

**INTEGRATING LIVED
EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE
INTO M&E PRACTICES**

THE GROUNDED
ACCOUNTABILITY
MODEL (GAM) - EVERYDAY
PEACE INDICATORS (EPI)




Context



Within international cooperation, traditional Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices often centre around showcasing a programme's success and results through knowledge production methods aiming to generate tangible, accurate, valid, and unbiased evidence. Programmes working around the issues of peace, justice and reconciliation are usually measured through top-down, expert-driven, and Western-led models imposed on the global south.

The Everyday Peace Indicators (EPI) project offers an innovative alternative based on community-driven indicators that reflect local experience and understanding. EPI acknowledges that while the current development cooperation system requires quantitative metrics to convey effectiveness to donors, it is possible to co-create the measurement tools needed for that purpose in collaboration with those being assessed.

The Grounded Accountability Model (GAM) emerges from EPI's efforts to tailor its methodology for CSOs and practitioners while showcasing its value and effectiveness to donors, multilateral and bilateral organisations, and governments.



**“The motivation behind
GAM was to try to pass
on the knowledge we
have gained through
EPI, through applying it
and developing it in the
academy to the
practitioner world.”**


Pamina Firchow,
EPI's Founding
Executive Director

“The idea or question was, does it look different if you adapt the EPI tool to a national NGO versus a community or a regional NGO, and how does that look different? How might they adapt it differently? How might they use it differently? What are the different challenges involved? And then, does it matter if they do different kinds of projects in different sectors (e.g. human rights, security, etc?)”

Pamina Firchow,
EPI's Founding
Executive Director



The BIG IDEA



GAM piloted the EPI Methodology in organisations operating at various levels, including an international NGO (Search for Common Ground), a national NGO (Asociación MINGA in Colombia), and a local organisation (COSURCA in the Cauca region of Colombia).



ACTIONS

The first step in implementing GAM involved training practitioners from each organisation to become “EPI experts.”

The EPI experts adjusted their learning to suit their organisations’ specific goals, aligning with their challenges and capacities. GAM adapts the EPI methodology differently for each organisation, resulting in diverse approaches.

This diversity fostered the establishment of a community of practice among the organisations, providing a platform for sharing insights and knowledge during the process.




MINGA's GAM


Asociación MINGA is a human rights-focused organisation working on social movements and environmental justice in Colombia.

MINGA's adaptation included engaging in focus groups to collaborate with the local community members to co-create indicators. Participants included leaders from a peasant organisation active in various municipalities of the Macizo Colombiano subregion in the region of Nariño.

Using cards on the wall, the group collectively reviewed, confirmed, or discarded proposed indicators, ensuring clarity in wording and allowing participants to vote for the best choices. There was a continuous verification process, and they employed the "World Café" method for cross-group feedback and categorisation of the indicators.



MINGA adapted the EPI methodology by simultaneously drafting and verifying the indicators, streamlining the process and engaging the community at all stages. The resulting indicators reflected community priorities and understanding of peace, including recognition of peasants' rights, well-maintained roads, access to land for young farmers, absence of exploitation, and university outreach to territories.



COSURCA's GAM

COSURCA is a cooperative of coffee bean producers in the Cauca region, located in the southwest of Colombia. The ASPROBALBOA association, comprised of 174 families from the municipality of Balboa that grow coffee, sugar cane, and cocoa, was selected to participate. Other rural organisations (Lirios del Campo and ASMUSAN) not associated with COSURCA also participated as control groups.

In this case, the objective was to develop indicators linked with cooperativism, solidarity economy, and agroecological production practices to measure the impact of COSURCA in the daily life of the associated families. Three mixed focus groups were conducted: two comprised participants aged over 35 (one with members of ASPROBALBOA and another with non-members), and one consisted of non-members of ASPROBALBOA aged between 14 and 35.

The COSURCA team adapted the EPI methodology by having participants write their answers to the moderator's guiding questions before discussing and constructing indicators based on those responses. The information gathered from focus groups was organised into Excel tables, and participants were given the opportunity to make adjustments or corrections. As part of the adaptation, a printed form of the indicators was provided to participants for anonymous voting. Due to logistical and security issues, this process was done in one day.

The process delivered valuable information about COSURCA's work, which proved useful in developing evaluations and strategies tailored to the association's needs and priorities. Likewise, as an unexpected result, the involvement of members from other associations helped establish channels for cooperation and communication.



Outcomes

The EPI methodology is not a rigid tool, but a flexible one that can be tailored to the specific needs of different organisations and adapted to its unique context.

All three organisations incorporated aspects of the adapted EPI methodology in their everyday work and evaluation strategies beyond GAM, meaning it is a helpful and valuable tool for organisations regarding donor accountability.

The GAM project nurtured a vibrant community of practice among these organisations, serving as the backbone of the project.



Learnings

The GAM's adaptation in Colombia underlines its significance in community engagement. It demonstrated that ICSSOs operating in intricate environments can tailor the EPI methodology to gather data in a participatory and culturally sensitive manner, all while upholding donor accountability standards.

- **It is important to spend time discussing and agreeing on key ways of working/operating and aligning to local challenges and capacities before collecting data.**
- **M&E practices can prioritise meaningful dialogue and engagement with everyday people from targeted communities.**
- **Community created indicators are susceptible to local co-option. For them to genuinely reflect the community's realities, a consensus-driven, inclusive and transparent process with the diverse groups needs to be carefully managed (not just the outcome).**

- **Diverse perspectives on peace and coexistence should be openly discussed, for they enrich the overall experience, even if it slows down the measurement process. Community members need to be clear on what they are monitoring through co-created definitions.**
- **ICSOs can advocate for bilateral and multilateral donors to actively support the integration of community-generated indicators into M&E frameworks.**
- **ICSO can invest in creating online platforms enables ICSOs to facilitate the ongoing sharing of insights when implementing innovative practices, including investing in regional communities of practices with similar cultural backgrounds.**



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