Monitoring & Evaluating
Technologies in Social Change Projects

This guide helps you measure the impact of your work and how far technology has contributed to its outcome and impact. It was written particularly with international projects using 'inclusive' (accessible, low-cost) technologies in mind but could be useful anywhere, in any kind of project.

You could use it as a minimum M&E standard for an organization or a project to follow at each phase of the program lifecycle (planning, implementation and monitoring, evaluation, and dissemination of learning), or use elements of it as you need. And while this work is aimed at using M&E for technology projects, don't forget to use technology for your M&E and take advantage of the opportunities that technology and digital tools can provide to gain insight and near-time data on usage, uptake, satisfaction or other critical questions.

What is monitoring and evaluation?
A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process can help management to drive change; can hold projects to account; provide lessons learned; create evidence about what works; inform future funding and program design, and examine how, and how far, technology contributes to wider programmatic goals.

Monitoring means tracking implementation in an ongoing way, to informing day-to-day project management decisions and report on progress to donors and managers.

Evaluations are snapshots of the ongoing activity and the progress of a project overall at specific points in time. They use systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project or program to look at its design, implementation and results. Evaluations may also aim to determine the worth of an activity, intervention or program.

Learning is also a critical element, in which we ensure that the lessons learned from our M&E are used to improve our work, shared internally and wherever possible, shared externally as well, in easily-digestible formats.

Why create a framework for M&E of technologies in social change projects?
In technology for social change, we need more evidence of what works and what doesn't, so that we can improve our practice and hold ourselves to account. New best

Whether it's gathering information about the project context, building for sustainability based on the market or understanding the wider ecosystem, **evidence is important before and after your intervention.** The Framework for monitoring and evaluation helps you understand the contribution technology made to your project.

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For more resources and advice on how you can adopt the Principles for Digital Development into your own work, please visit digitalprinciples.org

practice standards such as the Principles for Digital Development give us potential benchmarks against which we can do this. We can look at how well a particular channel, tool, or platform works in a given scenario or domain; how it contributes to development goals in combination with other channels and tools; how the team selected and deployed it; whether it is a better choice than not using technology or using a different sort of technology; and whether or not it is sustainable.

This doesn't mean that M&E tools, guidelines, and systems that are used for other scenarios are not relevant to technologies. Rather, there are additional considerations, and particularly relevant approaches, that we propose might be helpful to consider in constructing an M&E plan, and additional criteria against which you can evaluate your project.

Evaluation criteria

The criteria against which a project should be evaluated provide a useful frame for an evaluation, bringing in an external logic that might go beyond the questions that implementers and their management have about the project (such as 'did our partnerships on the ground work effectively?' or 'how did this specific event in the host country affect operations?'). They can prompt us to routinely incorporate policy and best practice questions about, for example, protection of target populations, risk management, and sustainability. The criteria for an evaluation could be any set of questions that draw on an organization's mission, values, principles for action; professional standards or other best practice guidance; or other thoughtful models of what good looks like for that project or organization.

Given the particular demands of technology-enabled projects, we propose two potential sets of evaluation criteria: an adapted version of the OECD-DAC criteria (SIMLab's own evaluation criteria for tech in social change projects, published in 2015) and another derived from the Principles for Digital Development, or 'Digital Principles'.

SIMLab's evaluation criteria

Based on adapted OECD-DAC criteria, these six criteria look at projects in terms of their goals, outcomes, outputs and activities in critical ways to understand what happened and how well it went, or is going. They are: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact; sustainability; and coherence. See the larger framework for full descriptions of each criterion, and questions to consider under each.

The Digital Principles as evaluation criteria

The Digital Principles, which have now been widely adopted by organizations using technology for social change work internationally, can be a useful set of evaluation criteria. Evaluators can ask how far the project embodied some or all of the Principles.

Find more on data collection tools and sample templates at http://www.simlab.org/resources/mandeoftech

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