ISDM
INDIAN SCHOOL OF
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

AND EVALUATION GUIDE

MARCH 2025

Acknowledgments

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EXECUTIVE

Summary

The purpose of this guidebook is threefold:

1. To clarify the definitions and distinctions of Impact Assessment (IA), Monitoring, and Evaluation (M&E).
2. To highlight the unique challenges inherent in the sector, emphasising the significance of (ISDM) advisory services in providing a holistic view to undertaking evaluations and impact assessment
3. To outline ISDM's approach to impact assessment and evaluation, specifically tailored to its target audience.

The guidebook will serve as a valuable resource, equipping our target audience with a comprehensive understanding of key concepts, processes and knowledge. In the landscape of development initiatives, the terms Monitoring, and Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA) are often used interchangeably, leading to confusion and inefficiency. This guidebook seeks to provide clarity by defining each concept distinctly as recognising these nuances is essential for effective decision-making and resource allocation in the development sector.

Furthermore, the development sector faces a myriad of challenges w.r.t conducting impact assessments and evaluations, ranging from resource constraints, lack of availability of comprehensive standardised metrics, to complex socio-economic and cultural dynamics. ISDM's advisory services offer a unique perspective, grounded in a holistic understanding of the sector. By recognising the interconnectedness of various stakeholders and factors, ISDM provides tailored approaches and methodology to measure, assess and evaluate impact that address the root causes of challenges, rather than merely addressing symptoms; and those that align with international standards and best practices. Whether for evaluators or development practitioners seeking methodological guidance, funders or donors requiring evidence-based insights, policymakers in need of informed recommendations, or aspiring researchers and students seeking practical knowledge, ISDM's impact assessment and evaluation framework serves as a valuable resource. By engaging with diverse stakeholders and drawing on interdisciplinary expertise, the organisation ensures that assessments and evaluations are comprehensive, contextually relevant, and actionable.

Ultimately, the purpose of this guidebook is to empower our target audience with the

knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the complexities of the development sector. By fostering a deeper understanding of IA, M&E, and ISDM's holistic approach, this guidebook equips stakeholders with the insights needed to drive positive change and achieve sustainable development goals. Whether you are an evaluator, funder/donor, policymaker, researcher, or student, we invite you to leverage this guidebook as a roadmap for informed decision-making and impactful action. Together, we can build a more resilient and equitable future for all.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment are crucial for ensuring that development projects and social programs are effective and achieve their intended outcomes. They provide a foundation for accountability, innovation, and learning by systematically assessing whether resources are being used efficiently and the goals of an intervention are being met. MEIA is also essential for building knowledge about what works in reducing poverty and improving welfare, informing policy decisions, and addressing the needs of various stakeholders.

The report discusses various frameworks including Log Frame Analysis (LFA), Theory of Change (ToC), Results-Based Monitoring (RBM), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's and Development Assistance Committee (OECD – DAC) Criteria, Kirkpatrick's Model, Adaptive Evaluation, and the SDG Impact Assessment Framework. These approaches are tailored to specific contexts and objectives, offering distinct advantages in project planning, evaluation, and impact measurement.

The report throws light on several barriers to effective impact assessments and evaluations, including inadequate baseline data, scarcity of skilled personnel, misalignment of assessment timing with project lifecycles, and difficulties in quantifying social impact, particularly for programs with long-term goals.

Traditional approaches to impact assessment and evaluation often fall short in capturing the complex, multifaceted nature of social programs. A paradigm shift is needed to develop more robust, adaptive, and context-sensitive frameworks that can meet the evolving needs of various stakeholders. Funders, such as CSR initiatives and philanthropies, require real-time insights to enable course corrections during project implementation. NGOs and government agencies need approaches that are relevant and inclusive, addressing the diverse and rapidly changing socio-economic landscape. The growing emphasis on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further highlights the need for integrated, systems-based approaches that consider the broader social, economic, and environmental impact of interventions.

ISDM's approach and methodology assesses or evaluates impact across multiple levels, from individual participants to broader systemic and global changes. This multi-tiered evaluation/impact assessment framework is designed to capture the full spectrum of social, economic, and environmental impacts, thus providing a more nuanced understanding of development outcomes.

The report underscores the need for a more integrated and adaptive framework for impact assessments and evaluations, aligning with the complexities of contemporary development challenges. By adopting ISDM's holistic approach, stakeholders can better navigate the intricacies of impact assessment and evaluations, fostering innovation, cross-learning, and maximising impact.

INTRODUCTION TO

the Guide

India's Human Development Index (HDI) value, which experienced a decline in 2021, has risen to 0.644 in 2022, positioning the country at 134 out of 193 nations[1]. Despite th is encouraging advancement, persistently high levels of malnutrition, illiteracy, and poverty remain prevalent. These issues are exacerbated by income inequality and regional disparities (World Bank, 2023)[2]. Although there has been an expansion in social services such as health, nutrition, and education, the quality of these services remains inadequate, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, a substantial portion of the population still lacks basic social protection (OECD, 2022)[3].

The Indian government has been actively engaged in addressing these multifaceted issues through various policy interventions and programs aimed at improving human development outcomes. For instance, flagship schemes such as the National Health Mission, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana have made significant strides in expanding access to essential services (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2022). However, the scale and complexity of these challenges require a concerted effort beyond government initiatives alone. While the government's role is undeniably pivotal, the involvement of funders (CSRs, philanthropies, international aid, foundations, HNI, etc.), civil society organisations/Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and policymakers is equally crucial in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in India. These stakeholders or as we say, the 'state, market and society' play a complementary role by addressing gaps in developmental interventions, fostering innovation, and ensuring that development efforts are inclusive and sustainable.

Enhanced monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment practices are deemed necessary to assist all the stakeholders, encompassing government officials, development managers, civil society organisations, and funding entities, in better planning their projects, improving progress, and enhancing learning. Given the estimated global expenditure of over US$350 billion annually on development programs by bilateral, multilateral, and non-profit organisations, improvements in monitoring, evaluation and impact assessments hold the potential to deliver benefits worth many millions of dollars annually.[4]

Moreover, impact assessments, monitoring and evaluations are part of a broader agenda of evidence-based policy making. This growing global trend is marked by a shift in focus from inputs to outcomes and results. Not only is the focus on results being used to set and track national and international targets, they are increasingly being used by state, market and society to enhance accountability, determine budget allocations, and guide program design and policy decisions.

[1] Human Development Report 2023 - 24 Available at: https://www.undp.org/india/publications/human-development-report-2023-24-0
[2] World Bank. (2023). Poverty and Equity Brief: South Asia - India. The World Bank. Available at: https://databank.worldbank.org/source/poverty-and-equity.
[3] OECD. (2022). Social Protection System Review of India. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/social/soc/social-protection-system-review-india.htm.
[4] Monitoring and Evaluation in the Development Sector. Available at- https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2014/09/2014-survey-monitoring-evaluation-v4.pdf

UNDERSTANDING

Monitoring, Evaluation & Impact Assessment

FOUNDATION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY, INNOVATION, AND LEARNING:

It generates robust evidence that serves as a foundation for greater accountability, innovation, and learning. These processes provide a systematic way to assess whether resources are being used efficiently and whether intended outcomes are being achieved, thus demonstrating success (to donors, ourselves, the public; to be seen supporting progress in meeting SMDGs, etc.), both to justify funds received and to solicit further funding.

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL LEVEL:

It is central to building knowledge about the effectiveness of development programs, shedding light on what works to reduce poverty and improve welfare. Impact evaluations are being used increasingly to test innovations in program design or service delivery, contributing to the improvement of the programs.

INFORMING POLICY DECISIONS:

It provides convincing and comprehensive evidence that can be used to inform policy decisions, shape public opinion and improve program operations. Findings and recommendations from these studies can contribute to changes in behaviour, attitudes, policy and legislation at all levels.

ADDRESSING STAKEHOLDER NEEDS:

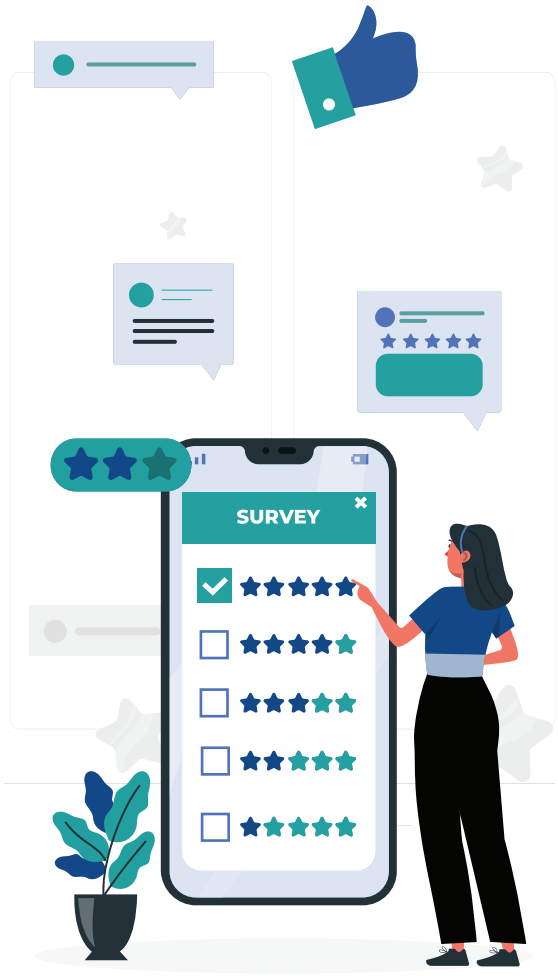
Stakeholders, including funders, government agencies, and beneficiaries, often require evidence of impact and progress. It provides the data and insights needed to meet expectations, ensuring that stakeholder needs are addressed and that their investments are justified.

DEFINING MONITORING, EVALUATION & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

In the development world, the growth of monitoring and evaluation and impact assessments, in particular, has been acknowledged to be crucial. The OECD (2002a)[5] defines Monitoring and Evaluations as:

1 Monitoring is a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators, to provide the organisation working on an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives, and progress in the use of allocated funds.

2 Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, or policy, including its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors.

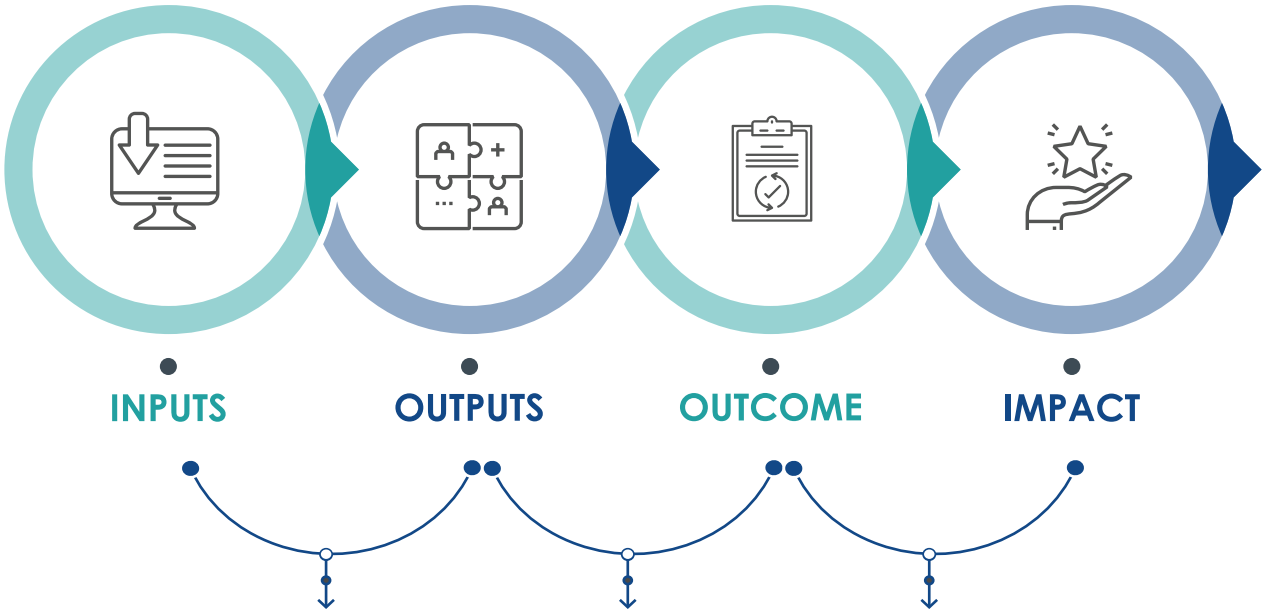


World Bank (2010) defines impact assessment as the process of identifying the long-term effects or changes due to a particular intervention, such as a project, program, or policy. It aims to assess the broader, direct and indirect, changes in the target population or environment that result from the intervention, including intended and unintended outcomes. Impact assessments typically seek to establish a causal link between the intervention and observed changes.[6]

In terms of distinguishing between monitoring and evaluating and impact assessment, monitoring (as mentioned in Figure 1)[7] relates to the effort or the work that goes into a project or program (the activities and outputs); evaluation refers to outcomes or the results of these efforts, and impact is linked to changes in peoples' lives associated with these results.

[5] 2002a. "Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management." Paris: OECD/ DAC.
[6] World Bank: 2010: World Bank Impact Evaluation in Practice
[7] Data in Social Impact: What are the Limitations?. Available at: https://aif.org/data-in-social-impact-what-are-the-limitations/

FIG 1: Stages of Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment



Monitoring: What has been invested, done and produced , and how are we supporting partners to achieve the objectives?

Evaluation and review: What progress has the project made towards achieving its objectives?

Impact assessment: What long-term, sustainable changes have occurred and how did our interventions contribute to these?

Monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment are all intimately connected and draw on each other. However, some distinctions exist which include[8]:

TIMING

Monitoring occurs frequently and evaluation periodically. Impact assessment, however, occurs infrequently, usually towards or after the end of an intervention.

ANALYTICAL LEVEL

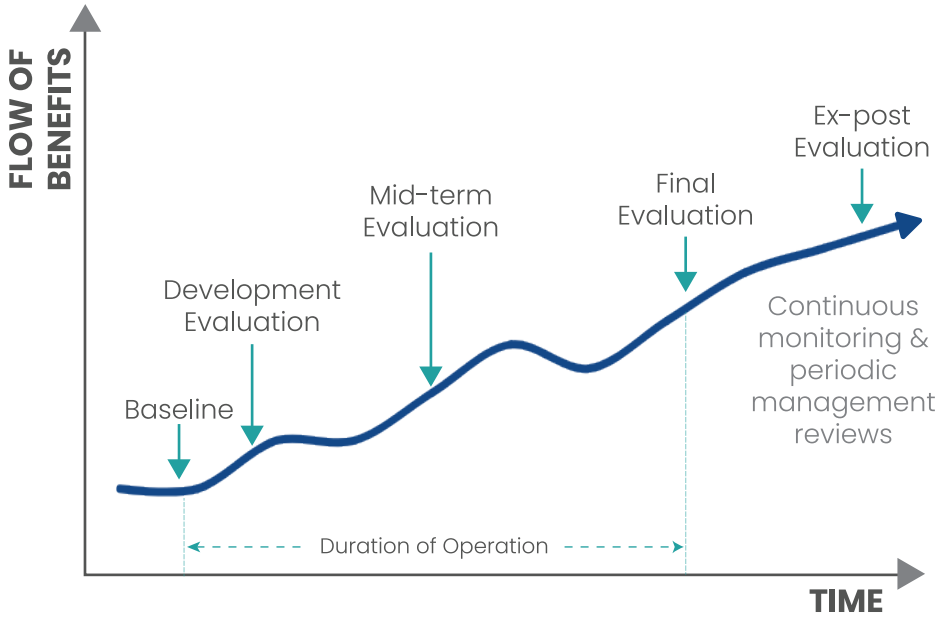
Monitoring is mainly descriptive, recording inputs, outputs, and activities. Evaluation is more analytical and examines processes, while impact assessment is, to a great degree, analytical and concerned with longer-term outcomes.

SPECIFICITY

Monitoring is very specific and compares a particular plan and its results. Evaluation does the same but also looks at processes, whereas impact assessment is less specific and in addition considers external influences and events.

[8] Impact Assessment for Development Agencies: Learning to Value Change

FIG 2: Monitoring And Evaluation Throughout Operations Cycle



Monitoring occurs throughout the operation. A baseline study is usually conducted before the operations begin. Evaluations can occur - for different purposes - at different points on an evaluation. [9]

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO MONITORING, EVALUATION & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Various approaches and frameworks guide the practice of Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment, each tailored to specific contexts, objectives, and stakeholder needs.

Log Frame Analysis (LFA) and Theory of Change (ToC) are fundamental tools in project planning and design that provide a structured approach to understanding and achieving project goals. Log Frame Analysis is a systematic method for planning and managing development projects. It outlines the logical sequence of activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts, along with corresponding indicators, assumptions, assumptions, and risks.[10] The Theory of Change, on the other hand, goes deeper by mapping out the complex causal pathways through which a project is expected to achieve its long-term goals, identifying the underlying assumptions and preconditions necessary for success.[11]

While the Log Frame Analysis and Theory of Change are often foundational approaches for achieving project and program goals, other approaches are also essential for effectively managing and improving projects, particularly in the social impact sector. The Results-Based Monitoring (RBM) framework focuses on

[9] International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies(2022). Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluation. Available at : https://www.measureevaluation.org/resources/training/capacity-building-resources/basic-me-concepts-portuguese/IFRC_Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation%20handbook.pdf
[10] World Bank. (2012). Designing and Managing Monitoring and Evaluation Systems. Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/
[11] Vogel, I. (2012). Review of the Use of 'Theory of Change' in International Development. UK Department for International Development (DFID). Available at: https://www.theoryofchange.org/

achieving specific, measurable outcomes, enhancing accountability and performance by integrating monitoring and evaluation throughout the project lifecycle (World Bank, 2017).

The OECD DAC Criteria framework, which emphasises relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, offers a comprehensive, globally recognised standard for evaluating development assistance, ensuring that interventions are systematically assessed against key performance criteria (OECD, 2019).

Kirkpatrick's Model evaluates training programs through four levels—reaction, learning, behaviour, and results—providing a structured approach to assess the effectiveness of educational and capacity-building interventions (Kirkpatrick, 1994). Adaptive Evaluation allows for flexibility and responsiveness to changing project contexts, making it particularly valuable in complex or uncertain environments, where continuous learning and adaptation are necessary (Patton, 2011). Finally, the SDG Impact Assessment framework aligns evaluations and impact assessments with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring that projects contribute meaningfully to global development targets by assessing their broader social, economic, and environmental impacts (UNDP, 2020).

Each of these frameworks plays a critical role in ensuring that projects are not only effective and efficient but also aligned with broader development goals, adaptable to changing circumstances, and capable of delivering long-term, sustainable impact. [12]

Here is a comparative analysis of these frameworks, commonly used across various sectors.

TABLE 1: Summary of MEIA Frameworks

FRAMEWORK	UNIQUENESS	APPLICATION STAGE	CONTEXT	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANT-AGES
RBM Framework	Outcome-focused, integrates entire project cycle	All stages	Development projects, government, CSR	Clear focus on outcomes, accountability, continuous learning	Resource-intensive, potential overemphasis on quantifiable results
OECD DAC Criteria Framework	Five key criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability)	Evaluation, impact assessment	International development, public sector	Comprehensive, globally recognised, facilitates comparability	Can be rigid, resource-intensive

[12] OECD. (2019). DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/.
World Bank. (2017). Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation. Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/.

Kirkpatrick Model	Four levels of training evaluation (reaction, learning, behaviour, results)	Evaluation	Training, education, HR development	Clear structure for evaluating training effectiveness	May oversimplify complex processes, challenges in
Adaptive Evaluation Model	Emphasises flexibility and adaptability	Monitoring, evaluation	Complex, dynamic projects, social change	Highly flexible, encourages ongoing learning	Difficult to manage, may lack structure and rigour
SDG - Impact Assessment Framework	Focus on long-term impacts and sustainability	Impact assessment stage	Development projects, environmental assessments, public policy	Deep understanding of long-term effects, informs future designs	Time and resource-inten sive, attribution challenges

Each of these frameworks offers unique strengths and weaknesses, making them suitable for different contexts and stages within monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment processes. Selecting the appropriate framework depends on the specific needs, resources, and objectives of the project or program. By understanding the distinct characteristics and applications of each framework, organisations can better design and implement effective monitoring and evaluation strategies that align with their goals.

NEED FOR PARADIGM SHIFT IN APPROACHES TO CONDUCT EVALUATIONS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

India urgently requires a paradigm shift in its approaches, frameworks, and tools for conducting evaluations and impact assessments to address the evolving needs of funders, NGOs, government agencies, and policymakers. Traditional approaches, tools and frameworks, while valuable, often fall short in capturing the complex, multifaceted nature of social programs and their long-term impacts.

Funders, such as CSR initiatives and philanthropies, demand more robust, adaptive, and evidence-based frameworks that can provide real-time insights and enable course corrections during project implementation (Patton, 2011)[13]. Dasra (2012) in its report, 'Measuring Up: Landscaping the State of Impact Assessment Practices amongst Corporate and Family Foundations in India',[14] identified several challenges hindering effective impact assessment.

These include lack of baseline data, scarcity of skilled personnel to conduct assessments, and the timing of assessments not aligning with project

Patton, M. Q. (2011). Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use. New York: Guilford Press.
Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1994). Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
UNDP. (2020). SDG Impact Practice Standards. Available at: https://sdgimpact.undp.org/.
[13] Patton, M. Q. (2011). Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use. New York: Guilford Press.
[14] DASRA Report (2012) - https://www.dasra.org/individual-resources/38

lifecycles. Additionally, the report highlights the difficulty of quantifying social impact, particularly for programs with long-term goals or those addressing complex social issues.

NGOs and government agencies face the challenge of demonstrating the effectiveness and sustainability of their interventions in a rapidly changing socio-economic landscape, where context-specific and participatory approaches are increasingly necessary to ensure that evaluations are relevant and inclusive (Chambers, 1994).[15] Moreover, the diverse nature of NGO initiatives across various sectors and geographical contexts complicates the establishment of universally applicable impact assessment and evaluation frameworks, exacerbating the struggle to assess and communicate impact consistently.

Lastly, growing emphasis on achieving SDGs necessitates a shift towards more integrated and systems-based impact assessments and evaluation approaches that can evaluate not just the immediate outcomes, but also the broader social, economic, and environmental impacts of interventions (UNDP, 2020). [16] The limitations of traditional frameworks, such as their rigidity, lack of contextual sensitivity, and inability to account for unintended consequences, underscore the need for new, adaptive tools that can accommodate the dynamic nature of social change (Vogel, 2012). [17]

A paradigm shift in impact assessment and evaluation practices will enable stakeholders to move beyond mere accountability and compliance towards fostering innovation, learning, and sustained impact, ultimately contributing to more effective and equitable development outcomes.

As every stakeholder comes with distinct intentions, it relates back to the individual needs they cater to while attempting an impact assessment. In this regard, ISDM established an advisory vertical under the strategic capacity building (SCB) team aimed towards conducting holistic evaluations and impact assessments with a focus to offer a unique perspective, grounded in a holistic understanding of the sector. By recognising the interconnectedness of various stakeholders and factors, ISDM provides tailored solutions, a combination of multiple contextual frameworks that address the root causes of challenges, rather than merely addressing symptoms. This holistic approach is instrumental in fostering sustainable development outcomes and maximising impact.

[15] Chambers, R. (1994). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Challenges, Potentials, and Paradigms. World Development, 22(10), 1437-1454.
[16] UNDP. (2020). SDG Impact Practice Standards. Available at: https://sdgimpact.undp.org/.
[17] Vogel, I. (2012). Review of the Use of 'Theory of Change' in International Development. UK Department for International Development (DFID). Available at: https://www.theoryofchange.org/

Rather than seeking to undermine existing evaluations and impact assessment tools, ISDM employs a discerning approach consisting of rigorous methodology, participatory techniques and a critical appraisal of established frameworks. The objective is not to compete with existing tools, but rather to leverage the strengths of the current landscape while meticulously constructing a robust and adaptable blueprint for impact assessments and evaluations. This comprehensive approach would be specifically designed to address the diverse needs of social-purpose organisations across various sectors and thematic areas.

The goal of the advisory services is to achieve the following:.

Enhanced Stakeholder Involvement

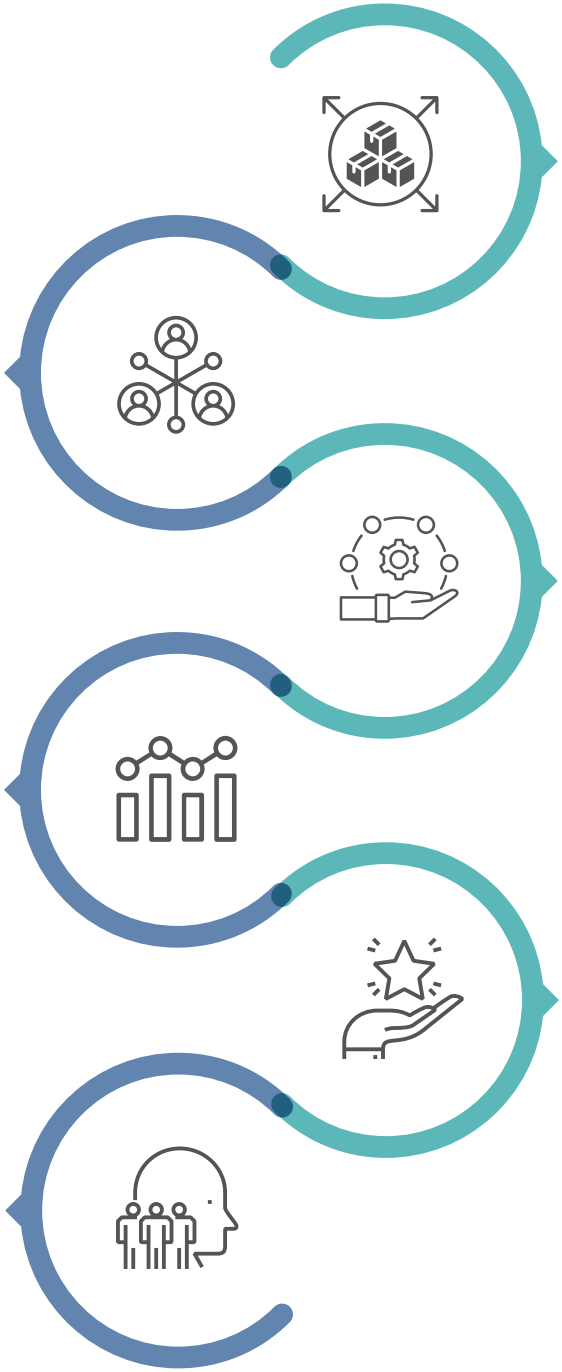
Ensure that all stakeholders, including beneficiaries, funders, and partners, are actively involved in the impact assessment process. Incorporate feedback loops to continuously improve programs based on stakeholder insights.

Investing in Technology & Robust Data Management Systems

Leveraging technology and building robust data collection and management systems to ensure access to reliable baseline and outcome data.

Knowledge Sharing & Collaboration

Encouraging knowledge sharing and collaboration between stakeholders from state, market, and society to promote best practices in impact assessment.



Standardisation & Capacity Building

Developing standardised frameworks and training programs to equip social sector organisations with the skills necessary to conduct robust impact assessments.

Comprehensive & Adaptable Metrics

Tailoring assessment and evaluation approaches to the unique circumstances and complexities of each intervention. Include both quantitative and qualitative metrics to capture the full spectrum of impact, from immediate outputs to long-term outcomes. Address aspects like social, economic, and environmental impact.

Scalability & Replicability

Identify and document successful models and interventions that can be scaled or replicated in different contexts. Create a repository of best practices and case studies to guide future projects.

Impact at Multiple Levels

ISDM broadens impact evaluation beyond simply measuring whether objectives have been achieved or assessing direct effects on intended beneficiaries. It includes the full range of impacts at all levels of the results chain, including ripple effects on families, households, and communities; on institutional, technical, or social systems; and on the environment. ISDM undertakes evaluation and impact assessment at multiple levels.

These levels range from the immediate effects on individual participants to broader systemic changes. Below are the key levels at which impact can be assessed, along with examples.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:

This level focuses on the direct effects of an intervention on individual participants. It looks at changes in behaviour, knowledge, skills, or well-being. For example, in education programs, impact at the individual level is measured by improvements in students' test scores or changes in their attitudes towards learning. [18]

HOUSEHOLD/COMMUNITY LEVEL:

Assessing impact at the household or community level involves evaluating how the intervention affects families or communities as a whole. This includes economic improvements, social cohesion, or changes in health and education outcomes. For example, a rural development project is measured by changes in household income levels or improvements in community health indicators.[19]

[18] Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). Evaluation: A systematic approach. Sage Publications.
[19] Bamberger, M., Rugh, J., & Mabry, L. (2012). RealWorld Evaluation: Working under Budget, Time, Data, and Political Constraints. Sage Publications.

ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL:

At this level, impact is assessed in terms of how the intervention influences the performance, capacity, and sustainability of organisations involved in its delivery. This could include NGOs, government agencies, or other partners. For example, assessment of how a capacity-building program has strengthened the management practices and operational efficiency of a local NGO. [20]

SECTORAL/SYSTEMIC LEVEL:

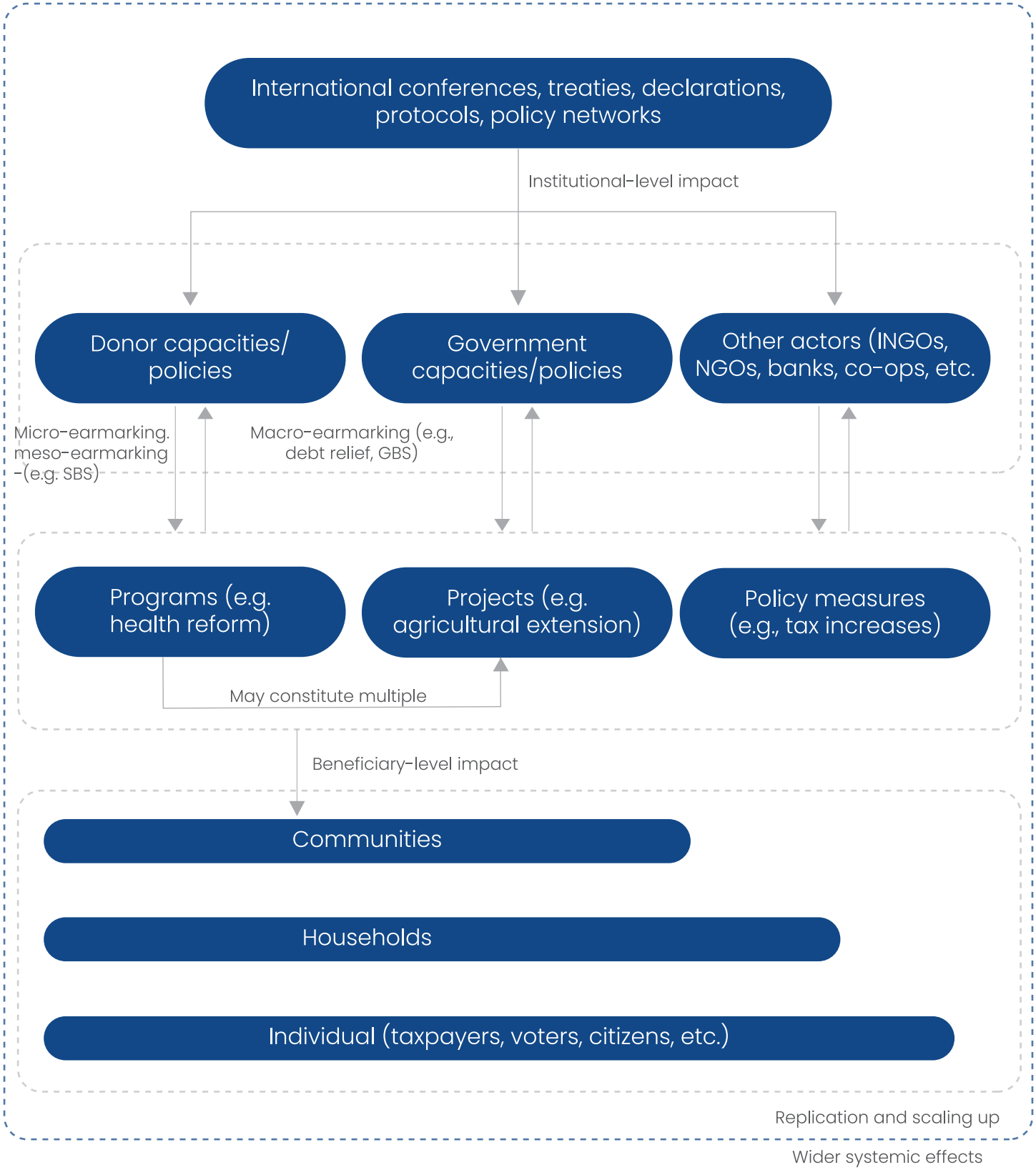
This level examines the broader changes in policies, systems, or entire sectors as a result of an intervention. It considers how the intervention contributes to systemic change or influences sector-wide practices. For example, an advocacy campaign might be assessed for its impact on national policy changes or shifts in public sector practices related to environmental sustainability.[21]

SOCIETAL/GLOBAL LEVEL:

At the highest level, impact is evaluated based on how an intervention contributes to societal or global challenges, such as poverty reduction, gender equality, or climate change. For example, the global impact of initiatives like the SDGs is assessed by tracking progress on indicators like the reduction of extreme poverty or improvements in global health metrics.[22]

[20] Ebrahim, A., & Rangan, V. K. (2014). What impact? A framework for measuring the scale and scope of social performance. California Management Review, 56(3), 118-141.
[21] Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review, 9(1), 36-41.
[22] United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations.

FIG 3: Levels Of Interventions, Programs And Impact[23]



[23] Adapted from 'Impact evaluations and development, NONIE guide on impact evaluation'

ISDM'S

Approach & Methodology

This advisory on evaluation and impact assessment serves as a potent catalyst for achieving the intended impact in the projects and programs undertaken by the social sector. Operating with a nuanced four-step strategy, ISDM transcends the limitations of conventional reporting. We address all critical nuances in the impact assessment domain, ensuring a thorough understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of social impact.

STEP 1: PLANNING AND SCOPING THE STUDY

1.1 IDENTIFYING PARTNERSHIPS

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
• Donor Organisations: Donor or funding organisations that provide financial, technical and other types of support to undertake studies doing evaluations and impact assessment. • Interested Parties: Groups that have other stakes in the evaluation; for example partner governments, implementing consultants, and others.	• Discuss with key partners about how stakeholder groups need to be involved in the process. • Indicate, clearly and as early as possible, how different stakeholder groups are expected to contribute to the evaluation and impact assessment studies with information and practical support.

1.2 DEFINING THE PURPOSE

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
• A clear understanding of the goals, objectives and outcomes is an essential first step in the design of any evaluation and impact assessment study. The timing, milestones, and level of detail of the study should be determined with the partners.	• Ensure that purpose is defined through a participatory process that engages all interested stakeholders. • Identify intervention areas and population coverage. • Draft MoU/ToR with the engagement partners.

1.3 UNDERSTANDING THE THEORY OF CHANGE/ THEORY OF ACTION OF THE PROJECT

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
Articulate the assumptions behind the theories linking interventions to outcomes. What are the causal pathways linking intervention outputs to processes of change and impact? For this, understand the **Theory of Change and Theory of Action** of project engagements and identify evaluation criteria for assessment. • Theory of change entails understanding the project context where situation analysis has been undertaken to identify root causes, with a defined problem statement and interventions are designed that are immediate, intermediate, and long-term. • Theory of action focuses on the availability of resources (human, technical, and financial) for implementation activities while taking cognisance of factors and criteria which are crucial for the success of the intervention.	• Understand the rationale for the intervention and the design of the program. • Identify all the risks, assumptions and strategies to mitigate them. • Ensure all important project/program related documents are available. • Specify what intervention phases the evaluation should deal with, and make sure that the intervention logic, and the activities and outputs during those phases are reviewed in detail. • Determine what its key units or levels of assessment are. Will the study focus on change at the level of individuals, communities, organisations, or all of these?

TROUBLESHOOTING/KEY RISKS :

1. **Unrealistic objectives:** Stating unrealistic objectives in terms of intended outcomes is likely to result in evaluation findings that show no impact on those outcomes. It is important to be realistic when defining the desired outcomes and learning objectives of the evaluation.
2. **Unrealistic planning:** When developing the timeline and budget, the main risk is to underestimate the time and resources needed to carry out an impact evaluation properly. It is common to experience delays in program design and implementation, which, in turn, will also increase the duration—and probably the cost—of the evaluation. For example, delays can result in key staff and consultants no longer being available. Conservative budgeting and forward planning for staffing levels is essential.

STEP 2: DESIGN RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK AND TOOLS

2.1 DESIGNING RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
Select the population: Select a representative subset of the target population that aligns with the study's objectives. Sampling design: Select random sampling for generalisability or non-random sampling for targeted insights. • Random sampling: Choose a random sample for generalisable results. • Non-Random sampling: Use purposive, convenience, or snowball sampling when targeting specific subgroups. Further depending on the study objectives, select the sampling design to be RCT or Quasi-experimental. • RCTs are a type of experimental study where participants are randomly assigned to one or more intervention groups or a control group. The aim is to test the	• Ensure sample size is adequate to provide meaningful insights and represents the target population. Sampling is usually done using 95% confidence and 5% margin of error, population of proportion is taken to be 50%. • Ensure baseline data is available from the implementation partners.

effectiveness of an intervention by comparing outcomes between these groups.

- Quasi-experimental studies involve comparing groups that are not randomly assigned. They are used when randomisation is not feasible, ethical, or practical. These studies aim to estimate the causal impact of an intervention.

2.2 DESIGNING ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

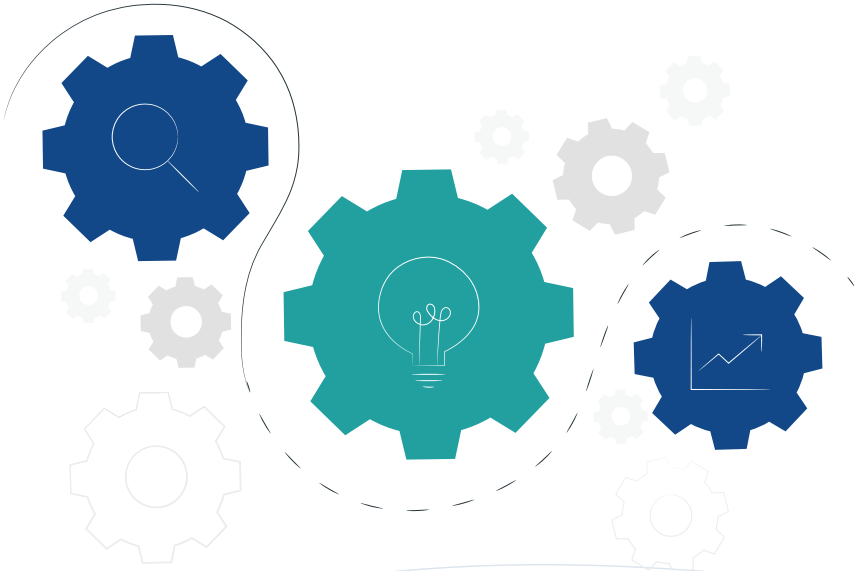
DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
An assessment criterion is designed which provides an overarching normative framework for intervention assessment; and plays a vital role in guiding the assessment tools. The following five have been recommended by the OECD/DAC and adopted by ISDM as standard yardsticks for the evaluation and impact assessment of development interventions. • Effectiveness: The extent to which a development intervention has achieved its objectives, taking their relative importance into account. • Impact: The totality of the effects of a development intervention, positive and negative, intended and unintended. • Relevance: The extent to which a development intervention conforms to the needs and priorities of target groups and the policies of recipient countries and donors. • Sustainability: The continuation or longevity of benefits from a development intervention after the cessation of development assistance. • Efficiency: The extent to which the costs of a development intervention can be justified by its results, taking alternatives into account.	• Ensure there is clarity in the definition of each criterion. • There are additional criterions which may be considered such as coherence, coverage, etc. • Use SMART (specific, measurable, articulate, realistic, timely) indicators while designing frameworks. • Deliberately set out to capture both positive and negative impacts of the intervention and to seek out groups who are often disadvantaged such as women, minority groups.

2.3 TOOL DEVELOPMENT

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
• Qualitative tool—Focused group discussions, key informant interviews, participatory appraisal • Quantitative tools— Household surveys, questionnaires • Deploying the quantitative toolkit on technological toolkit such as KOBO/survey monkey.	• Key informants such as community leaders, doctors, teachers, local government agencies, NGOs, and religious organisations may be able to provide useful reference data on baseline conditions. • Participatory methods such as many of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools can be used to help the community reconstruct past conditions and identify critical incidents in the history of the community or region.

TROUBLESHOOTING :

1. **Disconnect between program and evaluation:** Insufficient communication and coordination between the implementing organisation and the lead evaluator can result in designing an evaluation and impact assessment study that will not be feasible in practice. Keeping key program staff involved in the planning can help to ensure that the evaluation suits the operational context. If a disconnect does arise and it is caught in time, the best solution is to find a more realistic evaluation method.
2. **Selection bias:** Carefully identifying the sample and randomising study participants is the simplest and most robust way to eliminate selection bias for quantitative data collection. If selection bias is present in the data, one imperfect solution is to compare the outcomes among the treated group to a matched sample drawn from a different data set.



STEP 3: GATHER EVIDENCE FROM SOURCES

3.1 SECONDARY SOURCES REVIEW

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
• Review of secondary sources consisting of official project documents, and literature from reputed journals, past reports and government websites.	• Use credible, recent and updated sources for review of literature.

3.2 PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
• Conduct data collection activities according to the established protocols and procedures. This includes ensuring quality checks, training data collectors and establishing robust data management systems. Additionally, monitor progress, address any issues or concerns that arise, and revise the approach as needed.	• Implement quality control measures to ensure accuracy, reliability, and validity of collected data. • Train data collectors on the protocols, procedures, and ethical standards for data collection. • Establish secure systems for data management, storage, and confidentiality, ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.

3.3 TRIANGULATION OF RESULTS, DATA CLEANING AND DATA ANALYSIS

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
• Develop a plan for data analysis, specifying the analytical techniques, software tools, and statistical methods to be used. The analysis plan must align with the objectives.	• Interpret the findings in light of objectives, comparing and contrasting them with existing literature or theoretical frameworks.

TROUBLESHOOTING :

1. **Measurements:** Targeting too many outcomes, and thus including too many questions in the survey instrument, often extends the cost of the survey beyond the survey budget. Too many questions increase the burden on survey participants and may reduce response rate and the quality of responses. Cutting questions that are related to indirect outcomes is a good way of limiting this issue.
2. **Insufficient testing:** The step that is often skipped in the interest of saving time is piloting the evaluation tools. However, piloting is a critical step in the process that cannot be eliminated, especially because surveying beneficiaries poses additional challenges that may not be immediately understood. If the tool isn't validated, the results could be inaccurate, incomplete or misleading. Take the time necessary during the field-testing phase of a survey and other data collection tools to ensure that the information collected is of the highest quality.
3. **Finding respondents:** It may be difficult to locate beneficiaries for the survey. In this case, it is advisable to involve local program staff and other stakeholders in finding suitable participants.
4. **Data Availability and Quality:** Access to reliable and relevant data is essential for conducting meaningful impact assessments. However, data may be incomplete, outdated, or unavailable, particularly in contexts where information systems are underdeveloped or fragmented. Poor data quality can undermine the validity and reliability of assessment findings. Even professional survey firms may not always have a good understanding of impact evaluation and may not be as qualified and reliable as one might hope. Interviewers may falsify or incorrectly record information. Poor data collection methods should not be tolerated. If contrived or low-quality data is discovered, it is important to let the survey firm know that this is unacceptable and the data collection must be done again to ensure high standards.

STEP 4: REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

4.1 REPORTING

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
• Virtually all evaluations are presented as written reports. The main objective of the report is to convey the findings, identify gaps, best practices and provide recommendations for sustaining and scaling impact.	• Check that the report meets the formal requirements stipulated by the contract and any contractual agendas. • Ensure that the final feedback of stakeholders is incorporated in the final report.

4.2 DISSEMINATION

DESCRIPTION	CHECKLIST
• The dissemination of key findings and results must always, as with any successful communication strategy, be tailored to the audiences' needs and interests. Some users may require information specifically targeted for decision-making with regards to the intervention. Others may seek to apply the lessons learned from the evaluation to other interventions and circumstances.	• Discuss with relevant stakeholders to whom, when and how the results of the evaluation should be disseminated, and implement the dissemination plan accordingly. • Consider a range of dissemination options, including dialogue with partners, meetings, seminars, workshops, and any other kind of relevant and effective communications strategy.

TROUBLESHOOTING :

Limited use of evaluation findings: If the results of the evaluation are not shared sufficiently widely with internal and external stakeholders, then its main objectives of facilitating learning for the program and the youth employment sector as a whole are compromised. One way to overcome this issue is to define a dissemination strategy from the outset of the evaluation and to insist that at least one program staff member works closely with the evaluation team. This ensures that at least one key person in the program understands the evaluation and is well positioned to implement some of the report's findings.

Conclusion

The need for revisiting existing frameworks and tools for impact assessment and evaluation has become increasingly apparent, as the complexity of development challenges continues to evolve. Literature highlights the importance of integrating the local context, identifying underlying problems, engaging key stakeholders, and reflecting on their feedback throughout the innovation process. A holistic approach that considers multi-level impact using robust technology, standardised yet context specific methodology is essential for assessing and evaluating impact (Dyk, 2014).

The Indian School of Development Management's four-step holistic approach offers a promising framework that is tailored to the needs of diverse stakeholders. This approach emphasises the importance of co-creating innovation processes that respond to stakeholders' real needs and context, and adapting to changing circumstances by integrating timely feedback. The framework's systematic examination of key determinants across sectoral themes, such as health outcomes, service quality, and institutional capacity, aligns with the call for a systems thinking approach to evaluation.

By embracing a holistic, stakeholder-centric framework like the one proposed by the Indian School of Development Management, researchers, practitioners, donors/funders and policymakers can better navigate the complexities of what works, what does not, and under what conditions. This knowledge base will facilitate cross-learning and innovation, enabling organisations to adapt successful strategies to their specific contexts while avoiding pitfalls and challenges encountered elsewhere.

Annexures

OECD DAC FRAMEWORK

PRINCIPLES	CRITERION FOR ASSESSMENT	TARGETED PROBE AREAS
RELEVANCE	• Need assessment for beneficiaries • Analysing geographical context • Mapping objective of intervention – (Project rationales and core activities)	• Are the interventions/ activities facilitated in the project able to meet community priorities? • How was the planning done? Was it participatory? Was it inclusive? • How were the success indicators developed? • Was the community involved in the development of project indicators?
COHERENCE	• Alignment with existing schemes/policies • Alignment with SDGs • Analysing duplication of efforts • Mapping social cohesion	• Degree of convergence with government/other partnerships • Relationship between individuals, community, institutions and other stakeholders • SDG alignment as defined by NITI Ayog
EFFECTIVENESS & EFFICIENCY	• Target vs. Achieved • Operational activities • Risk mitigation • Utilisation of resources —Human resources, technology, and budget	• Have the activities been able to effectively address community expectations? • If the project is completed within the finalised time duration? • How efficiently have the resources been deployed, monitored and utilised?

IMPACT	• Quantifying the rate of adoption by target group • Identifying any paradigm shift across the following aspects depending upon the intervention. • - Technological • - Cultural • - Systemic • - Behavioural • Unintended Outcomes • Change in knowledge, attitude and Practices of beneficiaries	• The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects? • How well has been the intervention adopted by the beneficiaries—are there any challenges/good practices?
SUSTAINABILITY	• Scalability of intervention • Replicability of intervention • Institutionalisation of intervention • Identification of Champions of Change • Mapping social cohesion • Sustenance of the intervention	• If there is a potential to replicate the solution in other states or districts? • Will the project-initiated community interventions sustain even after the exit of the funding agency? • Are the institutions strengthened adequately to effectively manage and sustain the activities after the completion of the project? • Has an exit strategy been drafted? • Do communities feel ownership over the assets created by the activities?

FIELD PREPARATION CHECKLIST FOR PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

STEPS	DESCRIPTION
PLANNING & PREPARATION	Objective Definition: • Clearly define the objectives of the data collection. • Ensure alignment with overall research or project goals. Questionnaire/Survey Design: • Develop and pre-test questionnaires or surveys.

	• Translate and back-translate questionnaires if needed. • Ensure the questions are culturally appropriate and relevant. Ethical Considerations: • Obtain necessary ethical approvals. • Prepare consent forms and information sheets for participants.

TEAM PREPARATION	Recruitment:
	• Recruit and select data collectors/enumerators.
	• Assign roles and responsibilities to team members.
	Training:
	• Conduct comprehensive training sessions on:
	  • Data collection methods and tools.
	  • Ethical considerations and obtaining consent.
	  • Handling sensitive information and situations.
	• Run mock interviews or field simulations for practice.
	Materials and Equipment:
	• Prepare and check all data collection materials (e.g., questionnaires, tablets, pens).
	• Ensure all electronic devices are charged and functional.
	• Stock up on extra materials (e.g., batteries, backup devices).

LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS	Field Site Preparation: • Identify and confirm data collection sites. • Obtain necessary permissions from local authorities or community leaders. • Prepare a field itinerary with a detailed schedule. Transportation and Accommodation: • Arrange transportation for the team to and from the field sites. • Book accommodation if required. Health and Safety: • Ensure all team members have necessary vaccinations and health clearances. • Prepare a safety plan, including emergency contacts and protocols. Equip the team with first aid kits and personal protective equipment (PPE), if necessary.
DATA MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY CONTROL	Data Storage and Security: • Set up a system for secure data storage (e.g., encrypted digital storage). • Plan for regular data backups. Quality Assurance: • Develop a protocol for regular data quality checks. • Designate a team member for spot-checking and monitoring data collection processes. Field Monitoring: • Assign supervisors to oversee data collection in the field. • Establish communication channels between field teams and the central office.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION	Team Communication: • Ensure all team members have a means of communication (e.g., mobile phones, radios). • Set up daily check-ins to discuss progress and challenges. Stakeholder Coordination: • Communicate with local stakeholders and inform them of the data collection schedule. • Prepare a contact list of key stakeholders, including local authorities, community leaders, and project partners.
POST-FIELDWORK PROCEDURES	Data Collection Debrief: • Conduct debriefing sessions with the team to review fieldwork experiences. • Collect feedback on the data collection process and discuss any issues encountered. Data Cleaning and Processing: • Begin initial data cleaning and processing. • Document any data inconsistencies or errors and address them promptly. Reporting: • Prepare a fieldwork report summarizing the data collection process, challenges faced, and any preliminary findings. • Share the report with relevant stakeholders and project leads.

DEPLOYING QUANTITATIVE TOOLKIT ON TECHNOLOGICAL PLATFORMS

STEPS	DESCRIPTION
PREPARATION AND SETUP	Account Creation: • Create or assign a KoBoToolbox account for the evaluation study. • Ensure proper account settings for data security and access management. Toolkit Design: • Develop and design the toolkit's data collection instruments (e.g., surveys, questionnaires) using KoBoToolbox's form builder. • Include variables and metrics relevant to the evaluation objectives. Form Customization: • Customise forms with advanced KoBo features such as skip logic, validation criteria, and cascading questions. • Test the forms to ensure they function as intended and are user-friendly.

DATA MANAGEMENT & SECURITY	Data Collection Protocols: • Establish clear protocols for data collection, including field procedures, timing, and responsibilities. • Ensure enumerators are trained in using the toolkit and KoBoToolbox. Data Security Measures: • Implement security features within KoBoToolbox to protect sensitive data (e.g., encryption, access controls). • Regularly backup data collected through KoBoToolbox to a secure location. Ethical Considerations: • Ensure informed consent processes are embedded in the toolkit, especially for sensitive or personal data collection. • Adhere to ethical guidelines and data protection laws applicable to the study context.
TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING	Training Program: • Develop a training program for enumerators and field staff on using KoBoToolbox and the toolkit. • Include both technical training on using KoBoToolbox and practical training on field data collection. User Documentation: • Provide detailed user guides and manuals for field teams, covering the use of KoBoToolbox, toolkit forms, and troubleshooting tips. Support Systems: • Set up a help desk or support system to address queries and issues faced by field staff during the data collection phase.
DEPLOYMENT & FIELDWORK	• Pre-Deployment Testing: • Conduct a pilot test of the toolkit on KoBoToolbox in a sample location to identify and resolve any issues. • Analyse pilot data to ensure the toolkit captures the required information accurately. Deployment Strategy: • Develop a fieldwork plan outlining timelines, locations, and personnel responsibilities. • Deploy the toolkit on KoBoToolbox to field teams, ensuring all devices are pre-loaded with the necessary forms. Field Monitoring: • Implement real-time monitoring mechanisms using KoBoToolbox's data review features to track data collection progress. • Provide ongoing support to field teams to address technical or logistical challenges.

QUALITY ASSURANCE & DATA SUBMISSION	Quality Assurance Measures: • Use KoBoToolbox's built-in validation features to reduce data entry errors. • Conduct daily or weekly data quality checks and provide feedback to enumerators as needed. Data Submission: • Ensure all collected data is securely submitted from the field to the KoBoToolbox server. • Monitor the submission process to address any issues related to data syncing or upload failures.

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