MEASURING TO TRANSFORM:

IMPACT MEASUREMENT GUIDE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Dejusticia

PROGRAMA DE FORTALECIMIENTO

ENLAZA

Summary

This guide provides civil society organizations with key information for understanding and applying evaluation methods to measure their social impact. At Dejusticia, we view evaluation as a tool for determining the extent to which a social or community initiative has positively improved conditions for a given population. We also believe that social impact measurement is an act of care and collective memory that helps us reflect on the path traveled, recognize achievements, and identify challenges.

This guide is divided into five sections that reflect our understanding of social impact measurement. In the first, we discuss why it is important for civil society organizations to develop evaluation methodologies. In the second, we present five principles that should guide evaluation processes, including diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the third, we explain the stages and methodological tools involved in conducting an evaluation process. In the fourth, we provide a brief overview of the evaluation process for Dejusticia's Enlaza Strengthening Program. Finally, in the fifth section, we offer concluding recommendations to help readers begin or strengthen their own social impact measurement efforts.

Keywords: MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning), project evaluation, civil society organizations, collective memory, Enlaza Strengthening Program, DEI.

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Measuring to Transform: Impact Measurement Guide for Civil Society Organizations

Andrea Carolina Forero Hernández[1]
Nina Chaparro González[2]

[1]Researcher for Dejusticia's Enlaza Strengthening Program.
[2]Senior researcher and coordinator of Dejusticia's Enlaza Strengthening Program.

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The Center of studies of law, Justice and society, Dejusticia
Calle 35 No 24-31, Bogotá, D.C.
Telephone: (+57 1) 608 3605
Email: info@dejusticia.org
https://www.dejusticia.org

Copyediting in Spanish: Juan Manuel Caycedo

Translation: Morgan Stoffregen

Design and illustration: Laura Zambrano Pabón

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DO YOU WORK AT A CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION AND WANT TO LEARN HOW TO MEASURE THE REAL IMPACT OF YOUR PROJECTS

AND STRENGTHEN THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL CHANGE?

To do so, it is essential to have a clear, participatory, and learning-oriented strategy.

This guide offers practical advice to help you design, implement, and make the most of impact measurement so that you can understand the results of your organization's actions, learn from experience, and continuously improve your projects and initiatives.

The guide proposes a diversity, equity, and inclusion approach grounded in the principles of equity and representativeness, continuous learning and reflection, institutional transformation, accountability, and the use of mixed methods. Our goal is for impact measurement to be more than just a technical exercise—rather, it should be a process that builds memory, generates evidence, and leaves a positive mark on the communities, groups, and organizations involved.

1.

WHAT IS IMPACT MEASUREMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS?

We understand social impact measurement, in the context of civil society organizations, as a process of weaving together information, experiences, perceptions, and learning to build a collective memory of the transformations resulting from a project. Each indicator, each story, and each result provides evidence of the mark that a project leaves on the lives of individuals, organizations, and communities. Social impact measurement is not just a technical exercise but a living, reflective practice that preserves memory and strengthens institutional learning, since it allows us to remember, learn from, document, sustain, and transmit what might otherwise be lost over time (Perassi, 2019).

In other words, social impact measurement is a systematic process for determining the extent to which a project's or program's actions have succeeded in transforming the initial situation of a population or group. Its main objective is to assess the real and lasting changes attributable to a civil society organization's intervention, both in quantitative terms (concrete results) and qualitative terms (perceptions, legitimacy, and satisfaction of those involved).

Measuring impact means assuming technical and ethical responsibility for ensuring that a social intervention meets its objectives without harming communities and that it leads to meaningful and legitimate improvements in people's lives. This measurement can be carried out using different approaches depending on an organization's capabilities. However, because social projects require continuous improvement and openness to adapting to changing contexts, the monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) framework is a useful and effective approach for ensuring rigorous and strategic evaluation (Ramírez, 2024).

Application of the MEAL framework is based on four pillars:

1. **Monitoring:** Monitoring involves the ongoing and systematic collection of information to observe how a project is progressing and to make any adjustments needed to achieve its stated objectives.
2. **Evaluation:** Evaluation assesses a project's implementation by comparing the initial situation (baseline) with the

post-intervention situation in order to determine whether there were changes in well-being, capacities, or social conditions, as well as the extent to which those changes can be directly attributed to the project. Evaluation thus compares a project's stated goals with the results obtained at the end of the intervention.

3. Accountability: Accountability is a fundamental part of the evaluation process, since it responds to the need to inform all interested actors, including project participants, implementers, donors, and civil society more broadly.

4. Learning and continuous improvement: Beyond verifying the effectiveness of an intervention, impact measurement under the MEAL framework serves a strategic institutional learning function in that it allows for the identification of successful practices that can be replicated, as well as aspects that need adjustment, thereby contributing to the accumulation of knowledge and the strengthening of future social initiatives.

In sum, impact measurement under the MEAL framework is more than a technical exercise in accountability for civil society organizations—it is a tool for management, legitimacy, and social transformation that strengthens the collective fabric. This evaluation method makes it possible to demonstrate, through evidence, the value and effectiveness of interventions, ensure coherence between objectives and outcomes, and reinforce organizations' capacity to bring about structural change.

2.

WHAT PRINCIPLES GUIDE MEAL EVALUATION PROCESSES?

Measuring the impact of a social project is not just about collecting data or tracking indicators: It is also an opportunity to reflect on the journey taken, recognize achievements, and identify challenges.

This section outlines the principles that should guide impact measurement. Together, they support more ethical, participatory, transformative, inclusive, and useful processes for your organization and the communities you work with.

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- The composition of teams and governance structures for evaluation processes reflects gender parity and racial representation.
- The communities involved participate actively in the definition of criteria, indicators, and evaluation questions.
- Local knowledge and oral narratives are valued as legitimate sources of evidence.

2. Continuous Learning and Reflection

- Evaluation is conceived as a living process structured around learning cycles that inform decision-making in real time.
- "Failure" is understood as an opportunity to learn and adjust strategies.
- An organizational culture of critical review and openness to change is promoted.

3. Institutional Transformation

- Evaluation promotes the reconstruction of the theory of change, the reform of leadership structures, and the strengthening of antiracist commitments.
- Evaluation leads to reflection on power relations within the organization.

4. Horizontal Accountability

- Results are shared transparently and accessibly, using oral and participatory communication methods in addition to the written word.
- Evaluation is a form of dialogue and shared responsibility with communities, not an external imposition.

5. Mixed Methods and Triangulation

- Evaluation uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, including document analysis, interviews, surveys, ethnography, and reflective workshops.
- Triangulation facilitates different approximations of reality, which strengthens the validity and depth of the analysis.

3.

MEAL MODEL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

To design your own MEAL model, you can adapt these pillars and principles to your organization's specific needs for measuring results and impact. Although evaluation is always an organization-specific process, this guide sets out a series of recommendations on the stages typically considered when measuring the changes produced by a program. The content of those stages can then be tailored to the needs of your own project.

The three stages are (1) ex ante evaluation, (2) in-process evaluation, and (3) ex post evaluation. Each stage, in turn, comprises three actions. Ex ante evaluation involves characterizing the problem, defining the project's objectives, and identifying the outcome indicators to be measured at baseline. In-process evaluation includes reviewing the theory of change, designing a monitoring matrix, and analyzing the information collected. Finally, ex post evaluation involves administering final surveys to establish the project's endline, conducting final interviews, and analyzing outcomes and impacts.

Figure 1 illustrates the structure of these three stages and their respective actions:

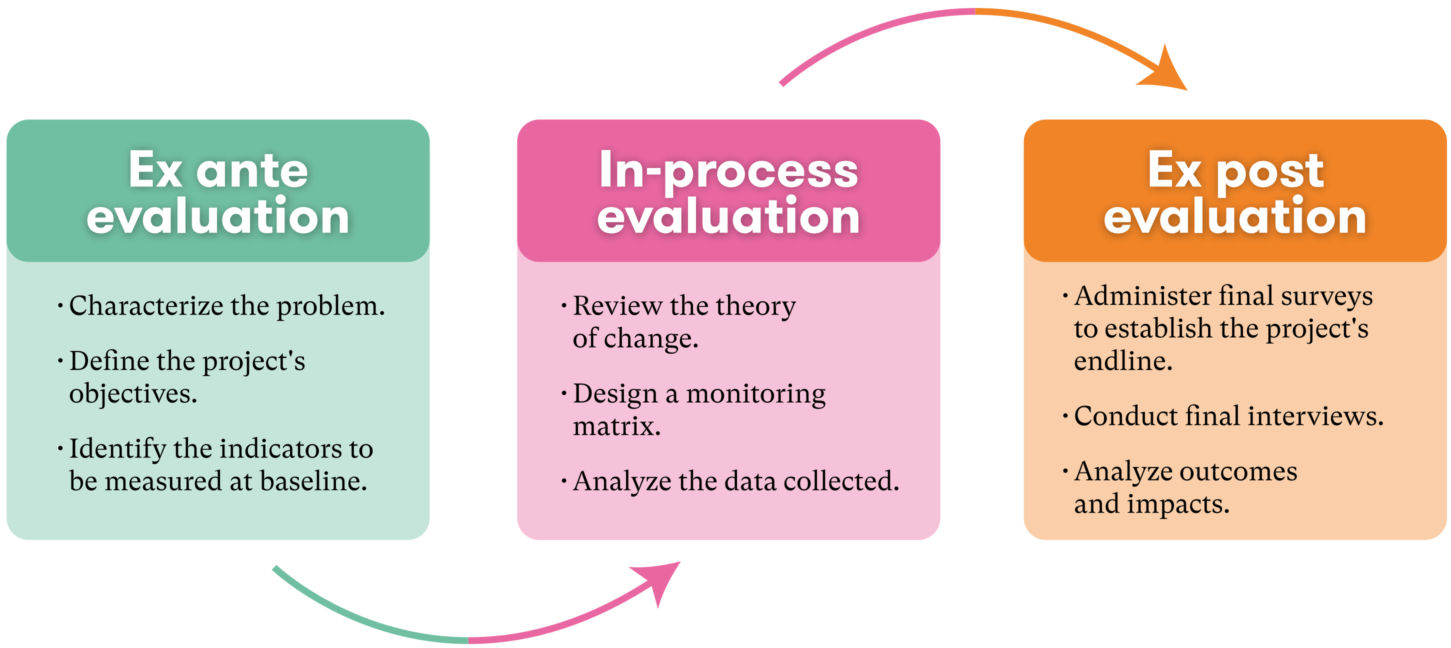

Figure 1. Evaluation stages. Source: prepared by the authors

It is important to keep in mind that all of the stages should incorporate the design of instruments for data collection, processing, and analysis. Below, we briefly explain each action and the corresponding instruments:

1. Ex Ante Evaluation: Getting a Project Off the Ground

Ex ante evaluation involves studying a population's problems, needs, characteristics, and context in order to property identify what you seek to transform and what will ultimately be assessed in the final evaluation.

This stage requires three key actions:

a) Characterize the problem.

b) Define the project's objectives.

c) Identify the outcome indicators to be measured at baseline.

Putting Each Action Into Practice

a) Characterize the problem

To assess the problem, you need to identify the general characteristics of the population you will be working with, the broader context surrounding the issue at hand, and the specific need you aim to address.

Example:

In the municipality of Santander de Quilichao, in the department of Cauca, ten women came together to create an Afro-Colombian community-based organization called Nosotras Incidimos. The organization aims to strengthen women's political participation in the municipality, where only a small percentage of women are actively involved in civic participation processes.

In this context, following an initial assessment, Nosotras Incidimos identified that the barriers to women's political participation in Santander de Quilichao are linked to entrenched gender roles that promote the idea that women should devote their time to caregiving and domestic work, while men should represent the community politically. These gender roles lead to discrimination, gender-based violence, and political violence against women who seek to participate in politics. They also contribute to a lack of knowledge about participation strategies and to low levels of confidence among women who do become involved in political life.

★ This example identifies the location, the context, and the population the organization seeks to work with: women in the municipality of Santander de Quilichao who face various barriers to political participation.

How should you collect information?

In this first stage, ethnographic methods such as interviews, focus groups, and document analysis allow you to gather useful data on the problem you seek to address.

→ Example:

To conduct the assessment described in the previous point, Nosotras Incidimos could interview women from different parts of the municipality, speak with other local community-based organizations working on gender issues that may already have documents analyzing the problem, or organize a focus group with women. All of these are useful tools for gathering information about the problem at hand.

b) Define the project's objectives and goals

Once the factors underlying the core problem have been identified, the next step is to determine how to address it (Cohen and Martínez, 2004). Here, it is important to establish the objectives, activities, and outputs that will guide project implementation.

Example:

After analyzing various sources, Nosotras Incidimos identified several factors underlying women's low levels of political participation in Santander de Quilichao. However, the women who participated in the focus group emphasized that they wanted to learn more about strategies for political participation, since this would give them greater confidence to engage in these spaces.

In this case, applying a diversity, equity, and inclusion approach means centering the women's priorities: Nosotras Incidimos could therefore define its project objective as strengthening women's knowledge and confidence to influence local decision-making through a training program on political participation strategies.

Accordingly, one possible goal could be for at least 70% of the women participating in these training workshops to report increased levels of knowledge and confidence in engaging in political advocacy spaces by the end of the project.

How should you organize this information?

In general, you should organize this information using the logical framework approach[3], which helps clarify how what you do connects to the change that you seek to achieve. To this end, you must first identify the resources available to your organization and then the activities that can be carried out with those resources. These activities will yield immediate outputs that will help you achieve your project's objective.

Example:

In this case, the results chain could be defined as follows:

Inputs: The members of Nosotras Incidimos are ten women leaders with specialized training in political participation strategies, developed through their experience in department-level advocacy spaces.

Activities: Drawing on this internal knowledge, the organization will offer five workshops combining theoretical training and practical exercises where its members share their expertise with other women in the municipality.

Outputs: After the workshops, Nosotras Incidimos will work with the participating women to develop a political participation strategy.

Results: Once the political participation strategy has been developed, the women will be able to apply it in advocacy spaces and build their confidence as a result of the knowledge they have acquired.

c) Identify the outcome indicators to be measured at baseline

In this first stage, it is essential to define outcome indicators—that is, the indicators that will allow you to assess changes in the people or organizations with whom you will work over the course of the project. These indicators do not measure activities themselves but rather the changes that result from them. They may capture changes in knowledge levels, the acquisition of new skills or tools, or shifts in the behavior or well-being of individuals or organizations.

How should you design these indicators?

1. The first step in designing these indicators is to identify the dependent variables—that is, the aspects expected to change as a direct result of the project. Defining these variables makes it possible to measure and assess both short-term changes, such as shifts in knowledge or the use of new tools, and longer-term changes, such as improvements in quality of life or organizational strengthening.

Example:

Nosotras Incidimos could define confidence in political participation as the dependent variable, since it is one of the areas the organization seeks to strengthen among women in Santander de Quilichao.

[3] According the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in its Manual for Program Design Using the Logical Framework Methodology (Aldunate & Córdoba, 2011), the logical framework is based on a series of assumptions describing cause-and-effect relationships, formulated as "if A occurs, then B is produced." These connections are understood in terms of necessary or sufficient conditions. A necessary condition means that cause A must be present for effect B to occur; in other words, B cannot occur unless A has happened first (p. 22).

2. Next, you should formulate questions that help you understand the initial situation with respect to the aspects you hope will change as a result of the project. The answers to these questions constitute the baseline—that is, the starting point for measuring the project's impact. At the end of the intervention, the same questions are administered again to establish the endline, which is what has changed in comparison to the initial situation.

Example:

Some of the questions that Nosotras Incidimos could ask to establish the baseline for this dependent variable are as follows:

1. Have you received any education or training on political rights or participation mechanisms? (Yes / No)

2. How often do you discuss political or community issues with other people in your circle? (Every day / Once a week / Once a month / Less than once a month)

3. On a scale from 1 to 5, how confident do you feel in your ability to influence decisions that affect your community?

4. If you had the opportunity to run for office or lead a political or community space, would you do it? (Yes / No)

5. Do you have a clearly defined strategy for political participation? (Yes / No)

6. Do you believe that caregiving responsibilities (such as housework or caring for children or older adults) limit your availability to participate in political spaces? (Yes / No)

7. On a scale from 1 to 5, how confident do you feel expressing your opinion in political spaces in which men also participate?

3. Once you know what you want to change through the project, you should define an indicator with a formula that allows you to measure the magnitude of the change produced by the project. To do so, you will need to take into account the baseline (the value at the start of the project), the endline (the value at the end of the project), and the resulting change (the difference between the endline and baseline).

Example:

If Nosotras Incidimos wanted to develop the indicator and formula for the fifth question above, they would proceed as follows:

Indicator:
percentage of women who have a clearly defined strategy for political participation.

Formula:
% of women with a strategy = nYes / nTotal x 100

Where:
nYes: the number of women who answered the question affirmatively
nTotal: the total number of women surveyed

Application of the formula:

If this question is asked at the start of the program and five of the twenty women surveyed respond that they have a political participation strategy, the formula would be as follows:

5 / 20 * 100 = 25

Percentage of women with a strategy at baseline: 25%

This formula should be applied both in the initial survey and in the final survey. If, at the end of the project, the same question is asked and fifteen of the twenty women respond that they have a political participation strategy, the formula would be as follows:

15 / 20 * 100 = 75

Percentage of women with a strategy at endline: 75%

Once both results are available, the following formula can be applied to determine the magnitude of the change:

Project result = %EL – %BL

Where:

%EL: the percentage of women who have a strategy at endline

%BL: the percentage of women who have a strategy at baseline

Formula: 75 – 25 = 50

The result is 50 percentage points. This indicates that there was a 50% increase in the share of women with a clearly defined political participation strategy after the project was implemented.

★ Although it is not necessary to apply the full formula during this first stage, it is important to define it from the outset to ensure that you are measuring what you need and therefore asking the right questions at baseline.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

This entire step should include a broad participatory component that recognizes the voices of the communities most affected by the circumstances the project seeks to transform. Doing so helps ensure that the process upholds the principles of participation, equity, and representativeness.

2. In-Process Evaluation: Keeping the Wheels Moving

After your project has been formulated and designed, it is essential to continuously track and monitor its implementation to ensure that the actions intended to achieve the stated objectives are actually carried out. Because social projects operate in dynamic and changing contexts, implementation is often flexible and involves ongoing interaction among objectives, courses of action, and the local context (Arias Torres & Herrera, 2012). The purpose of this stage is to review progress on an ongoing basis so that you can strengthen your courses of action and address difficulties as they arise.

This stage typically involves the following actions:

a) Review the theory of change—that is, the pathway designed to address the problem.

b) Design a monitoring matrix.

c) Analyze the data collected.

Putting Each Action Into Practice

a) Review the theory of change—that is, the pathway designed to address the problem

This action is intended to verify that the project is in fact changing the initial situation and that this change is being perceived by the people you are working with.

How should you review the theory of change?

You should schedule regular follow-up meetings with the people you work with to ask whether the project is meeting their expectations; it is also useful to hold such meetings with those implementing the project to verify that the activities are being carried out and are helping address the initial problem. These meetings can help you determine whether anything significant has changed and, if so, whether certain objectives or activities need to be adjusted.

b) Design a monitoring matrix

A monitoring matrix can take the form of a table that includes all of the project's activities and products, as well as the dates and the people responsible for carrying them out. This tool complements your ongoing review of the theory of change by helping track the project's progress.

What kind of information should you include in the monitoring matrix?

It is helpful to include the project's overall objective, activities, outputs, start and end dates, management indicators[4] and output indicators[5] (such as the number of workshops held or the number of books published), and the person responsible for carrying out each activity.

[4]According to the classification established by the Colombian National Department of Statistics, management indicators are used to measure resources utilized (such as personnel, money, and equipment) and the number of activities carried out during the implementation of a project (Función Pública, 2018).

[5]According to the classification established by the Colombian National Department of Statistics, output indicators measure the quantity of goods and services produced or delivered as the result of an intervention (Función Pública, 2018).

Example:

Political training project for women in the municipality of Santander de Quilichao		
Person in charge	**Project objective**	**Project goal**
Juliana Osorio	To strengthen women's knowledge and confidence to influence local decision-making through a training program on political participation strategies	70% of the women who participate in the political training workshops report increased levels of knowledge and confidence in engaging in political advocacy spaces

Activities	Outputs	Indicators	Indicator reports	Start and end dates
Conduct five training workshops on political participation strategies.	Co-development of a political participation strategy for women in the municipality.	Management indicator: Number of training workshops conducted Output indicator: Number of strategy documents produced	Management indicator: Five workshops conducted Output indicator: One document produced	01/02/26 - 31/05/26

If these results were to be explained in a report, the analysis could be structured as follows:

Compliance with the management indicator shows that the planned activities on political participation strategies were fully implemented. In addition, the output indicator shows that the training process resulted in the co-creation of a political participation strategy for women in the municipality, which contributes to the project's overall impact.

c) Analyze the data collected

This final action involves using the information gathered during the previous two actions to assess whether the project is progressing as expected or whether it requires some kind of intervention to address possible bottlenecks or disruptions.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Project adjustments should not be seen as setbacks when they help address problems and improve the project while safeguarding the well-being of the people involved. Approaching implementation in this way helps put the principles of continuous learning and reflection into practice.

3. Ex Post Evaluation: The Results of the Journey

The main purpose of the ex post evaluation is to measure the results achieved at the end of the project. Its function is to compare the initial situation (baseline) with the final situation (endline) in order to identify the changes that have occurred and assess the extent to which the project's objectives have been achieved. In addition to measuring results, this final stage makes it possible to draw lessons, identify best practices, and highlight areas for improvement that can inform future projects.

In this stage, it is important to undertake the following three actions to identify the project's main results and impacts:

a) Administer final surveys to establish the project's endline.

b) Conduct final interviews.

c) Analyze outcomes and impacts.

Putting Each Action Into Practice

a) Administer final surveys to establish the project's endline

The project's endline consists of the data collected once all project activities have been completed and should contain the same type of information gathered during the baseline assessment. For this reason, you must revisit the dependent variables to determine whether the initial situation changed following after the project's implementation. Here, you will ask the same questions you asked at the beginning regarding changes in knowledge levels, the acquisition of new skills or tools, and changes in the behavior or well-being of individuals or organizations.

How should you measure the endline?

Several things are important to consider when measuring the project's endline:

1. The questions and response options must be the same as those used in the baseline assessment in order to ensure comparability of the data.

2. You should verify that each person responding to the endline survey also responded to the baseline survey and that these individuals participated throughout the project.

3. It is important to ask directly whether the new tools and knowledge acquired, or any changes identified, were a direct result of your project, since they may sometimes stem from other parallel processes that contribute to the same objective but are not part of your intervention.

Example:

Nosotras Incidimos would revisit the questions that were asked in the baseline survey and ask them again:

1. Have you received any education or training on political rights or participation mechanisms? (Yes / No)

2. How often do you discuss political or community issues with other people in your circle? (Every day / Once a week / Once a month / Less than once a month)

3. On a scale from 1 to 5, how confident do you feel in your ability to influence decisions that affect your community?

4. If you had the opportunity to run for office or lead a political or community space, would you do it? (Yes / No)

5. Do you have a clearly defined strategy for political participation? (Yes / No)

6. Do you believe that caregiving responsibilities (such as housework or caring for children or older adults) limit your availability to participate in political spaces? (Yes / No)

7. On a scale from 1 to 5, how confident do you feel expressing your opinion in political spaces in which men also participate?

b) Conduct final interviews

In some cases, structured surveys with predefined questions and response options may fail to capture information about the results, effects, and general perceptions of a project. It can therefore be useful to conduct final interviews—whether individual or group—to gather additional information not captured through surveys.

What should you do during final interviews?

1. Keep in mind that this is a more open and less formal setting than surveys. For that reason, it may be appropriate to conduct a semi-structured—or even unstructured—interview[6], allowing project participants greater freedom to share their honest perceptions.

[6]In a structured interview, the researcher uses an interview guide that determines both the qustions—usally open-ended—and the order in which they are to be asked. By contrast, a semi-structured interview is based on a set of guiding themes and questions, but without fixed wording or a rigid sequence. Lastly, an unstructured interview does not rely on an interview guide, predefined questions or topics, or an established order; here, the researcher brings only the core questions of the study (Tejero, 2021, p. 67).

2. Be attentive to information that may not previously have been identified as a dependent variable through which change would be measured, but which project participants highlight as relevant.

c) Analyze outcomes and impacts

After collecting information through the final interviews and surveys, you will have a substantial body of data that can be used to conduct the final evaluation and to identify the outcomes, impacts, and longer-term effects of the project.

How should you process the information and turn it into an evaluation report?

1. Organize all of the data collected through the baseline and endline surveys, from all parties involved in the process, in an Excel matrix. This will allow you to identify the most common types of responses and compare the initial data with the final data.

2. Summarize and highlight the key information from the interviews. Here, you can also create an Excel matrix that presents the responses concisely and captures new information not reflected in the surveys.

3. Once the information has been organized, document the entire process so that you have an overview of what took place from the beginning to the end of the project. Drawing on this variety of information sources allows you to incorporate different perspectives and strengthens the validity and depth of the analysis through data triangulation.

4. Next, present the results using the outcome indicators designed during the first stage (ex ante evaluation). Apply the relevant formulas and demonstrate the changes achieved through the project's activities and outputs. This is the point at which you analyze changes in knowledge levels, acquired skills and tools, behavior, well-being, quality of life, and any other goals identified at the outset of the project.

5. Finally, draw the main conclusions about the project's impacts, including lessons learned and areas for improvement in a future phase of the project.

6. Once the information has been processed and the evaluation report is complete, share the project's results in accordance with the principle of horizontal accountability. Remember to communicate the findings transparently and accessibly through a variety of channels.

Example:

Project result = %EL – %BL

Formula: 75 – 25 = 50

If the Nosotras Incidimos results were to be explained in a report, the analysis could be structured as follows:

The percentage of women with a clearly defined political participation strategy increased from 25% at baseline to 75% at endline. This shows that the project contributed to a 50-percentage-point increase in the share of participants with such a strategy.

These findings are consistent with the interviews, in which the women who participated in the workshops reported having learned how to develop political participation strategies. It is worth noting that although 25% of the women already had such strategies before the project began, they explained that the training helped them improve and, in some cases, restructure those strategies, thereby strengthening their confidence. This was also true for the women who developed their strategies for the first time through the project.

At the same time, although the remaining 25% of women did not end the project with a written political participation strategy, the surveys showed that they had acquired the knowledge needed to develop one. This was confirmed in the interviews, where these women explained that they now had the skills to create such strategies independently in the future. This suggests that despite the different levels of engagement in the training process, the project had a significant impact on strengthening participants' capacities for political participation, thereby contributing to its broader objective of strengthening women's political agency.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

We recommend conducting surveys and interviews not only with those who participate in and benefit directly from the project but also with those who implement it, since learning processes in social projects often move beyond hierarchical distinctions between implementers and beneficiaries and instead become processes of mutual learning. This helps ensure that the evaluation process reflects the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in relation to knowledge.

4.

EXAMPLE: DEJUSTICIA'S ENLAZA STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

At Dejusticia, we created the Enlaza Strengthening Program in 2022 as a space for civil society organizations in the Andean region to strengthen themselves from the ground up. Through this program, we seek to protect civic space and democracy.

Enlaza uses a participatory evaluation methodology to understand its progress. This methodology has allowed us to identify promising practices and strengthen the program's impact, while also enriching our institutional knowledge and capacities. As explained in this guide, our evaluation methodology consists of three stages: ex ante evaluation, in-process evaluation, and ex post evaluation.

Learn more about the program here

For the ex ante evaluation:

1. We carry out a selection process to identify the civil society organizations that will participate in the program.

2. We co-create tailored capacity-building plans in collaboration with the organizations in order to address a specific need. In doing so, we apply the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion, since we value the organizations' situated knowledge and therefore design spaces in which they actively define the objectives of their own capacity-building plans.

3. We identify the dependent variables—that is, what we seek to change—in a way that is tailored to each capacity-building plan.

4. We design the baseline survey questions, which participating organizations respond to through a Google Forms questionnaire.

5. We systematize and standardize the baseline survey responses. In some cases, we assign numerical values to written responses so they can be standardized and compared at the end of the process using the formula for our outcome indicators.

6. We analyze the baseline survey responses, which then serve as an input for the final evaluation.

7. We design outcome indicators that, in our case, measure changes in knowledge levels, changes in organizational well-being, overall perceptions of impact, and general satisfaction with the process.

For the in-process evaluation:

1. We hold interim project follow-up meetings with Enlaza's participating organizations, as well as with Dejusticia research teams and partner organizations involved in strengthening the Enlaza participants.

2. We develop monitoring matrixes that outline the activities and products for each process, along with output indicators that we update regularly to track the progress of the capacity-building plans.

3. When necessary, we revise and restructure the capacity-building plans in order to achieve the best possible results. This helps ensure that the principles of continuous learning and reflection are mainstreamed into project implementation.

For the ex post evaluation:

1. At the end of the process, we interview the participating organizations, Dejusticia research teams, and partner organizations to gather feedback on the capacity-building process.

2. We administer surveys to establish the endline. These surveys use the same questions asked at the beginning, along with several additional questions about overall perceptions of the process.

3. We systematize and standardize the responses from the endline surveys.

4. By drawing on all of the sources of information described above, we apply the principles of mixed methods and triangulation, since we consider both qualitative and quantitative information while also capturing the diversity of voices involved in the project.

5. We analyze the survey and interview responses and compare them with the information gathered during the baseline assessment in order to apply the formulas for our outcome indicators.

6. We compile all information on activities and outputs to complete our monitoring matrixes and report on all output indicators.

7. We draft a report presenting all the results, including both output and outcome indicators, along with a description of the most relevant findings on the concrete effects and impacts on the organizations participating in the capacity-building process.

8. We collect and systematize recommendations for improvement and lessons learned in order to refine methodologies or processes in subsequent phases of the project. In this way, we apply the principle of institutional transformation, which allows us revise or adapt project components as needed.

9. At the end of the project, we disseminate the main results and share them with participating organizations as a way of fostering shared responsibility in the evaluation process. In doing so, we uphold the principle of horizontal accountability.

We then repeat the process one year after the project's implementation.

5.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Impact measurement is not a destination but an ongoing process that supports and transforms the way civil society organizations, think act, and learn. Throughout this guide, we have explored how applying the MEAL framework through an ethical, participatory, transformative, and feminist lens enables each project to become an opportunity to improve, innovate, and build legitimacy. Measuring impact not only demonstrates what has been achieved but also reveals how those changes were achieved and with whom, while inviting us to reflect on our practices, relationships, and ways of understanding social development.

With this approach in mind, the following recommendations may help you begin or strengthen your own impact measurement process:

- Prioritize a participatory and diverse approach that actively incorporates the voices of communities, groups, and their members in order to ensure equity and representativeness at every stage of the process.
- Develop a clear strategy tailored to your organization's specific needs and objectives, incorporating ex ante, in-process, and ex post evaluation stages to ensure continuous monitoring and timely adjustments.
- Design outcome indicators that measure real and lasting change in individuals and communities by clearly defining dependent variables and formulating comparable questions for the baseline and endline assessments.
- Incorporate mixed methods and data triangulation, combining qualitative and quantitative tools for deeper and more robust analysis, and use monitoring matrixes to organize activities, outputs, and indicators.
- Foster an organizational culture of continuous learning, openness, and critical review, in which mistakes are understood as opportunities to improve and transform projects and internal structures alike.
- Ensure transparency and horizontal accountability by communicating results clearly and accessibly and strengthening legitimacy and shared responsibility among the people, communities, and organizations involved.
- Systematize the lessons learned and promising practices from each cycle in order to support the continuous improvement of your processes and to contribute to lasting social impact grounded in evidence and collective memory.

Social impact measurement is a systematic process that allows us to understand the extent to which a project's actions have brought about positive changes in the lives of individuals and communities. Its purpose is to assess the real and lasting effects attributable to an intervention, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Importantly, measuring impact is also an act of care and collective memory: it is a way of recognizing the value of what we do, learning from experience, and leaving a mark for those who continue weaving processes of change.

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