Scenario Planning

As an Effective Adaptive Management Tool

USAID/Jordan 2022 MEL Conference

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Session Objectives

1. Understand the importance of scenario planning for effective program implementation and adaptation;
2. Learn how to facilitate a process with your team to develop a scenario plan, and alternative approaches for implementation; and
3. Look at scenario planning in a systematic, intentional, and resourced approach from a Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) lens.

Agenda

- Welcome and Overview;
- Introductions;
- Scenario Planning in the CLA Framework;
- Effective Scenario Planning;
- The Scenario Planning Process;
  - Step 1: Framing;
  - Step 2: Planning;
  - Step 3: Monitoring and Adapting
- Useful Scenario Planning Resources; and
- Individual Reflection: Scenario Planning in Practice.

What is Scenario Planning?

- A method to prepare for a range of plausible futures based on a set of different "uncertainties".
- Creates a way to analyze the organization in a variety of conditions.
- There are numerous scenario planning processes/approaches:
  - We will look at one utilized by the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance | USAID.
  - Examine existing scenario planning resources developed by USAID-funded activities.

Why Scenario Planning is Important?

- Prepare effectively when circumstances outside your control impact your ability to implement your activity as planned.
- The scenario planning process is a practical, adaptable, and action-oriented way for your team to:
  - Develop contingency plans for various anticipated scenarios;
  - Monitor changes and adaptations regularly to support planning;
  - Strengthen internal and external collaboration and evidence-based decision-making.

USAID's CLA Framework

CLA IN THE PROGRAM CYCLE

LEARNING
Scenario Planning

KEY CONCEPTS

1. Identify risks and opportunities through scenario planning.
2. Monitor trends related to scenarios.
3. Respond to and apply learning from monitoring.

Effective Scenario Planning

CLA IN THE PROGRAM CYCLE

LEARNING
Scenario Planning

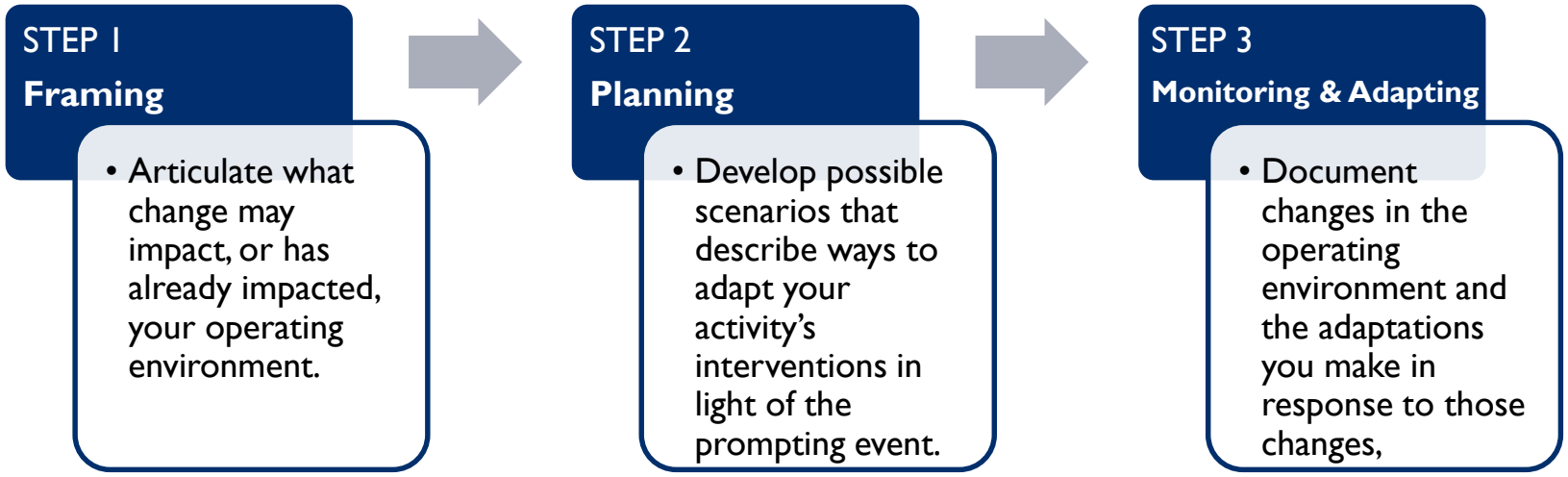
KEY CONCEPTS

1. Identify risks and opportunities through scenario planning.
2. Monitor trends related to scenarios.
3. Respond to and apply learning from monitoring.

MATURITY STAGES

NOT YET PRESENT	EMERGENT	EXPANDING	ADVANCED	INSTITUTIONALIZED
↗ We have not yet participated in scenario planning.	↗ We **informally ask big picture 'What if?' questions**.	↗ We **ask and document** big picture 'What if?' questions. ↗ We **informally monitor trends** related to those questions.	↗ We **usually develop scenario narratives** to reflect on potential risks and opportunities. ↗ We **regularly** monitor trends related to those scenarios. ↗ Monitoring of scenarios **often informs planning and implementation**.	↗ We consistently develop scenario narratives, **identifying early warning signals** for anticipated risks or opportunities. ↗ We **systematically** monitor trends related to scenarios. ↗ We use early warning signals to respond to context changes in **real-time**.

The Scenario Planning Process



Step 1: Framing

STEP 1: FRAMING		
Activity Name & Location	**Scenario Planning Timeframe**	**Current Situational Assessment**
		Reality as of [date]
Activity Goal	**Prompting Event**	**Name Current Situation**
State your Activity's overarching purpose/goal	*Describe the anticipated/actual change in your operating environment that prompted this exercise*	*Describe current operating context as it relates to your prompting event*
Planned Interventions	**Possible Impact on Interventions**	**Actual Implementation & Adaptation**
List your primary interventions as they were designed/planned to be implemented	*Describe how these interventions may be impacted by your prompting event*	*Describe how these interventions are being implemented currently*

Step 2: Planning

STEP 2: PLANNING		
Scenarios		
Scenario 1 ***Name Possible Scenario***	**Scenario 2** ***Name Possible Scenario***	**Scenario 3** ***Name Possible Scenario***
Describe possible scenario	*Describe possible scenario*	*Describe possible scenario*
Implications on interventions for this Scenario	**Implications on interventions for this Scenario**	**Implications on interventions for this Scenario**
Describe how each of the primary interventions listed in the Framing step (to the left) may be adapted if this scenario becomes reality	*Describe how each of the primary interventions listed in the Framing step (to the left) may be adapted if this scenario becomes reality*	*Describe how each of the primary interventions listed in the Framing step (to the left) may be adapted if this scenario becomes reality*

Step 3: Monitoring & Adapting

STEP 3: MONITORING & ADAPTING	
Ongoing Situational Assessments [Add more columns as needed.]	
Reality as of [date]	**Reality as of [date]**
Name Current Situation	***Name Current Situation***
Describe current situation	*Describe current situation*
Description of Current Implementation/Adaptation	**Description of Current Implementation/Adaptation**
Describe how each of the primary interventions listed in the Framing step (to the left) is being implemented at this time	*Describe how each of the primary interventions listed in the Framing step (to the left) is being implemented at this time*

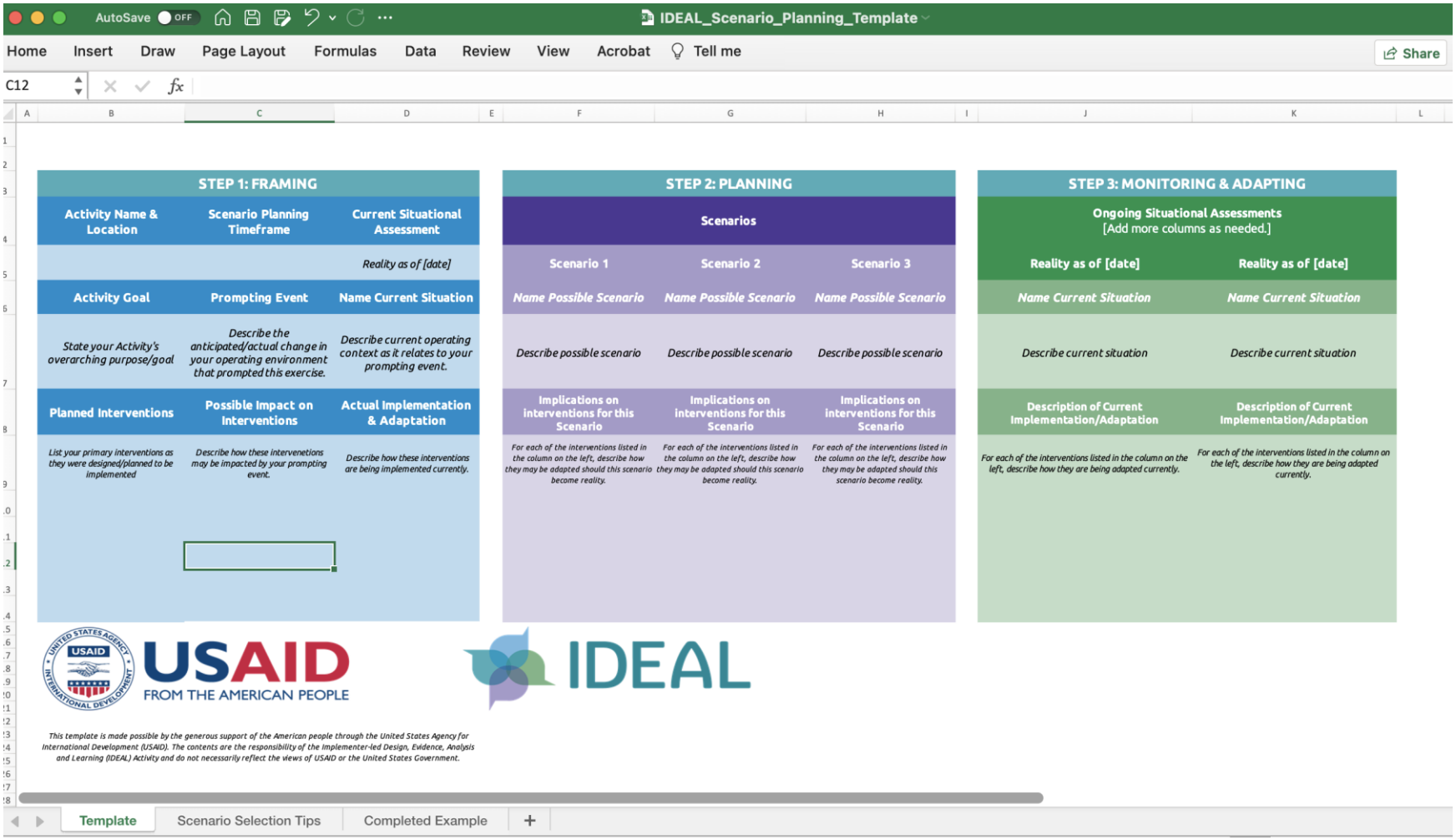
Other Considerations

Scenario planning can also help teams to:

- Become more aligned on activity priorities.
- Develop a shared vision.
- Promote a learning culture founded on openness, continuous learning, and improvement.
- Discover other opportunities for evidence-based decision-making and adaptation.
- Align with your funder and/or other key stakeholders.

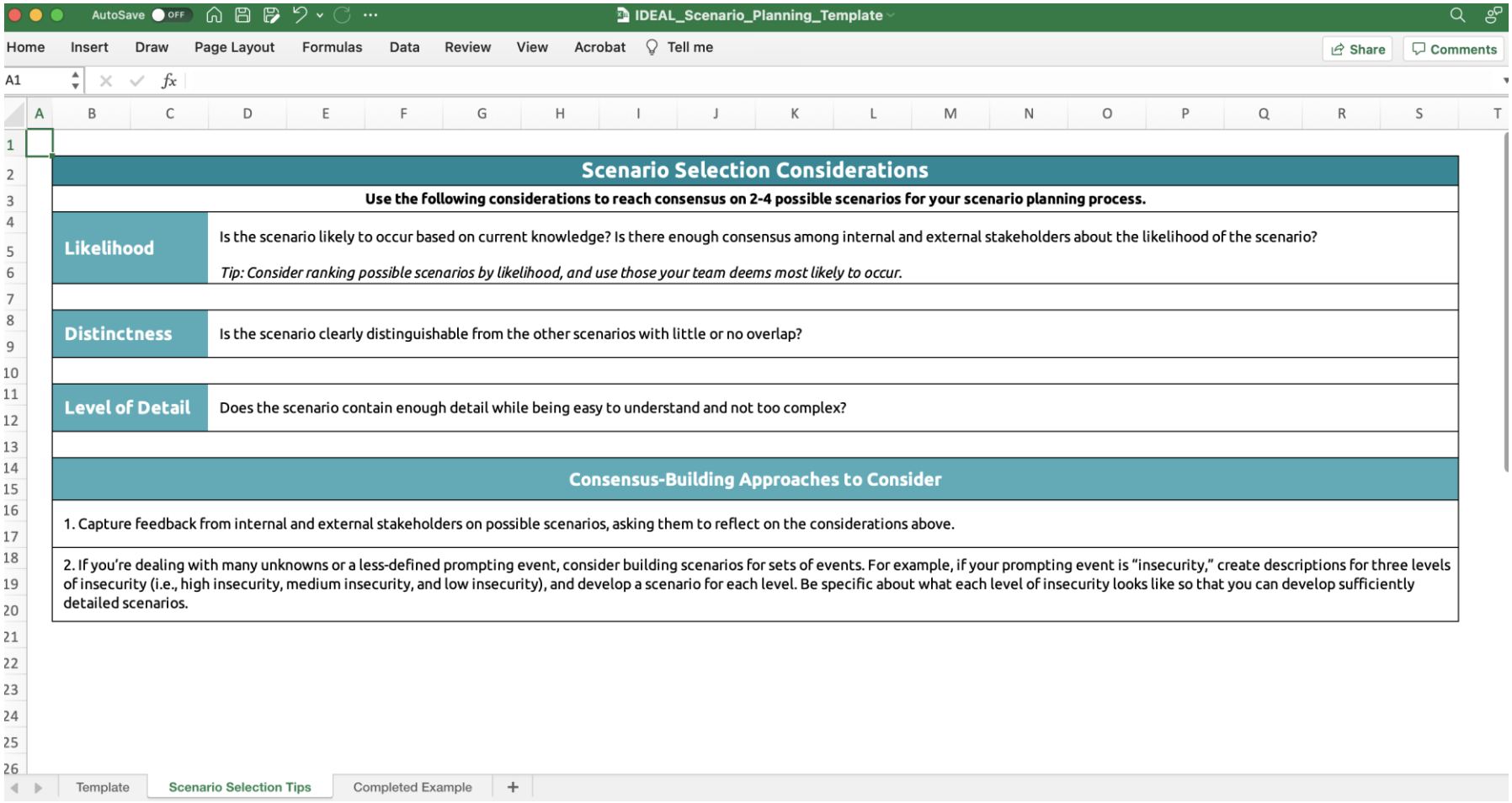
USEFUL SCENRARIO PLANNING RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

The Scenario Planning Template



Tab 1: SP Template

Scenario Selection Tips



Scenario Selection Considerations

Use the following considerations to reach consensus on 2-4 possible scenarios for your scenario planning process.

Likelihood	Is the scenario likely to occur based on current knowledge? Is there enough consensus among internal and external stakeholders about the likelihood of the scenario? *Tip: Consider ranking possible scenarios by likelihood, and use those your team deems most likely to occur.*
Distinctness	Is the scenario clearly distinguishable from the other scenarios with little or no overlap?
Level of Detail	Does the scenario contain enough detail while being easy to understand and not too complex?

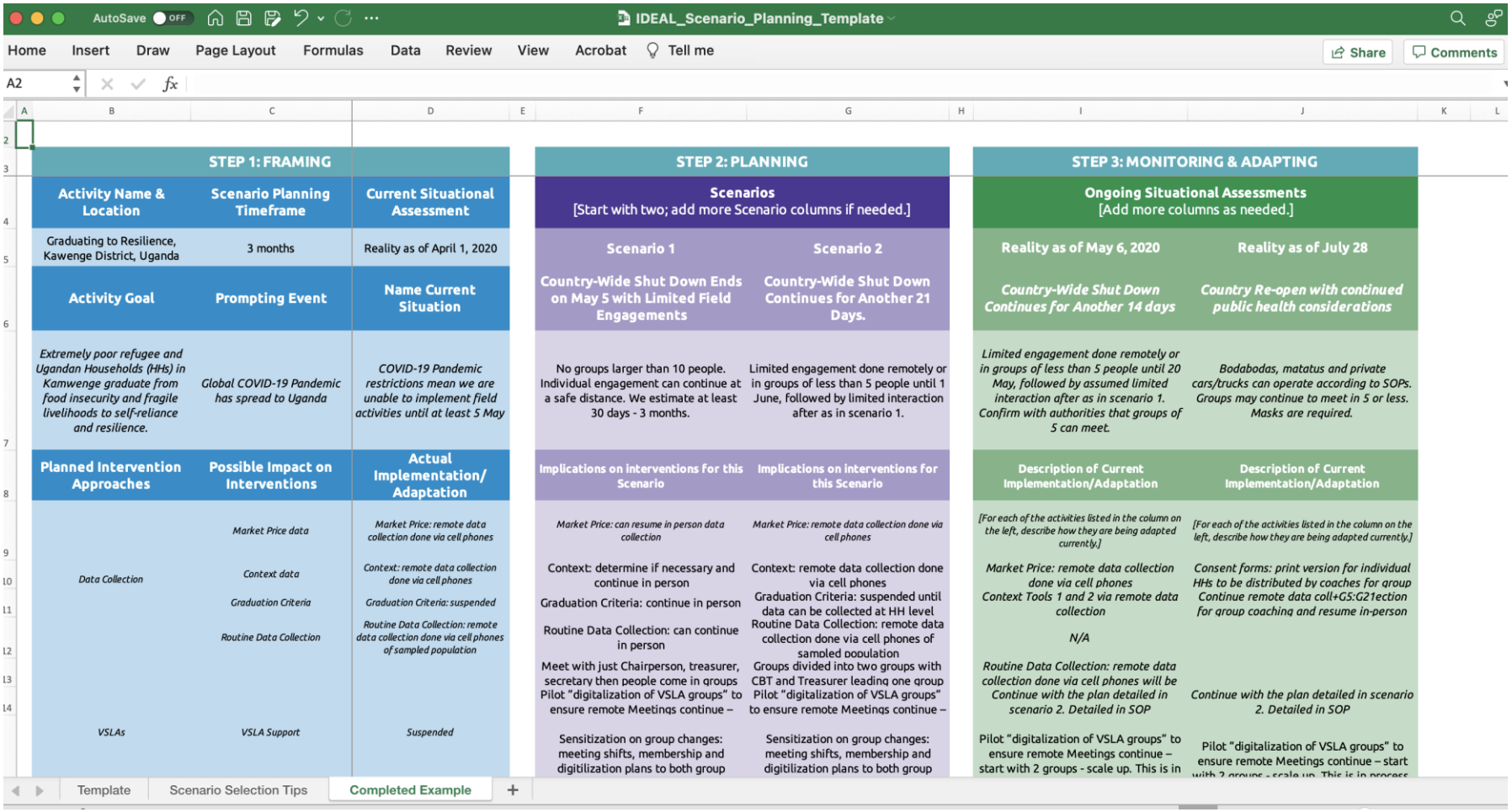
Consensus-Building Approaches to Consider

1. Capture feedback from internal and external stakeholders on possible scenarios, asking them to reflect on the considerations above.

2. If you're dealing with many unknowns or a less-defined prompting event, consider building scenarios for sets of events. For example, if your prompting event is "insecurity," create descriptions for three levels of insecurity (i.e., high insecurity, medium insecurity, and low insecurity), and develop a scenario for each level. Be specific about what each level of insecurity looks like so that you can develop sufficiently detailed scenarios.

Tab 2: Scenario Selection Tips

A Complete Real Example



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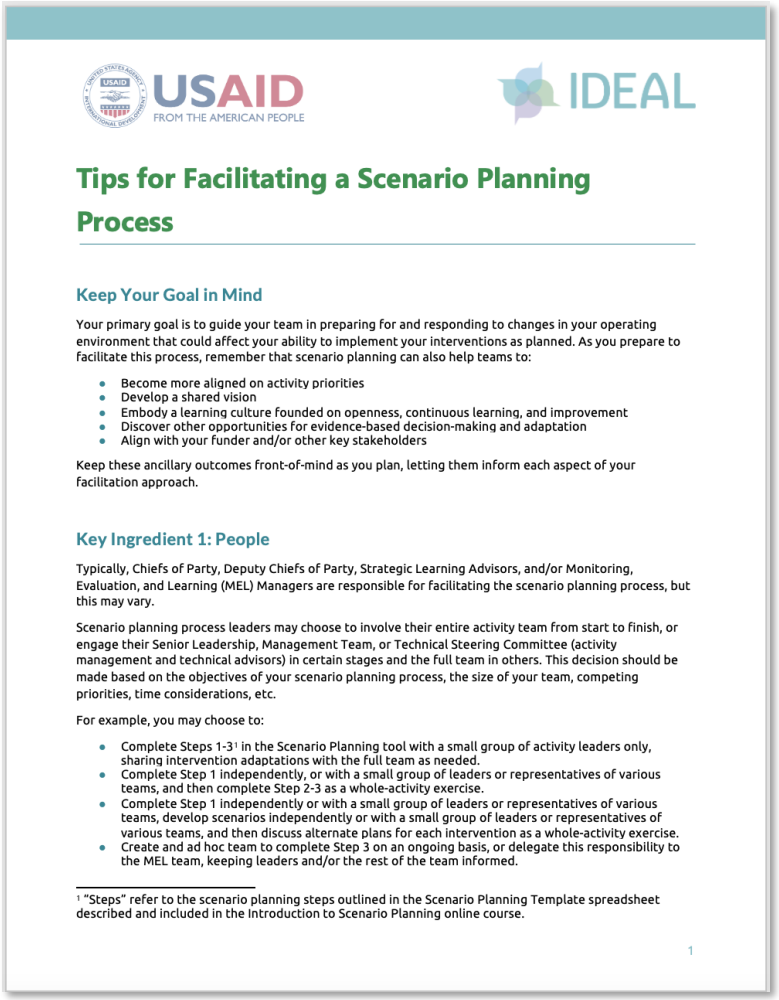
STEP 1: FRAMING			STEP 2: PLANNING		STEP 3: MONITORING & ADAPTING	
Activity Name & Location	**Scenario Planning Timeframe**	**Current Situational Assessment**	**Scenarios** [Start with two; add more Scenario columns if needed.]		**Ongoing Situational Assessments** [Add more columns as needed.]	
Graduating to Resilience, Kawenge District, Uganda	3 months	Reality as of April 1, 2020	**Scenario 1**	**Scenario 2**	**Reality as of May 6, 2020**	**Reality as of July 28**
Activity Goal	**Prompting Event**	**Name Current Situation**	**Country-Wide Shut Down Ends on May 5 with Limited Field Engagements**	**Country-Wide Shut Down Continues for Another 21 Days.**	***Country-Wide Shut Down Continues for Another 14 days***	***Country Re-open with continued public health considerations***
Extremely poor refugee and Ugandan Households (HHs) in Kamwenge graduate from food insecurity and fragile livelihoods to self-reliance and resilience.	*Global COVID-19 Pandemic has spread to Uganda*	*COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions mean we are unable to implement field activities until at least 5 May*	No groups larger than 10 people. Individual engagement can continue at a safe distance. We estimate at least 30 days - 3 months.	Limited engagement done remotely or in groups of less than 5 people until 1 June, followed by limited interaction after as in scenario 1.	*Limited engagement done remotely or in groups of less than 5 people until 20 May, followed by assumed limited interaction after as in scenario 1. Confirm with authorities that groups of 5 can meet.*	*Bodabodas, matatus and private cars/trucks can operate according to SOPs. Groups may continue to meet in 5 or less. Masks are required.*
Planned Intervention Approaches	**Possible Impact on Interventions**	**Actual Implementation/ Adaptation**	**Implications on interventions for this Scenario**	**Implications on interventions for this Scenario**	**Description of Current Implementation/Adaptation**	**Description of Current Implementation/Adaptation**
	Market Price data	*Market Price: remote data collection done via cell phones*	*Market Price: can resume in person data collection*	*Market Price: remote data collection done via cell phones*	*[For each of the activities listed in the column on the left, describe how they are being adapted currently.]*	*[For each of the activities listed in the column on the left, describe how they are being adapted currently.]*
Data Collection	*Context data*	*Context: remote data collection done via cell phones*	Context: determine if necessary and continue in person	Context: remote data collection done via cell phones	*Market Price: remote data collection done via cell phones*	*Consent forms: print version for individual HHs to be distributed by coaches for group*
	Graduation Criteria	*Graduation Criteria: suspended*	Graduation Criteria: continue in person	Graduation Criteria: suspended until data can be collected at HH level	*Context Tools 1 and 2 via remote data collection*	*Continue remote data coll+G5:G21ection for group coaching and resume in-person*
	Routine Data Collection	*Routine Data Collection: remote data collection done via cell phones of sampled population*	Routine Data Collection: can continue in person	Routine Data Collection: remote data collection done via cell phones of sampled population	*N/A*	
			Meet with just Chairperson, treasurer, secretary then people come in groups	Groups divided into two groups with CBT and Treasurer leading one group	*Routine Data Collection: remote data collection done via cell phones will be*	
			Pilot "digitalization of VSLA groups" to ensure remote Meetings continue –	Pilot "digitalization of VSLA groups" to ensure remote Meetings continue –	*Continue with the plan detailed in scenario 2. Detailed in SOP*	*Continue with the plan detailed in scenario 2. Detailed in SOP*
VSLAs	*VSLA Support*	*Suspended*	Sensitization on group changes: meeting shifts, membership and digitilization plans to both group	Sensitization on group changes: meeting shifts, membership and digitilization plans to both group	Pilot "digitalization of VSLA groups" to ensure remote Meetings continue – start with 2 groups - scale up. This is in	Pilot "digitalization of VSLA groups" to ensure remote Meetings continue – start with 2 groups - scale up. This is in process

Template | Scenario Selection Tips | Completed Example | +

Tab 3: A Complete Real Example

Facilitation Tips

- **Key Ingredient 1:** People
- **Key Ingredient 2**: Time
- **Key Ingredient 3**: Data



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Tips for Facilitating a Scenario Planning Process

Keep Your Goal in Mind

Your primary goal is to guide your team in preparing for and responding to changes in your operating environment that could affect your ability to implement your interventions as planned. As you prepare to facilitate this process, remember that scenario planning can also help teams to:

- Become more aligned on activity priorities
- Develop a shared vision
- Embody a learning culture founded on openness, continuous learning, and improvement
- Discover other opportunities for evidence-based decision-making and adaptation
- Align with your funder and/or other key stakeholders

Keep these ancillary outcomes front-of-mind as you plan, letting them inform each aspect of your facilitation approach.

Key Ingredient 1: People

Typically, Chiefs of Party, Deputy Chiefs of Party, Strategic Learning Advisors, and/or Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Managers are responsible for facilitating the scenario planning process, but this may vary.

Scenario planning process leaders may choose to involve their entire activity team from start to finish, or engage their Senior Leadership, Management Team, or Technical Steering Committee (activity management and technical advisors) in certain stages and the full team in others. This decision should be made based on the objectives of your scenario planning process, the size of your team, competing priorities, time considerations, etc.

For example, you may choose to:

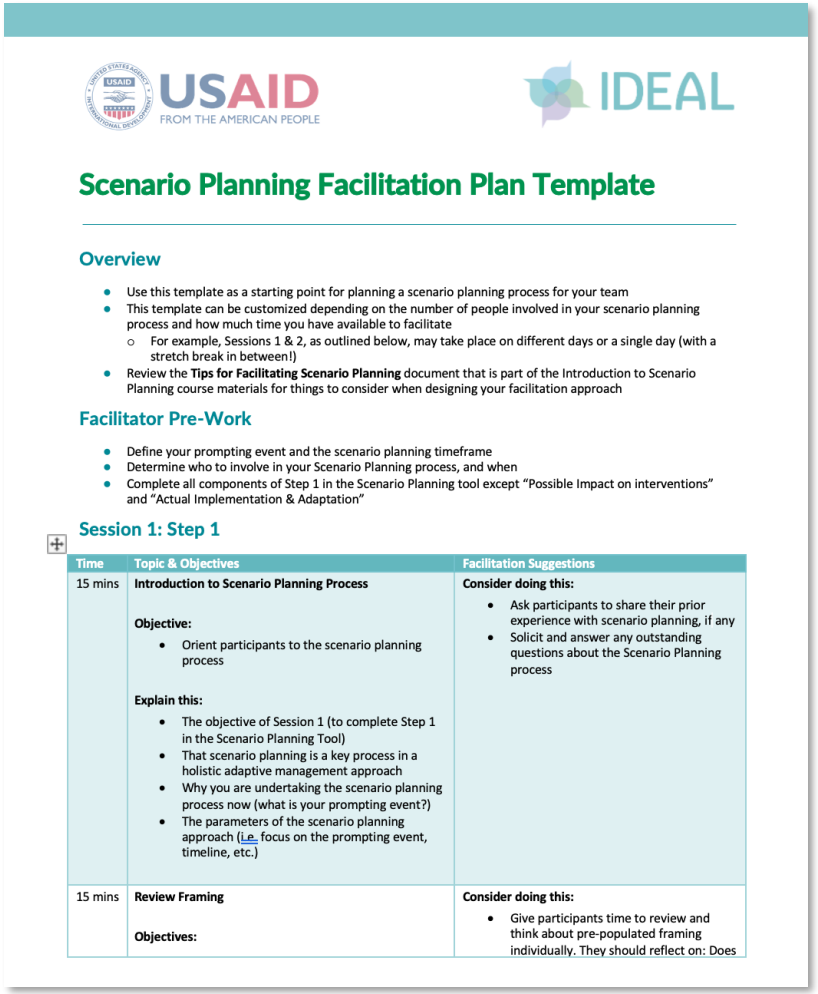
- Complete Steps 1-3[1] in the Scenario Planning tool with a small group of activity leaders only, sharing intervention adaptations with the full team as needed.
- Complete Step 1 independently, or with a small group of leaders or representatives of various teams, and then complete Step 2-3 as a whole-activity exercise.
- Complete Step 1 independently or with a small group of leaders or representatives of various teams, develop scenarios independently or with a small group of leaders or representatives of various teams, and then discuss alternate plans for each intervention as a whole-activity exercise.
- Create and ad hoc team to complete Step 3 on an ongoing basis, or delegate this responsibility to the MEL team, keeping leaders and/or the rest of the team informed.

[1] "Steps" refer to the scenario planning steps outlined in the Scenario Planning Template spreadsheet described and included in the Introduction to Scenario Planning online course.

1

Scenario Planning Facilitation Plan Template

- *Customizable* template for facilitating scenario planning with your team.
- Talking points to walk your team through each step.
- Options for group facilitation approaches.



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Scenario Planning Facilitation Plan Template

Overview

- Use this template as a starting point for planning a scenario planning process for your team
- This template can be customized depending on the number of people involved in your scenario planning process and how much time you have available to facilitate
  - For example, Sessions 1 & 2, as outlined below, may take place on different days or a single day (with a stretch break in between!)
- Review the **Tips for Facilitating Scenario Planning** document that is part of the Introduction to Scenario Planning course materials for things to consider when designing your facilitation approach

Facilitator Pre-Work

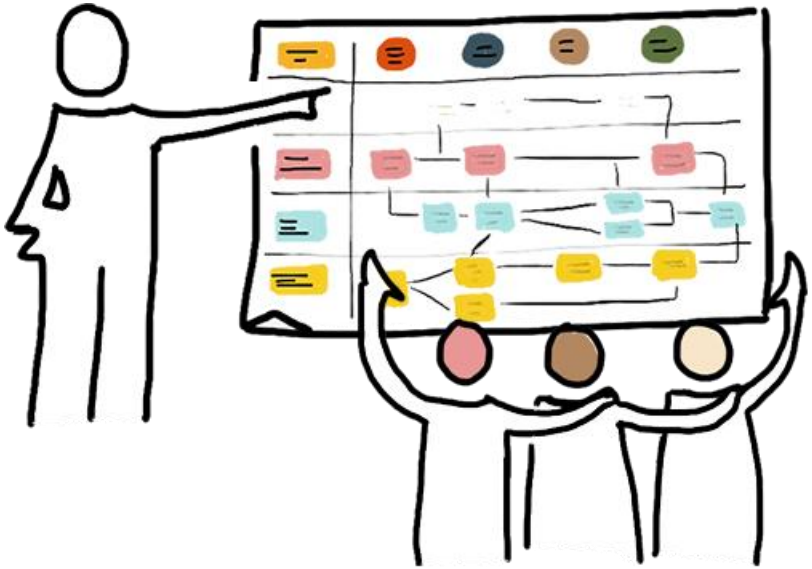
- Define your prompting event and the scenario planning timeframe
- Determine who to involve in your Scenario Planning process, and when
- Complete all components of Step 1 in the Scenario Planning tool except "Possible Impact on interventions" and "Actual Implementation & Adaptation"

Session 1: Step 1

Time	Topic & Objectives	Facilitation Suggestions
15 mins	**Introduction to Scenario Planning Process** **Objective:** • Orient participants to the scenario planning process **Explain this:** • The objective of Session 1 (to complete Step 1 in the Scenario Planning Tool) • That scenario planning is a key process in a holistic adaptive management approach • Why you are undertaking the scenario planning process now (what is your prompting event?) • The parameters of the scenario planning approach (i.e. focus on the prompting event, timeline, etc.)	**Consider doing this:** • Ask participants to share their prior experience with scenario planning, if any • Solicit and answer any outstanding questions about the Scenario Planning process
15 mins	**Review Framing** **Objectives:**	**Consider doing this:** • Give participants time to review and think about pre-populated framing individually. They should reflect on: Does

The Facilitator's Role

- A guide to help people move through a process together.
- Draws out opinions and ideas of group members.
- Focuses on how people participate in the process of learning or planning, not just on what gets achieved.
- Is neutral and never takes sides.
- Is NOT present to give their own opinions.



Individual Reflection

Questions:

- What single prompting event may you focus on in your scenario planning process?
- **People**: Who may you involve in each of the three steps of your scenario planning process?
- **Time**: How much time do you have for your scenario planning process (hours? days?)
- **Data**: What data might you consult to develop scenarios?
- What challenges do you anticipate as you facilitate the scenario planning process?

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Questions & Answers

References and Resources

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