TIMELINES
Visualizing the evolution of events and ideas

What it is

Timelines are visualization tools for showing the progress of programmes, institutions or ideas. They highlight historical milestones and complex developments in a schematic manner. They can be adapted for use in participatory reflection on trends and developments, and to link events with strategic planning.

When to use it

- To identify interconnected milestones
- To visualize a sequence of events
- To understand complex scenarios
- To make history interesting
- To plot networks
- To activate past learning.

How it is applied

Timelines can be generated by individuals or as a collective exercise. They can be used in documents and presentations, or built into the context of meetings and learning activities. In all cases, the first step is to identify the objective of the timeline.

1. If generating a timeline in the course of a meeting, first establish an appropriate space by hanging the necessary length of brown paper on a blank wall, or by placing multiple writing walls/whiteboards together to create a continuous canvas.

2. Begin by inserting boundaries indicating where the timeline will start and where it will finish.

3. Draw appropriate indicators, such as a central line or reference years.

4. Create an environment that is conducive to participation, so that even the shyest participants will contribute. Do not position working spaces in the front and centre of the room and support all suggestions.

5. Provide participants with writing materials or sticky notes, and ask them to fill the timeline with relevant information.

6. When the participants have exhausted their ideas, suggest additional points to ensure that all information is captured.

7. Debriefing should be carried out using a participatory discussion format. If time is limited, the facilitator can summarize the ideas.

8. 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.
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How to adapt it

- If participants are not familiar with the topic’s history, prepare cue cards of milestones in advance and have the participants place them on the timeline.

- Interactive Timelines use the internet to introduce key occurrences, related projects or historical events, and set the stage for an exercise.

- Dipity (www.dipity.com) and AllofMe (www.allofme.com) are simple free tools with which to create online timelines. Content cannot be uploaded directly but is linked in from other web resources. Thumbnail images, videos and audio clips make online timelines engaging and interesting to explore.

- If there is no working space big enough for the entire group, separate the participants into small groups to work on several timelines simultaneously.

- Create multiple working groups to generate diverse timelines on the theme from complementary perspectives – social, economic and political events, followed by a comprehensive and comparative debriefing. These timeline results may also be combined in various ways to demonstrate common features, differences and relationships between events.

What to consider

- Events of particular importance can be plotted using different colours or larger sticky notes for emphasis.

- Participants with very little historical knowledge of the given subject will find it difficult to populate a timeline. This situation needs to be anticipated so that you can prepare for it properly. A comprehensive timeline or knowledgeable resource person can provide hints, or direct participants to identify additional milestones if major elements are missing.

Where to learn more

- Dipity is one of many free online tools for creating basic timelines. These can be presented in other forms such as flipbooks, lists and maps: http://www.dipity.com/timeline/Iran-UN-Sanctions


- Create custom and personal web-based timelines with: http://www.allofme.com/

Examples of timelines

Milestones of human rights mainstreaming in the United Nations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UN reform</th>
<th>Millennium Declaration</th>
<th>Action 2, UN reform</th>
<th>World Summit Outcome</th>
<th>Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Review Summit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
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1920s: First attempts of indigenous peoples to gain visibility at the international level

1936: ILO adopts "The Recruitment of Indigenous Workers Convention", C50

1939: ILO adopts "The Contracts of Employment Convention, C64"

1947: ILO adopts "The Convention concerning the maximum length of contracts of employment of indigenous workers", C86

1957: Adoption of the ILO’s Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, C107

1971: The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) authorizes a complete and comprehensive "Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous People"

1972: Special Rapporteur José Martínez Cobo begins the Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous People

1982: The Economic and Social Council establishes the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) with the mandate to develop a set of minimum standards that would protect indigenous peoples


1985: WGIP begins the drafting of a declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples

1987: The WGIP proposes the celebration of an International Year of the World’s Indigenous People

1989: The ILO adopts the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (C169)

1991: The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, C169, enters into force

1992: The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to Rigoberta Menchú Tum

1993: UN General Assembly proclaims 1993 as the International Year of the World’s Indigenous Peoples

1994: The Commission on Human Rights establishes the open-ended inter-sessional working group to consider and elaborate on the 1994 draft declaration

1997: OHCHR Indigenous Fellowship Programme is launched


2001: The Commission on Human Rights appoints Dr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen (Mexico) as the first Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People

2002: UNESCO adopts the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity

2002: UNPFII holds its first session

2003: UNESCO adopts the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

2004: Proclamation of the Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples

2006: The Human Rights Council adopts the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

2007: Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is created through Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1


2007: The Human Rights Council once again renews the Special Rapporteur’s mandate

2008: Prof. James Anaya (United States) replaces Dr. Stavenhagen as Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People

2010: Indigenous peoples participate in the Conference of the Parties to the UN’s Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen, Denmark.