KoGe Learning Brief No.1: Leave No One Behind – LNOB
April 2023

1. LNOB Concept in general - what is "Leave No One Behind" or LNOB?

According to the Learning Paper on LNOB by Smruti Patel (Patel 2023:1) "Leave no one behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole. LNOB not only entails reaching the poorest of the poor but requires combating the root causes of discrimination and rising inequalities within and amongst countries. A major cause of people being left behind remains the persistent forms of discrimination, including gender discrimination, which leaves individuals, families and whole communities marginalized, and excluded." As such, the concept of LNOB is not new, but it puts renewed emphasis on the interconnectedness of the causes of poverty and links a number of concepts including gender, exclusion, power dynamics and multi-dimensional poverty in a way to motivate the development sector to make pro-active efforts to ensure the participation of those at risk of being left behind, the most difficult to reach and for whom the impact of development action would be the most transformational.

KoGe's understanding of LNOB

KoGe's nine very different organizations (in size, nature of activities, regions of intervention, target groups etc.) have started to develop the elements of a shared understanding of LNOB during the learning journey in 2022. Much of this understanding has been summarized in the paper of Smruti Patel cited above. It is, however, a more inductive approach, compared to a policy approach such as used by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) or the GiZ. In a nutshell, it can be stated that the KoGe understanding of LNOB is overlapping by and large with the SDC guidance on LNOB and the GiZ, with three main differences that make the emerging KoGe LNOB concept unique and distinct from others:

- **Intersectional approach to discrimination:** Applying an intersectional lens helps to gain a better understanding on the multiple forms of discrimination that people experience and the reasons for their exclusion. It may contribute to 1) achieving substantive equality that leaves no one behind by recognising that rights, entitlements, opportunities and access are not equally distributed throughout society and a one size fits all approach will not achieve equality and 2) developing more inclusive and responsive policy making and service delivery. It likely promotes stakeholder collaboration and builds a better understanding of the context and solutions, and it results in more tailored services. KoGe lists eight enablers developed by UN Women (2021)[1] to adopt a more intersectional lens. It should be mentioned that many member organizations (MO) and local partner organizations (LPO) have "good practice" examples of implementing these enablers. In this sense, there seems to be some sort of an emerging shared understanding of intersectionality.

> **Intersectionality** describes the fact of multiple interlinked sources of discrimination (race, class, gender etc.) often affecting a same individual or group simultaneously thereby leading to a complex phenomenon of exclusion and multidimensional poverty.

- **Inward-looking reflection on power at the heart of LNOB considerations**: The KoGe conceptualization of LNOB has a strong focus on power dynamics and how they characterize situations of discrimination. In particular, it asks the question of the power dynamics inherent to an organization and a person that seek to change the lives of people at risk of being left behind in a given context. It therefore asks us to be self-critical in the first place and to improve our institutional coherence (internal) before intervening in the context (external). There are examples of MO and LPO practice of this self-critical thinking, but it is too early to speak (as in the case of intersectionality) of an emerging shared understanding of self-conscious reflection on power.

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[1] UN Women, 2021, Intersectionality-resource-guide-and-toolkit, an Intersectional approach to LNOB. The eight enablers are reflexivity, dignity, universality, diversity of knowledges, intersecting identities, power, time and space, and transformation.

- **The KoGe LNOB Wheel**: In order to operationalize LNOB in KoGe programming, the KoGe LNOB wheel was developed, which refers to the main stages of project cycle management (planning, implementation, evaluation and adaption), while adding the dimension of institutional coherence as discussed above.

4 clusters of the LNOB Wheel:

1. Planning
Analyze - the gaps (WHAT)
Identify - WHO is left behind
Examine - WHY people are left behind

2. Implementing
Enact - policies, laws, reforms, interventions to confront the drivers that leave people behind
Empower - those who are left behind

3. Evaluate
Assess - understand what changes have happened and what still needs to be done
Adapt - the design and implementation of the intervention that follow the determined pathway for change specific to the context

4. Institutional coherence
Be conscious- the alignment of internal composition and power dynamics with the project activities

2. Current KoGe LNOB Practice

LNOB integration at institutional level: KoGe MOs and LPOs are mostly aware of LNOB, but not all have integrated the concept systematically in their constitutional, strategic and operational documents that are the basis for operational policies and documents that frame the interventions. As a result, LNOB is not present in a systematic way in project cycle management manuals, project approval documents and related documents, thereby leading to a partial application based on personal understandings of the concept in the work of the MOs and LPOs.

LNOB integration at project level: In general, there is a visible tendency over the last few years for LPOs and MOs to increasingly consider LNOB and integrate aspects of it in their programming. While we are on the right path, all aspects of LNOB are not considered the same way and in many instances application of LNOB is not systematic. In summary:

- LNOB is primarily used for the identification of marginalized and vulnerable people but often unsystematically, e.g. power dynamics are not taken into account, or poverty, exclusion and gender are not understood multi-dimensionally and interactively;
- The theories of change / results chains are often not LNOB sensitive enough (mainstreaming vs targeting);
- KoGe programming aims at empowering its constituencies, but too often does not aim at transformative change (linking the micro- and meso-level to the macro-level);
- LNOB monitoring could be improved to make M&E systems more LNOB-sensitive. LNOB monitoring is further incomplete in terms of implementation and steering, e.g. continuous gathering and reflection of data should be used more for the adaptation of the project as well as for the theory of change.

3. Recommendations to become more LNOB sensitive

Based on the findings above, several recommendations have been developed, including minimum criteria for organizations who strive to become more thoroughly LNOB-oriented. The full list of recommendations is in the Mid-Term-Review report. The following is a summary for the purpose of this brief.

Integrate LNOB at institutional level				
Approval procedure (MO)		**Recommendations**	**Thorough anchoring**	**Links to tools and references**
Assessing the quality of new project proposals before / for approval		- Integrate LNOB guiding questions in PCM documents (prodocs, reports, evaluations, …)	X	- LNOB Learning Paper - SDC LNOB brief - GiZ checklists (fig.5/6)
		- Use LNOB checklist during approval processes	X	
Integrate LNOB at operational/project level				
Planning	Context analysis	Combine who-why-from what-by whom, and accordingly inform theories of change	X	- SDC LNOB brief - GiZ checklist (fig. 5/6)
		Assess interlinked LNOB-poverty-inequality-gender	X	
		Use power sensitive tools for stakeholder analysis	X	Tools I (ch. 4.1)
	Project design	- Differentiate LNOB mainstreaming and targeting - Design evidence-informed results chains	X X	- SDC LNOB brief - Evidence gap maps
	Monitoring design	- Use LNOB indicators - Conduct complexity-aware LNOB monitoring	X X	- Indicator toolkit (table 5) - Monitoring tools
Implementation		Aim for transformational change by interconnecting socio-political levels	X	SDC LNOB brief
		Differentiate 'integrated' and 'systemic' approach	-	
		Specify measures to include MaVu, but 'do-no-harm'	-	Do-no-harm tip sheet
Evaluate		Adapt theories of change based on monitoring data	X	Adaptive Management
		Conduct evaluations, and capitalize on their insights (e.g. use Management Response)	-	Management Response template
		Use standard LNOB questions in evaluations (e.g. according to KoGe evaluation guidelines)	X	- Standard questions - SDC LNOB brief (p.18)
Institutional coherence		Work with partners who know about LNOB and the context, and work with staff from left behind groups	X	
		Work with partners who are learning-oriented	X	Learning organization (p.31f. and p. 37f.)
		Use LNOB learning / training opportunities	-	Training
		Capture participants' complaints/feedback, and use mechanisms for MaVu to participate in LPO's governance	X	Accountability
		Focus on self-consciousness of power.	X	LNOB Learning Paper