candidates in supporting education-related agendas. Among these candidates are individuals who have been elected to provincial and national assemblies, thus becoming policymakers who can advocate for and implement the endorsed agendas. This endorsement and subsequent election of supportive candidates signify a significant step forward for the project in terms of political buy-in and influence within the policymaking process.

5   Recommendations for 2024 onwards

i.   **Consider elevating** *participatory organisational learning***, ensuring broader and deeper participation across stakeholders within grantee organizations. This strategic approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement, and building the bandwidth of organizations to effectively disseminate learning and drive sustainable impact among more and deeper within their membership.**

Participatory organisational learning extends beyond mere learning by encompassing the systematic development and strengthening of organizational capacities, resources, and structures to enhance overall effectiveness and sustainability, and *ultimately get more people involved in the learning activities*. Capacity takes into account the quantitative factor of human resources or the number of affiliated persons with particular skillsets as intangible organisational assets (sometimes described as 'bandwidth'). This would involve broader organizational development efforts aimed at empowering more people within the CSOs to better fulfil their missions, be more resilient, and have the bandwidth to do more. This recommendation comes from the consultants' reflection after presenting the findings and initial recommendations to the RMU. It also relates to the finding that there are inherent power dynamics within certain grantees, which reinforces the 'power' over participation in learning among one or two key actors. This recommendation relates to a way to shift the ability to participate to a larger base, rather than only one representative or focal point.

Pre-intervention, learning or advocacy activity

- Learning Partners to integrate participatory methodologies into their learning support for the grantees, for example identifying learning needs using the 'participation ladder' or the 'IOM model' before designing learning and advocacy interventions, for example more multi-member initiatives rather than one focal point / representative.
- Grantees to involve more members and stakeholders in their own dialogue-based learning needs assessment during strategic planning and/or annual planning or before embarking on any learning or advocacy activities, and to ensure the decision-making over allocation of resources and mandate for learning is participatory within the organisation.

During-intervention, learning or advocacy activity

- Learning Partners to incorporate multiple members into learning support for grantees, ensuring that educational activities contribute to broader organizational strengthening and development.
- Grantees to allocate resources and efforts to build internal capacity during learning or advocacy events, such as dedicating time for skill-building workshops or knowledge-sharing sessions among team members, or allocating resources for under-represented member profiles (female or younger advocates) to participate in international/regional forums and learning events.
- Grantees to target and foster leadership among under-represented member profiles in executive/governance and non-executive/governance roles.
- Grantees to establish mentorship systems among experienced and potential leaders and members, especially targeting under-represented profiles of members.

After intervention, learning or advocacy activity

- RMU and GMU to continue to encourage celebration and showcasing of capacities developed, or participatory learning processes, among more members within an organisation rather than just the singular organisation.
- Grantees, learning partners, and RMU to incorporate metrics on participation into monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

    ii. **Facilitate an agenda/schedule of grantee lessons learned, strengths, or case studies, so that other grantees can prioritize interaction, enabling purposeful and scheduled engagement rather than relying on chance connections. Make this sharable to the grantees.**

The recommendation to facilitate an agenda/schedule of grantee lessons learned, strengths, or case studies, along with actionable steps for implementation, stems from the recognition of the value of structured and purposeful knowledge sharing among Education Out Loud (EOL) program stakeholders. The findings indicate that while informal interactions occur among grantees, there is a need for a more organized approach to facilitate meaningful engagement and collaboration. Several of the grantees specifically described this recommendation and suggestion directly, as they reported that it takes a long time to get to know 'by chance' that another grantee has some learning which may be relevant for them. By providing a platform for grantees to share their experiences, successes, and challenges, this recommendation aims to foster a culture of learning and collaboration within the EOL community. It acknowledges that chance connections are insufficient for comprehensive knowledge exchange and advocates for a systematic approach to prioritize interaction.

Pre-intervention

- RMU to identify existing communication channels and platforms for sharing information among grantees, assess the current level of interaction and knowledge sharing among grantees, and develop a framework for documenting lessons learned, strengths, and case studies from grantees.
- Learning Partners to collaborate with the Regional Management Unit to understand the needs and challenges of grantees, identify relevant topics and areas for capacity building and knowledge sharing, and develop training materials and resources to support grantees in documenting their experiences.
- Grantees to familiarize themselves with the objectives and expectations of the Education Out Loud program regarding knowledge sharing and collaboration and identify internal resources and expertise that can contribute to documenting lessons learned and case studies.
- Grantees to identify at least one other grantee from whom they would like to learn, and notify that grantee, and/or RMU and learning partner(s). From there, the grantee/RMU/learning partner to make a plan to pair the mentor and mentee.

During-intervention

- RMU to facilitate regular meetings or webinars where grantees can present their experiences and learnings and establish a centralized repository or platform where grantee insights can be shared and accessed by others.
- Learning Partners to facilitate workshops or training sessions on effective documentation of lessons learned and case studies, provide technical support to grantees in preparing and sharing their insights, and encourage active participation and engagement from grantees in sharing their experiences.
- Grantees to actively participate in scheduled interactions and sharing sessions facilitated by the program. document experiences, successes, and challenges encountered during project implementation, and contribute to the development of case studies and best practice examples to share with other grantees.

After intervention

- RMU to evaluate the effectiveness of the agenda/schedule in facilitating knowledge exchange among grantees, gather feedback from grantees on the usefulness and accessibility of shared resources, and continue to maintain and update the repository of grantee lessons learned for future reference and learning.

- Learning Partners to offer ongoing support and guidance to grantees in maintaining and updating their documentation, monitor the use and dissemination of shared resources and case studies among grantees, and conduct periodic evaluations to assess the impact of capacity-building efforts on knowledge sharing and collaboration.
- Grantees to continue to engage with the shared agenda/schedule of lessons learned and case studies, provide feedback on the usefulness and relevance of shared resources and experiences, and utilize the documented insights and experiences to inform future project planning and decision-making. Each grantee to be encouraged to nominate one learning that they can offer to share with others.

iii. Offer professional training sessions on an opt-in/opt-out basis, scheduling them well in advance to accommodate participants' schedules effectively.

The recommendation to offer professional training sessions on an opt-in/opt-out basis, accompanied by detailed implementation steps, is grounded in the understanding that flexibility and autonomy are crucial for effective capacity building within the Education Out Loud (EOL) program. The findings suggest that stakeholders have diverse schedules and learning needs, and a one-size-fits-all approach to training may not be optimal. By adopting an opt-in/opt-out model, the RMU, learning partners, and grantees can cater to individual preferences and availability, fostering a more inclusive and participant-centered learning environment. Overall, this recommendation aims to enhance participant engagement, promote a culture of self-directed learning, and maximize the impact of capacity building efforts within the EOL program. This recommendation was directly suggested by several grantees.

Pre-intervention

- RMU to continue identifying which training/learning events are mandatory, which are opt-in/opt-out, and which are targeted; continue to describe or co-create the grantee roles accordingly, as they may 'generalise' these experiences and not see a distinction.
- RMU and learning partners to encourage the decision of opt-in/opt-out being taken in a participatory way, rather than one representative or focal point on behalf of the whole organisation.
- RMU to emphasize the opt-in/opt-out approach to training session participation, ensuring stakeholders understand their autonomy in choosing sessions based on their needs and availability, collaborate with learning partners to design a flexible training schedule that accommodates diverse participant schedules and preferences, develop clear communication materials outlining the opt-in/opt-out process and its importance for participant engagement. Some opt-in/opt-out prefabricated materials may be used by grantees as input before or during learning activities, or as resources for them to conduct their own trainings or workshops within their organisations.
- Learning partners to incorporate the opt-in/opt-out approach into training design, ensuring sessions are structured to accommodate participant preferences, provide guidance and resources to help participants navigate the opt-in/opt-out process and make informed decisions about session attendance, and collaborate with the regional management unit to develop a training schedule that balances flexibility with program objectives.
- Grantees to communicate the opt-in/opt-out option to team members, emphasizing the importance of active engagement and autonomy in the training process, encourage team members to assess their individual training needs and preferences and make informed decisions about session attendance, and prepare teams to effectively utilize the flexibility offered by the opt-in/opt-out approach to tailor their participation to their specific needs and schedules. Grantee leaders to offer opportunities to their members whenever possible.

During-intervention

- RMU or learning partner to encourage a nomination/selection process for the places in the opt-in learning/training events, in order to manage the number of places and provide as many opportunities as possible, and encouraging the practice of nominating members rather than the main leader/representative.
- RMU to consider opening the nominations/applications for opt-in learning/training opportunities to multiple contact points within the grantee organisations, to ensure that the message reaches multiple members.
- RMU to coordinate with learning partners to facilitate the training sessions as per the agreed schedule, monitor participation and gather feedback from participants to continuously improve the training program, and ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the opt-in/opt-out option for training sessions.
- Learning partners to offer training sessions on an opt-in/opt-out basis, respecting participants' choices regarding session attendance, provide additional support and resources to participants who opt-in, ensuring they have access to necessary materials and opportunities for engagement, and respect the decisions of participants who opt-out, offering alternative resources or opportunities for catch-up sessions as needed
- Grantees to empower team members to exercise their autonomy by opting into or out of training sessions based on their availability and relevance to their work. participate in the scheduled training sessions as per their availability and interest, and communicate openly with program stakeholders about any challenges or feedback related to the opt-in/opt-out approach, contributing to ongoing program improvement efforts.

After intervention

- RMU to solicit feedback from participants regarding their experience with the opt-in/opt-out model, including suggestions for improvement and maintain a repository of training materials for ongoing capacity building efforts.
- Learning partners to collect feedback from participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the training sessions, adjust future training offerings based on participant input and emerging needs, and offer ongoing support and follow-up sessions to reinforce learning and address any lingering questions or challenges.
- Grantees to provide feedback on the training sessions to the regional management unit and learning partners, reflect on the benefits and challenges of the opt-in/opt-out model, sharing experiences and recommendations with program stakeholders.

iv. **Continue offering mentoring and coaching support, recognizing its value to grantees' learning and development. However, RMU may like to closely define the specific objectives and target audience of the learning support.**

EOL and the RMU have a principle of 'demand-based' learning, where grantees request learning support. However, one disadvantage of this approach is that the RMU may identify learning needs which the grantees or learning partners have less prior exposure to, or in an area which the RMU explicitly sees a need to improve. In addition, the RMU may see that some learning support may be targeted towards specific members of the grantee organisations, such as younger generation members below a certain age threshold, or high potential female leaders. This recommendation is to support the RMU to more directly intervene in the learning opportunities provided for the members of the grantee organisations, as appropriate or needed.

Pre-intervention

- RMU to assess the current mentoring and coaching support provided to grantees and identify areas for improvement, define clear objectives for the mentoring and coaching program, specifying the intended outcomes and target audience criteria, and develop guidelines and resources to facilitate the mentoring and coaching process.

- Learning Partners to align capacity building initiatives with the defined objectives of the mentoring and coaching program, ensuring complementary support for grantees and prepare resources and materials to support mentors, coaches, and grantees in the mentoring and coaching process.
- Grantees to assess their organization's learning and development needs and readiness to participate in mentoring and coaching activities and communicate their preferences and expectations for mentoring and coaching support to the RMU and learning partners.

During-intervention

- RMU to communicate the defined objectives and target audience criteria for the mentoring and coaching program to all stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of alignment with program goals, facilitate the matching of mentors/coaches with grantees based on their specific needs and the defined target audience criteria, and monitor the implementation of mentoring and coaching activities, providing support and guidance to mentors, coaches, and grantees as needed.
- Learning Partners to provide training and support to mentors and coaches to effectively guide and support grantees in achieving their learning and development objectives and monitor the progress of mentoring and coaching activities and provide feedback to mentors, coaches, and grantees to enhance effectiveness.
- Grantees to actively participate in mentoring and coaching sessions, seeking guidance and support to address organizational challenges and achieve learning objectives, provide feedback to mentors, coaches, and the RMU on the effectiveness of the mentoring and coaching support received, and collaborate with mentors and coaches to develop action plans and strategies for ongoing learning and development.

After intervention

- RMU to evaluate the impact of the mentoring and coaching program on grantees' learning and development, considering feedback from mentors, coaches, and grantees and reflect on the effectiveness of the defined objectives and target audience criteria, adjusting as necessary based on lessons learned.
- Learning Partners to evaluate the impact of mentoring and coaching support on grantees' learning and development outcomes, gathering feedback from mentors, coaches, and grantees and reflect on the effectiveness of capacity building initiatives in supporting the mentoring and coaching process, adjusting as necessary.
- Grantees to reflect on the impact of mentoring and coaching support on their organization's learning and development journey, identifying successes and areas for improvement, and share insights and experiences with the RMU and learning partners to inform program enhancements and future support initiatives.

v. **Be intentional about in-person activities due to resource constraints, ensuring conscious decision-making regarding their implementation.**

The recommendation to be intentional about in-person activities due to resource constraints underscores the importance of strategic decision-making to optimize the impact and effectiveness of program activities within the Education Out Loud (EOL) initiative. This recommendation was based on the observation of the learning review respondents, including grantees and learning partners, that while in-person activities are highly preferred, the cost is higher, and most of the respondents who commented on this recognised the balancing act that the RMU has to make.

Pre-Intervention

- RMU to assess the available resources and budget allocated for in-person activities, considering any constraints or limitations and define clear criteria for determining when in-person activities are most beneficial and aligned with program objectives, considering factors such as impact, reach, and cost-effectiveness.
- Learning partners to align capacity building initiatives and program activities with the defined priorities and objectives for in-person engagement, ensuring efficient use of resources and prepare alternative approaches or strategies for delivering content or engaging participants if in-person activities are not feasible.
- Grantees to identify which learning priorities they have for in-person activities, and which can be made available for more member through online or other less costly mechanisms.
- RMU and learning partners to require a plan for how the in-person participant will cascade the learning throughout the grantee organisation, as a prerequisite for funding for in-person learning opportunities.

During Intervention

- RMU to prioritize in-person activities that offer high impact and value within the constraints of available resources, considering alternative approaches for activities that may be less feasible and monitor the implementation and impact of in-person activities, gathering feedback from participants.
- Learning partners to adapt capacity building initiatives and program activities based on decisions regarding the implementation of in-person activities, ensuring alignment with program priorities and resource constraints and collaborate with the RMU and other stakeholders to explore creative solutions or alternatives for delivering content or facilitating engagement in the absence of in-person activities.
- Grantees to nominate and prioritise participation of the members for in-person learning opportunities, based on learning needs as well as impact.

After Intervention

- RMU to reflect on the outcomes and lessons learned from in-person activities, identifying strengths and areas for improvement in decision-making and resource allocation.
- Learning partners to reflect on the outcomes and impact of in-person activities within the program, considering their effectiveness and relevance in achieving program objectives and share lessons learned and best practices with the RMU and other stakeholders to inform future planning and decision-making regarding in-person activities.
- Grantees to enforce that the members who participated in funded in-person learning activities transfer the knowledge and skills to others in the organisation, through an evaluated mechanism.

vi. **Address the repetition of participants and promote knowledge dissemination within organizations by encouraging diversity in attendance and facilitating cascading of learnings.**

The recommendation to address the repetition of participants and promote knowledge dissemination within organizations underscores the importance of fostering diversity and inclusivity in learning environments within the Education Out Loud (EOL) initiative. By encouraging a broader range of participants to engage in program activities, the initiative aims to enhance the diversity of perspectives and experiences contributing to collective learning. The recommendation has linkages with the first recommendation, which focuses on 'capacity building' rather than 'learning'. Additionally, facilitating the cascading of learnings within organizations enables knowledge sharing and capacity building at multiple levels, empowering participants to disseminate insights and best practices to their peers and colleagues. The recommendation has linkages with the 'power analysis' described in the approaches below this section, as it can promote 'internal advocacy' within grantee organisations. This approach not

only enhances the overall effectiveness of capacity-building efforts but also contributes to the sustainability of impact by fostering a culture of continuous learning and knowledge exchange within grantee organizations. The recommendation is based on the observation that for some grantee organisations, there is a tendency to send the same representative to learning opportunities.

Pre-Intervention

- RMU: Conduct an assessment to identify patterns of participant repetition in training sessions or workshops. Decide to share this with the respective grantee(s) and/or leaning partner(s).
- Learning Partners: Collaborate with the RMU to review participant demographics and engagement data, identifying underrepresented groups or sectors within grantees' organizations. Utilize this information to tailor capacity-building initiatives and outreach efforts, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all stakeholders.
- Grantees: Encourage grantees to assess their organizational demographics and identify gaps in participation diversity, fostering awareness of the importance of inclusivity and representation in learning activities. Additionally, advocate for the prioritization of diverse attendance within their organizations and allocate resources to support participation from a broader range of staff members.

During Intervention:

- RMU: Implement targeted outreach strategies to engage underrepresented groups or sectors within grantees' organizations, leveraging existing communication channels and networks to promote upcoming training sessions or events. Consider to offer targeted learning opportunities. Alternatively, introduce a hard requirement for diverse representation as a contingency for funding for learning.
- Learning Partners to encourage the grantees to nominate different representatives for learning opportunities, and support the grantees to develop a capacity building plan.
- Grantees: Actively promote diversity and inclusion within their organizations by encouraging staff members from various departments or levels of seniority to participate in training sessions and share their insights and experiences. Support colleagues who may face barriers to attendance, such as providing necessary resources or assistance.

Post-Intervention:

- RMU: Evaluate the effectiveness of diversity promotion strategies implemented during the intervention phase, gathering feedback from participants and monitoring changes in attendance patterns over time. Use findings to refine outreach efforts and adjust programmatic approaches as needed, ensuring continuous improvement in fostering inclusivity within learning initiatives.
- Learning Partners: Reflect on the outcomes of capacity-building activities in terms of participant diversity and engagement, as well as organisational capacity building. Share lessons learned and best practices with the RMU and other stakeholders to inform future collaboration efforts and enhance the impact of capacity-building initiatives.
- Grantees: Review attendance and participation data from training sessions and workshops, assessing progress in promoting diversity and capacity building within their organizations and identifying any persistent challenges or barriers.
- Grantees to require those members who participated in learning opportunities to conduct learning transfer to other members.

vii. **Encourage diverse learning approaches, such as dialogue-based community learning, and provide tools like AI-based recorders to facilitate reflection and knowledge sharing.**

Allow and encourage grantees to explore sense-making and reporting methods which are culturally appropriate and are easier and more time-efficient.

Encouraging diverse learning approaches, such as dialogue-based community learning, fosters a dynamic and inclusive learning environment within grantee organizations. Dialogue-based community learning promotes active participation and collaboration, allowing participants to engage in meaningful discussions and knowledge exchange.

Additionally, new technologies such as generative AI-based recorders and text and image creators enhance the learning process by capturing insights and reflections in real-time, facilitating documentation and sharing of valuable experiences. Such tools and be used asynchronously without having to coordinate with a facilitator, or can be shared across several members (may be dependent on paid access subscriptions). These tools are much 'lower bandwidth' than video calling and other 'online' tools. The effort, ownership of data, choice of platform/app, level of task, and risks need to be duly taken into account by the CSOs.

Pre-intervention:

- RMU and learning partners to conduct an assessment of the technological infrastructure and digital literacy levels among grantees to understand their capacity for adopting new sense-making and reporting methods. Based on the assessment, RMU can provide guidance and resources on culturally appropriate and time-efficient reporting methods, ensuring alignment with program objectives.
- Learning partners to collaborate with RMU to develop training materials and workshops on utilizing diverse reporting methods effectively, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and efficiency.
- Grantees to explore, try, and document different sense-making and reporting approaches, exploring tools and techniques that resonate with their organizational culture and operational context. Grantees to present and share about their experiences with other grantees, particularly in the same sub-region.

During intervention:

- RMU and/or learning partners may facilitate training sessions or webinars on utilizing new technologies such as generative AI-based recorders and text/image creators for sense-making and reporting, providing hands-on support and troubleshooting assistance to grantees.
- Learning partners should offer ongoing guidance and technical support to grantees during the implementation of diverse reporting methods, encouraging experimentation and adaptation based on feedback and lessons learned.
- Grantees to sign up to common ai tools (preferably making use of free trial periods) and actively trial among different members of the organisation, leveraging asynchronous communication channels to enhance efficiency and accessibility. Tools could be a combination of text, image, or video generators.
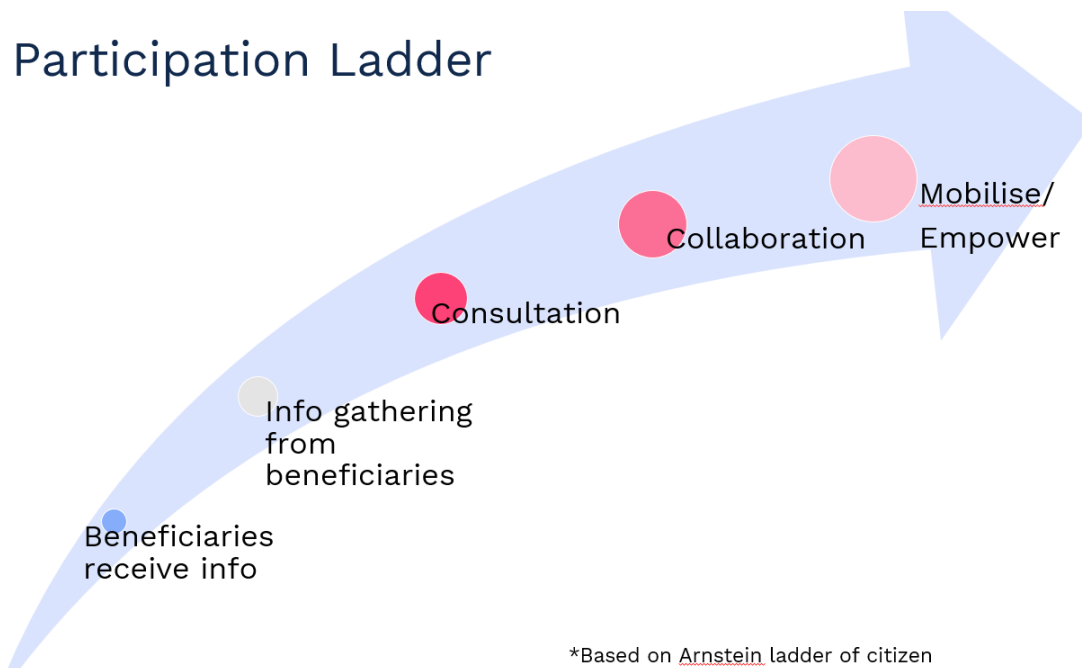
Post-intervention:

- RMU to ask and listen to the grantee's experiences of the effectiveness of the adopted sense-making and reporting methods, collecting feedback from grantees on their experiences and challenges. Based on the evaluation, RMU can refine and customize support mechanisms to address specific needs and enhance the sustainability of the chosen approaches, or encourage sharing between grantees.
- Learning partners should continue to offer support and resources to grantees, facilitating peer learning and knowledge exchange on best practices for utilizing diverse reporting methods.
- Grantees to reflect on their reporting practices and identify opportunities for improvement, sharing insights and success stories with the RMU and other stakeholders to inform future capacity-building initiatives.

6 Suggestions of approaches/methodologies for learning, capacity building, and advocacy

The descriptions provide some insight into various approaches that may be used by the GMU, RMU, learning partners, or grantees in improving learning, capacity building, and advocacy.

6.1 Participation Ladder

Participation Ladder

Mobilise/
Empower

Collaboration

Consultation

Info gathering
from
beneficiaries

Beneficiaries
receive info

*Based on Arnstein ladder of citizen

The adapted 'participation ladder' model, based on Arnstein's framework, offers a structured approach to empowering members and allies within grantee organizations. Starting from the basic provision of information to members, the model progresses through stages of gathering feedback, consulting members' opinions, collaborating on decision-making, and ultimately empowering members to mobilize themselves and demand the support they need. This approach to empowerment and capacity building focuses on strengthening the capabilities of local organizations and networks, providing platforms for member engagement, and fostering alliances and coalitions. By increasing the power and influence of stakeholders, such as members and allies, on the issue at hand, this approach contributes to the overall organizational development and effectiveness of grantee organizations.

The participation ladder approach could be applied by the GMU, RMU, or learning partners on the grantee organisations. Or, it may be used by leaders, agitators, or change-maker members within the grantee organisations.

6.2 Integrated Organisation Model

The Integrated Organizational Model (IOM) is used extensively by MDF to analyse organisations in light of internal organizational analysis and the position of the organization in the institutional setting. The IOM is a simplification of the complex reality of intersecting influences. The model emphasizes the interrelationships of the different elements of an organization: although the elements can to a certain extent be reviewed separately, they are all interrelated and - ideally - in balance. When there is no clear synergy between the different elements within an organization, the organisation will not function optimally, and the need for organizational change becomes

apparent. Besides, the organization has to 'position' itself to align with the changing context including the new trends.

Five external components (mission, outputs, inputs, actors, factors) give a broad overview of the general and specific environmental context. These are analysed with 6 internal components (strategy, structure, systems and processes, staff/internal partners, management style, culture), which represent choices and behaviours enacted by the organization and its members.
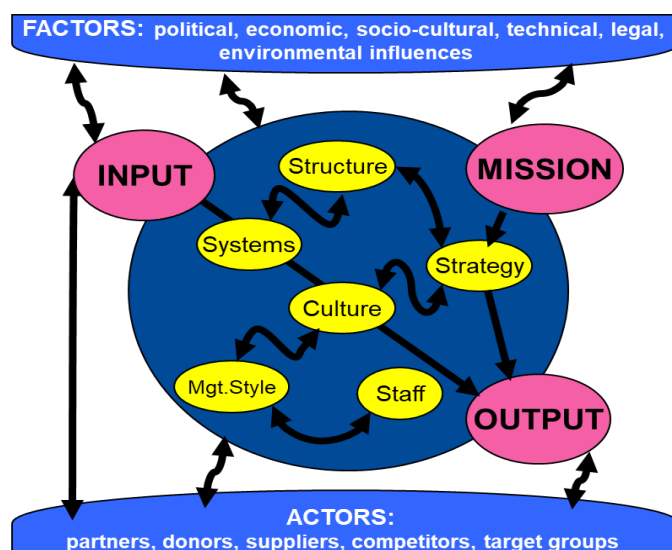
The "first-level analysis" of the IOM for an organisation can show:
- Opportunities and threats that could lead to possible strategic directions
- An impression of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation
- A comprehensive overview on the balance and match between the elements
- A list of issues for further investigation

The aim of the findings is to assist in analysing an organisation from different points of view; it broadens and deepens one's understanding of the situation. It triggers new questions. Working together with members of the organisation to analyse the findings in a participatory process is therefore referred to as 'Second level of analysis', further fosters acceptance and discussion of the results, awareness of a need for change, common desire for positive changes, and the beginning of consensus for the direction of change. While we may not conduct a full assessment using the IOM model, it will serve as a model to analyse the gaps in skills and organisational needs for resourcing and capacity building, in order to achieve the capacity building training objectives.

The IOM model could be used by grantee organisations themselves to conduct a self-assessment. It may be used by the RMU or learning partners on the grantee organisations, but it would be more effective and legitimate using a highly participatory approach.

6.3   MDF's Approach to Influencing

While considering any management skills, approaches, project templates and reporting criteria, it will be important to map out the needs and interests of the various stakeholders, in order to make change possible. Even though MI and ACMECS do not play a role in policy influencing, they will be part of internal advocacy to build buy-in, cohesion, and coordination in any sub-regional initiatives. In particular, we note the political nature of many of the stakeholders in the GMS, and as partners of ACMECS and MI, and their duty to serve their respective constituencies.

Below is the description of MDF's outline to develop an advocacy and/or policy influencing strategy. While we will not revise any advocacy and campaign strategy during the capacity building trainings, the project plans will need to be aligned with the strategic plan already developed. Therefore, it may be useful to have some of the advocacy and policy influencing tools and strategic planning exercises and discussions as a backdrop to inform some sessions, or as a refresher to ensure alignment with the strategic plan, and in guiding policy development.
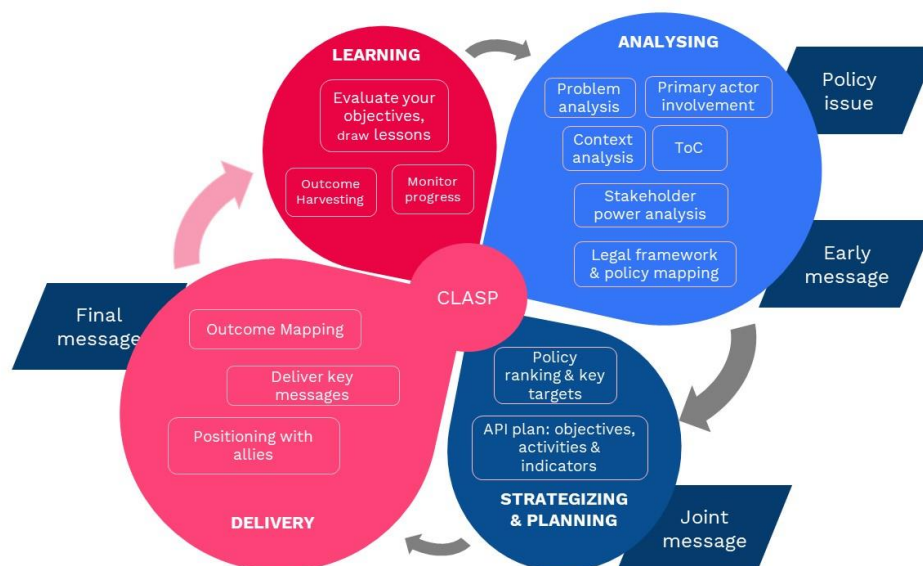
Context analysis of primary stakeholders (beneficiaries) problems

1. **Problem analysis**: which problems do primary stakeholders (beneficiaries) encounter? Can they be resolved by direct interventions and/or by changing policies?

2. **Primary stakeholder involvement:** do your benficiaries agree with your analysis, and have you involved them in your problem analysis, since they are the primary stakeholders?

3. **Context analysis:** can you outline the main trends that are affecting the problems and solutions for your problem and for your primary stakeholders? [political – economic – social – technical – legal – environmental trends]

Design political solutions to beneficiaries problems

4. **Theory of Change:** what is your ultimate dream, and which POLICY pathways can you imagine to make your dream come true? Which are the most important policy change buttons?

5. **Stakeholder mapping:** which powerful stakeholders have influence on the main legal frameworks that you want to address? [governement – local to global; private sector; civil society; science; media]

6. **Legal framework, Policy mapping:** have you discovered the concrete *existing policies, laws, strategies, regulations* and in which institutions these are handled? [parliament/councils; ministries and implementing governments; judicial institutions; private sector companies; other CSOs]

Strategizing: Rank & Choose Key Policies, Policy targets and Tactics

7. Which **policies** rank highest and are realistic to change … in the next year?

8. Who are your **key political targets**, your **allies, competitors** and other key **opponents.**

9. With which **activities** can you **tactically** address these targets – will you do research, lobby, advocate, demonstrate? And in what **sequence**?

Choose and Make your Strategic API plan

10. Formulate objectives and **indicators or progress markers**: When are you satisfied with your achievements

11. **Manage joint message delivery with allies** with like-minded organisations

12. **Monitor** your progress and **Evaluate** every year if you have achieved your goals

6.4   Power Analysis and Stakeholder Analysis

The stakeholder analysis is inspired by Oxfam's power analysis framework. Utilizing a power analysis, also known as a stakeholder analysis, involves identifying key stakeholders relevant to an issue and assessing their levels of power or influence and their degree of interest in the matter. This analysis typically employs a matrix format where stakeholders are plotted based on these two dimensions. Stakeholders with high power and high interest are considered key players whose engagement is crucial for achieving objectives, while those with low power and low interest may require minimal attention. Understanding the dynamics of power and interest among stakeholders enables organizations to tailor their strategies and communication efforts effectively, ensuring meaningful engagement and alignment with stakeholder priorities. This analytical approach provides valuable insights for decision-making and resource allocation, ultimately enhancing the organization's ability to navigate complex stakeholder landscapes and drive positive outcomes.

Allies & Opponents Matrix
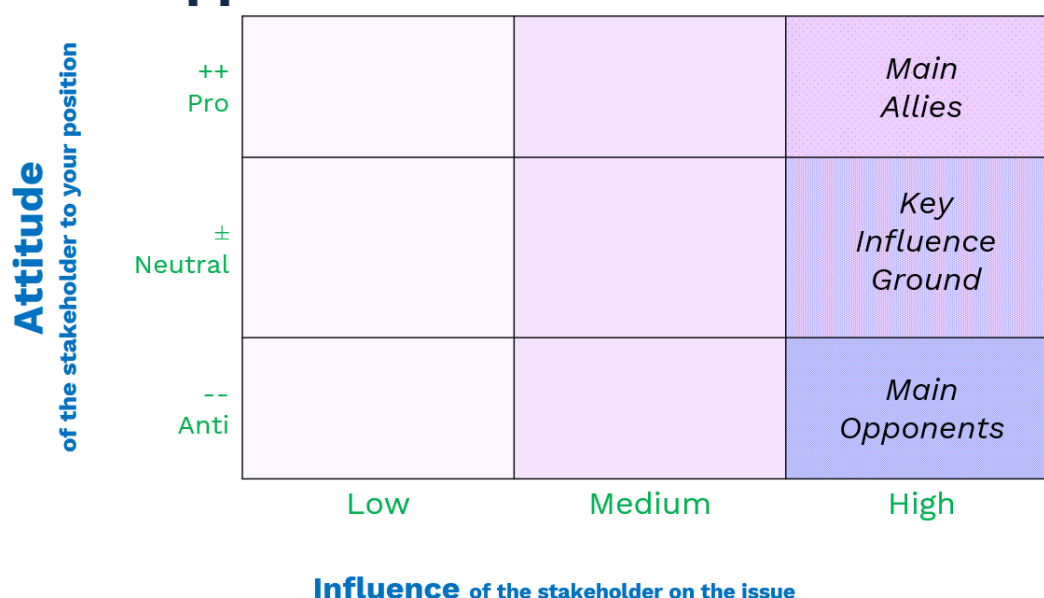
The power analysis could be used *in a sensitive way* by the RMU, or by or learning partners to understand and analyse more about the grantee organisations. Or, it may be used by leaders, agitators, or change-maker members within the grantee organisations. To do so we suggest identifying specific different profiles, e.g. leaders of the grantees, governing persons, influential learning partners, general members, marginalised members. This analysis is often used within movements, unions, and organisations where power dynamics are at play.

The next step would involve an in-depth stakeholder analysis on each type of internal stakeholder.

Key stakeholder analysis

	Knowledge	Attitudes / Beliefs	Interests	Contribution/ influence	Possible strategy
Key Stake-holders	What do they know about the issue?	What do they believe about the issue?	What do they care most about (even unrelated to issue)	How can they potentially contribute to/ harm process?	Which strategy can we use to engage them?
Leader of the grantee					
Members of the grantee					
Influential learning partners					

It is important to have a strong empathy for each stakeholder, and try to understand from their perspective. What is really important to them, and what do they care most about, even unrelated to learning/capacity building? Therefore, how can we engage them in an effective way? How do we want them to 'move' relative to other stakeholders (e.g. to build their power/influence, or to get them to care more about the same issue we do)? The main objective is to create a change or a movement in some way, in relative influence and interest, among the internal/external stakeholders.

6.5 Human-centered design thinking for learning interventions

In the development sector, there's a growing recognition that traditional project-based thinking often overlooks the agency and complexity of stakeholders involved. To address this limitation, there's a shift towards embracing human-centered design (HCD) thinking methodologies. HCD places emphasis on understanding the needs, desires, and challenges of stakeholders through methods like creating personas and empathy mapping. By delving deep into stakeholders' perspectives, HCD enables a more nuanced understanding of their capabilities, motivations, and opportunities. This approach allows for the identification of key pain points and gains experienced by stakeholders (assumptions), which forms the foundation for crafting tailored solutions and interventions. By centering on the stakeholders' experiences and aspirations, organizations can design more effective learning interventions and experiential learning journeys that resonate with their needs and drive meaningful impact. Ultimately, HCD thinking fosters a more empathetic and inclusive approach to development work, ensuring that interventions are truly responsive to the diverse needs and contexts of the communities they aim to serve. It also repositions 'beneficiaries' into 'users', and encourages us to think in a service-oriented way.

Personas
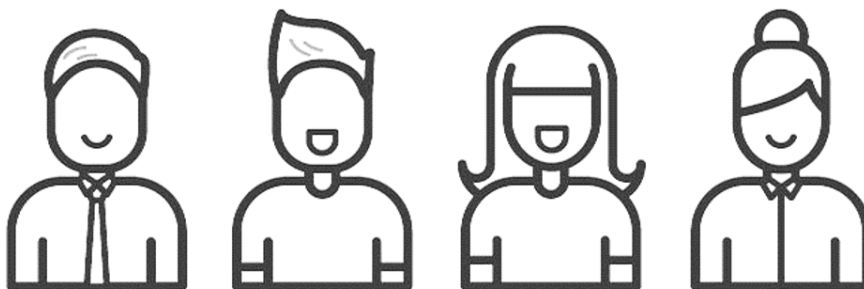
Semi-fictional representations of your ideal customers based on market research and real data about existing customers.
Personas should consider including customer demographics, <u>behavior</u> patterns, motivations, and goals. The more detailed you are, the better.

Developing a persona involves creating a fictional but representative character that embodies the key traits, characteristics, and needs of a specific stakeholder group. This process typically begins with gathering insights and data through interviews, surveys, and observations to understand the demographics, behaviors, motivations, and goals of the target audience. Once the information is collected, it is synthesized and distilled into a detailed profile that includes aspects such as age, gender, occupation, aspirations, challenges, and preferences. The persona is often accompanied by a name, photo, and personal narrative to humanize the representation and make it relatable to stakeholders and decision-makers.

The Value Proposition Canvas
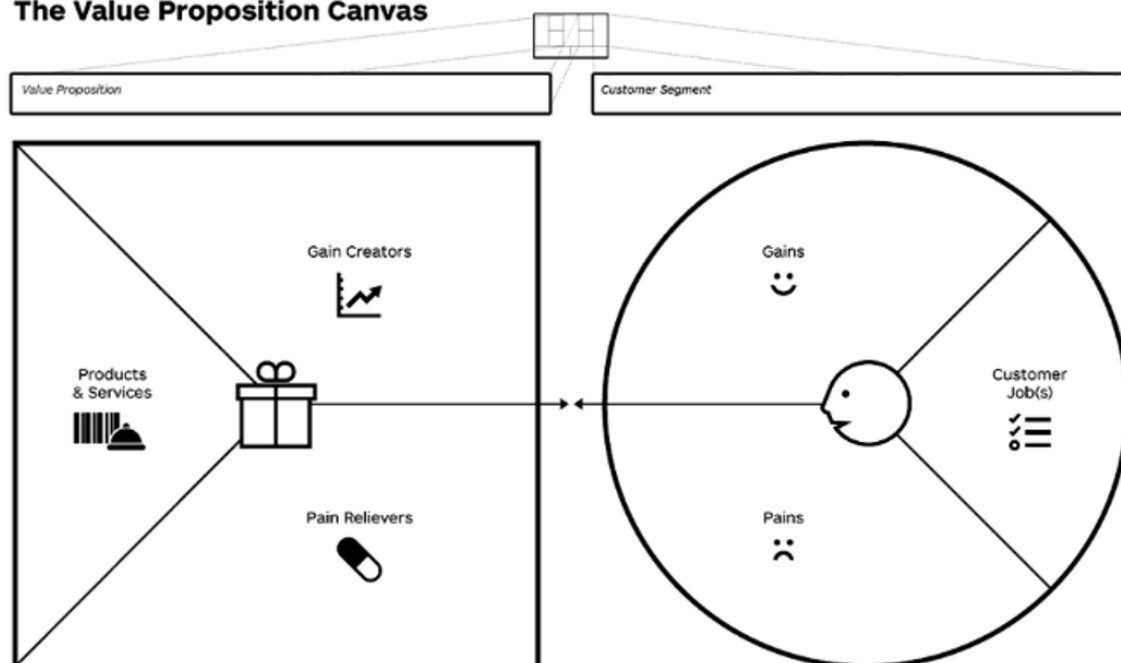
Empathy mapping is a visual tool used to deepen understanding of stakeholders' perspectives, emotions, and experiences. It involves creating a structured framework that captures stakeholders' thoughts, feelings, actions, and pain points related to a particular issue or challenge. Through empathy mapping, teams can gain insights into stakeholders' needs,

motivations, and aspirations, enabling them to design interventions that resonate with their target audience on a deeper level.
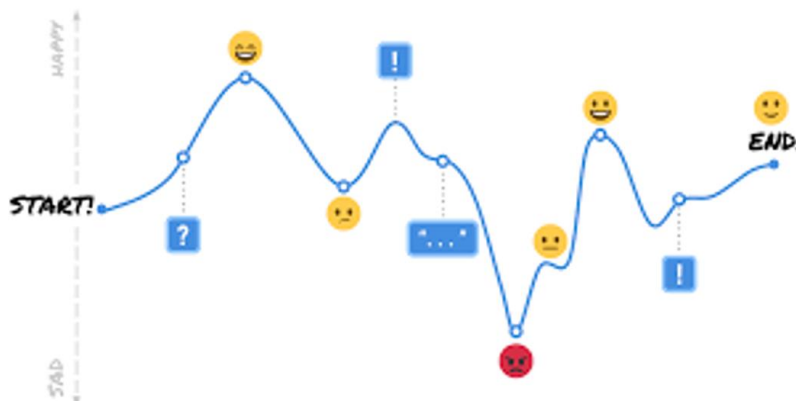
Based on this understanding, we can develop a learning experience journey. This is basically a plan for learning intervention (training, workshop, etc) but from the perspective of the 'user'. A learner-centric experience journey is a visual representation that maps out every interaction and touchpoint a learner has with an organization or brand. It illustrates the learner's trajectory from initial engagement to ongoing interaction, aiming to create a seamless and personalized experience at every stage. By mapping out this journey, organizations can identify opportunities to enhance engagement, address pain points, and nurture long-term relationships with their learners. This approach may be used by the RMU or by learning partners.

7 Annexes

- List of respondents to survey / info form
- List of respondents to focus group discussion calls
- Survey results
- Focus Group Discussion protocol/outline

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