# 3 Knowing your partners: Mapping the inter-organizational space

"Mapping the inter-organizational space" constitutes a very useful first step in building a joint action space. Mapping means analyzing and comparing the various partner organizations according to a number of key dimensions. It not only helps partners get to know each other better, but also clarifies common ground as well as potential tensions. There is no single set of categories for mapping the partner CSOs, but it is useful to characterize the fields in which different organization act, their goals, values, players with whom they interact, networks they belong to, and action strategies, tools, and resources they use.
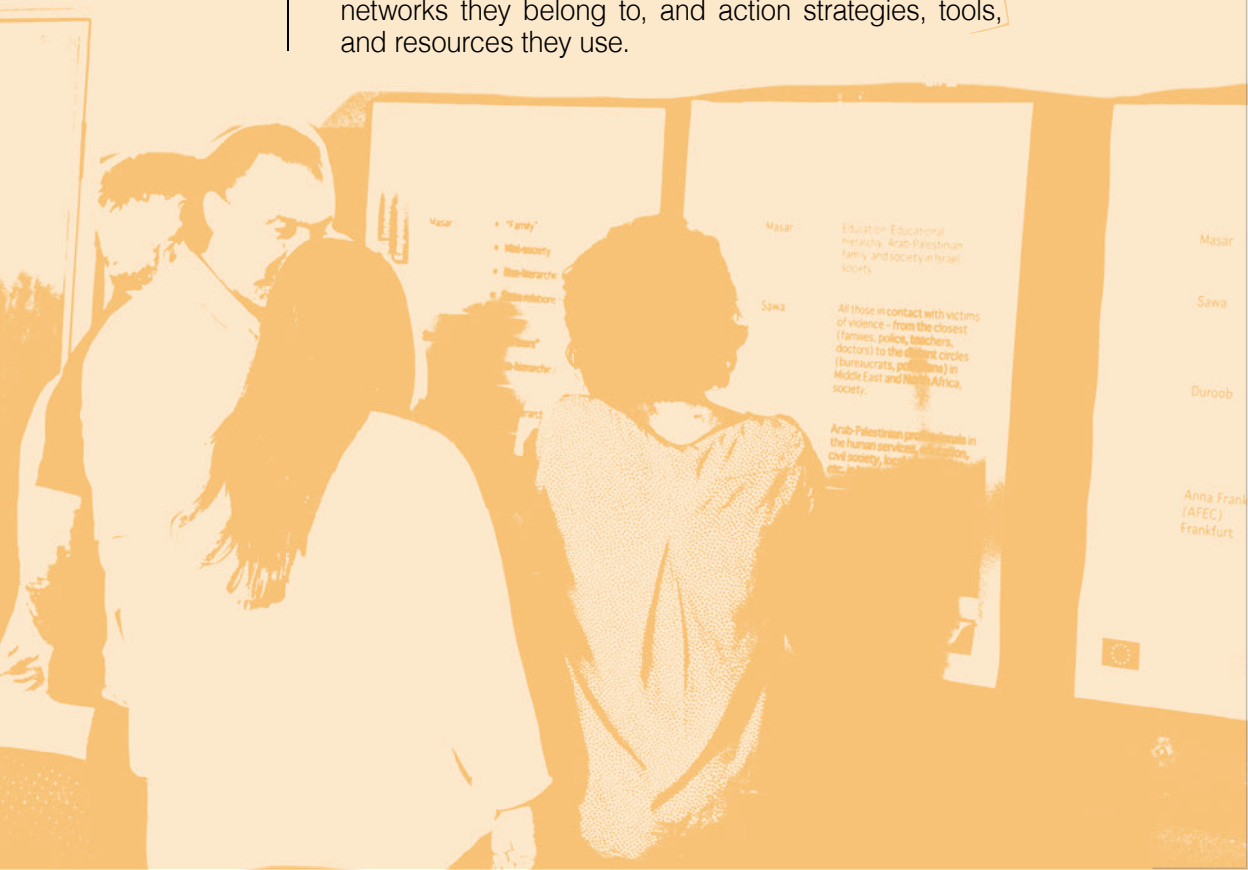
What happened in the Incubator project?

>> *During the set-up phase of the Incubator project, the project's research team interviewed founders and prominent members of the partner organizations. The interviews were open, narrative interviews, focusing first on the personal stories of the members and then on the partner organizations themselves. The findings of these interviews were analyzed and mapped by the research team (see Appendix 1 for the full map) and then presented to all of the partners in the first annual seminar of the CSO Learning Forum, prior to the beginning of project activities.*

The CSOLF participants examine the research team findings, Ramallah Seminar, 2013

*In mapping the goals and values of the four partner CSOs in the Incubator, it first appeared as if they were very different. Masar aimed at providing children with the freedom to be different. Sawa aimed at protecting victims, helping them overcome fear, and to see that they were not to blame. Duroob aimed at promoting leadership based on strength rather exploitation and a true sense of security and partnership in society. Anne Frank aimed at helping individuals and organizations promote inclusion and constructively mediate conflict arising from difference. However, the mapping uncovered a deeper, common shared value or vision of change that implicit in these espoused values but rarely expressed. **All four organizations were committed to freeing people from domination of a hierarchy (bureaucratic, traditional) so they could think for themselves, admit the existence of problems, act differently, and still feel secure.** >>*

How to map the CSO inter-organizational space?

Given the different mechanisms through which CSOs come together to form a partnership, as described in the previous chapter, the first step in building a partnership should be mapping the inter-organizational space. No matter what brought the organizations together, there is likely to be a great deal that they do not know about each other. The goal of this mapping process is to enable the partner organizations to become deeply acquainted with the other and to identify both common ground and key differences that could be potential. The assumption is that the common ground is the soil in which the partnership will take root and grow. Key differences may be the source of potential tension and conflict or resources that can be leveraged for the benefit of the project and each individual CSO. In any case, the sooner and more aware the CSO's become of the commonalities and differences, the more likely they will be able to build a healthy partnership.

Mapping involves analyzing and comparing the various partner organizations according to a number of key dimensions. There is no ultimate, single set of dimensions for mapping; they may vary according to the field of action, the nature of the project or the participant organizations. However, the following dimensions, which were used in the Educational Innovation Incubator, provide a useful starting point.

- **The target field.** The target field represents the specific area in which each CSO works to make a difference. Activities such educational inclusion, social welfare, family violence, sustainability, environment. Partnerships may be formed by organizations coming from the same field or from completely different fields. When organizations come from the same field, there is always the potential for a higher degree of open or hidden competition for resources, territory, and knowledge. Under these conditions there is often a fear that the one organization might "steal" something from the other. These issues should be put on the table at the very beginning of the process so as to create minimal conditions for building trust.

- **Goals/Values.** Each CSO in a partnership has explicit and/or implicit long and short-term goals that give expression to the kind of impact or change it wants make through its efforts. Furthermore, these goals are driven by values or commitments to particular kinds of change. The question here is not specific objectives but rather each CSO's reason for existing and deeper calling as reflected through personal stories and organizational histories. These are really the roots of a partnership. To the extent that the organizations find common ground at this deeper level, there is a stable foundation for the partnership.

- **Players/Network.** Each CSO works within a network of individual and institutional actors. These networks are largely a reflection of the fields in which the CSO functions. However, CSOs from different fields may find themselves working with the same actors. In mapping the field, it is important to identify these networks, where they intersect, where there may be conflicts, and where there are potential synergies.

- **Action Strategies.** Each CSO has a particular action strategy for achieving its goals. These strategies constitute ways of doing things and "rules of the game" as each organization perceives them. Organizational members are rarely fully aware of these differences and they tend to regard their own way of doing things as "normal." As a consequence, members of one organization often perceived members of other organizations as acting in inappropriate or simply incomprehensible ways. These differences can be a source of negative judgement, tension, and conflict – particularly when they are not openly discussed. Becoming aware of different strategies not only helps avoid unnecessary tension, but also offers opportunities for potential learning and cross-fertilization.

- **Tools.** As part of their action strategies, CSOs employ very different tools to achieve their goals. For example, Masar's main tool was an alternative school, Sawa's was a hotline for victims, Duroob's was innovative training programs, and Anna Frank's was a museum space based on the diary and the biography of Anne Frank. The variety of tools provides each CSO with opportunities for learning and supplementing its particular toolbox.

- **Resources.**   Financial and other resources are a source of constant concern for CSOs. CSOs are frequently in open or implicit competition over scarce resources, leading to underlying tension. The stability of a CSOs resource base constitutes a critical factor in its ability to be committed, reliable partners. Therefore, in mapping a CSO partnership, it is important to put the issue of resources on the table, to frankly discuss potential sources of conflict or instability, and to establish mechanisms for dealing with them openly and constructively so that they do not undermine trust and sustainability.

How did the mapping contribute to the partnership in the Incubator project?

Mapping revealed significant differences among the CSOs' action strategies. For example, Masar consciously challenged normative educational practices without having ready alternative methods because it believed that innovations had to emerge through experimentation rather than plan. This strategy naturally required a willingness to live with a high degree of uncertainty. Sawa, on the other hand, employed very well-known, structured methods – a hotline, training, and consciousness raising – for revealing information that was usually not seen, acknowledged, or discussed. As opposed to both Masar and Sawa, which explicitly defined themselves as challenging the mainstream, the strategy of Duroob and Anne Frank was to look mainstream while acting radically. These very different ways of working arose in designing and carrying out project activities. However, members were aware of them and appreciated the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy. Essentially the different strategies provided the members of partner organizations with a varied repertoire of ways of perceiving and acting that could be called on in different ways depending upon the situation.

Values/Meanings

Masar	• Freedom and equality as legitimacy to be different. • Selectivity: thinking about what you want and making choices for oneself. • Joy. • Trusting people in the field.
Sawa	• Victims of violence are not to blame. • Violence as stemming from the society – not the individual or the family. • We are not afraid (courage). • Believing in the field.
Duroob	• Security through liberal values (equality, rights) not group affiliation. • Strength/power without exploitation • Interaction between emotional, ethical, and behavioral parts of the person (holism). • Being real partners in society and not just a means to other's (Jewish) ends.
Anna Frank (AFEC) Frankfurt	• Political - not social - education (inclusion, conflict). • "Mediation". • Civil Courage. • Human rights as mediating factor between historical perspective and present.