

## Tool 15: Timeline

### Aim of the tool

To promote participatory reflection on trends and developments and to link events with strategic planning.

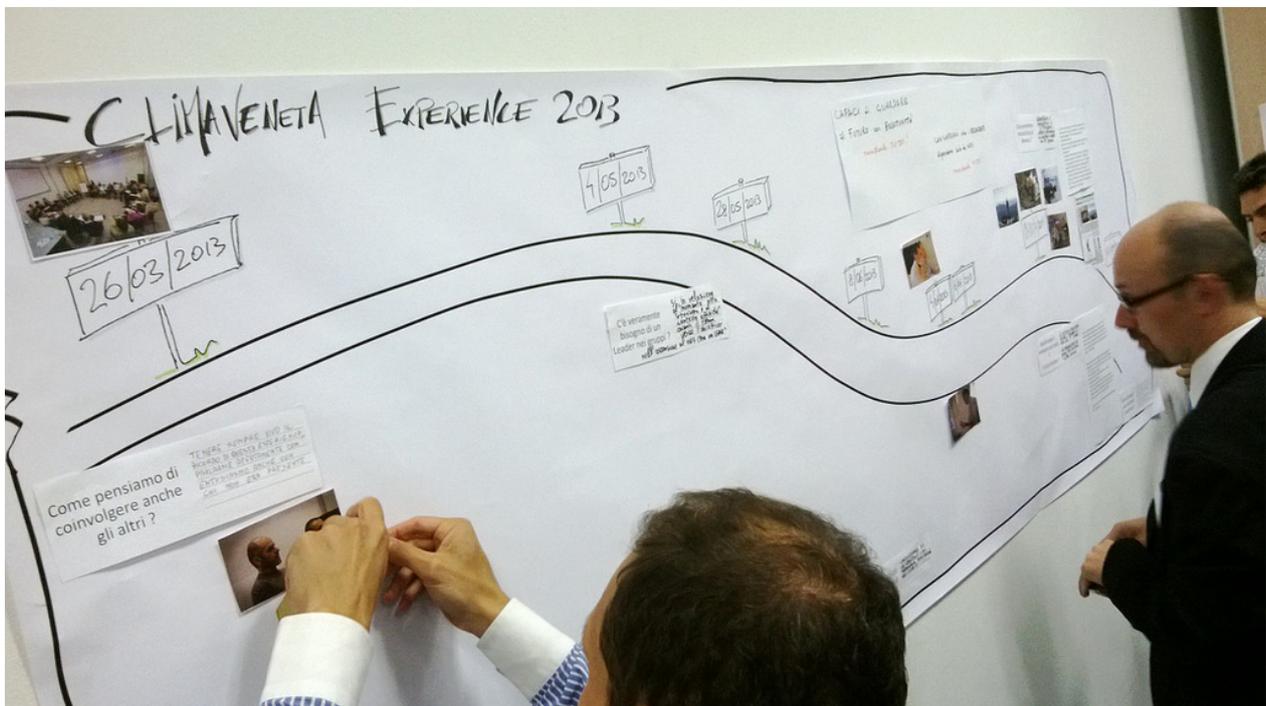
### When to use it?

Early phase of a MSP. Issue exploration and shared language.

### What is a Timeline?

Timelines are visualisation tools to map moments and metrics that shaped an issue, or the MSP. They highlight historical milestones and complex developments in a schematic manner. They can guide participatory reflections on broader trends and developments emerging from interconnected events. As a collective exercise, they can also unlock insight in the progress of programmes, institutions or ideas. Doing so, they can be built into the context of meetings and learning activities.

Timelines are made of a horizontal line, starting from a chosen historical point up to today with time intervals (e.g. 6 months). On this timeline, events, projects, successes, disappointments can be placed in line by using symbols.



Source: Luigi Mengato/FlickrCC

## Timelines - Step by step

If generating a timeline in the course of a meeting, first establish an appropriate space by hanging the necessary length of flipchart paper on a blank wall, or by placing multiple writing walls/whiteboards together to create a continuous canvas. Provide the participants with writing materials and sticky notes.

Create an environment that is conducive to participation, so that even the shyest participants will contribute.

### How to facilitate a Timeline:

- Identify the objective of the timeline
- Draw a horizontal line up to today with clear boundaries indicating where the timeline will start and where it will finish.
- Mark time intervals (eg 6 months) as references.
- Invite the participants to fill the timeline with relevant information. They can plot events, projects, successes, disappointments on the line using symbols.
- When the participants have exhausted their ideas, suggest additional points to ensure that all information is captured. Validate the entries with the group, if in doubt about facts
- Debriefing should be carried out using a participatory discussion format. If time is limited, the facilitator can summarize the ideas.
- Turn the timeline into a re-usable resource. This can be done by posting photos of the end products on the Intranet or using a free online tool such as Dipity (see link below) to organize milestones.



Source: ECDD Comoros, Everyday Democracy

### Learn more

UNHR Toolkit: Timelines: Visualizing the evolution of events and ideas. Access [here](#)

Dipity ([www.dipity.com](http://www.dipity.com)) and AllofMe ([www.allofme.com](http://www.allofme.com)) are free tools to create online timelines.