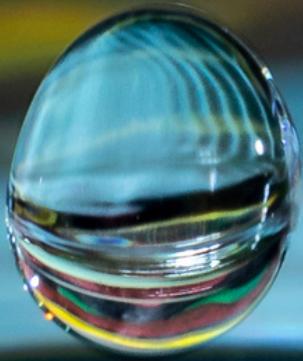




SMART ERP

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SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

WHY, WHO, HOW?

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From the outset ...

Reading this, you may be the leader of a values-led organisation with a strong desire to create change.

Resources will be invested, money, time, knowledge and passion.

Like us, you will want to have positive outcomes.

In order to achieve these, we need to clarify what "positive outcome" means.

- who are the beneficiaries of these "outcomes"?
- in what areas will there be a change for beneficiaries from one situation to another?

The main beneficiaries of a Social Impact initiative are those identified and targeted. Ultimately though, all the stakeholders should gain something, everybody who is affected by the project - the sponsor, the team, as well as the target group.

To align the stakeholders for a common purpose, they should all get something out of it. They might be wildly varied benefits, from physical improvements, through monetary gains, to feeling better about themselves.

The clearer the individual stakeholders' gains, the more likely that the project will find a way to succeed. Better planning and better execution will also result from this clarity.

To make sure these benefits materialise, they should be measured or assessed - some with meticulous measurement methods, others with impromptu judgement, whichever is available and possible.

In this document we explore how the "selfish" personal whys, "selfless" human conscience and scientific measurements can create a complementary assessment system.

Assessment Map

An Assessment Map for Social Impact projects serves to harmonise three elements - the personal whys, the human conscience and scientific measurements. Their purpose is to counterbalance - the "selfish" and the "selfless", the subjective and the objective.

An Assessment Map is for our own benefit, trying to maximize the impact of our projects and save precious resources from being wasted. We can decide which details of it we share with others, and which details we will keep for ourselves.

These three elements serve different purposes and are equal in importance. Each gives scope, meaning and depth to the others. Each has its own traps, and playing them "against" each other will highlight some of these pitfalls.

Short descriptions

Personal whys

This is a "selfish" or self-focused view on our own personal benefits. It could be self-esteem, yearning for respect, peace of mind, fame, leaving a legacy or even financial reward. The personal why is about self-awareness, so that when we reach tough decision points, we know our "inner side of the story". The personal why is where our energy will come from, so we'd better be aware of the source. Neglecting, denying or hiding from ourselves our personal whys is a risk to the project's success.

Human conscience

This is a "selfless" view of the targeted beneficiaries' benefits - which could be their safety, a better living or improved environment. It is about HOW THEY WILL EXPERIENCE their own personal benefits.

Fortunately, our consciences can describe for us what and how others will feel. It is built into us - each of us constantly lives inseparably from an active personal conscience. Our awareness of its usefulness and keenness may vary from one individual to another, but it is always there if we seek it. We can use it as a good predictor and route-finder of changes for main beneficiaries.

Scientific measurement and assessment

This is an objective approach towards the tangible changes each project makes. Measured and assessed changes should provide evidence and support for the other two levels. Science offers qualitative and quantitative assessment and measurement techniques which we can use here.



How to understand the true benefit to ourselves

It may seem strange to talk about the personal benefits in Social Impact projects, but ultimately it is often individual efforts and sacrifice that will make these projects successful, maybe even against all odds. Extra boosted determination almost always comes from personal whys.

Most people don't like to share their personal whys, maybe for diffidence or for fears of being rejected, judged or laughed at! Still, each of us should become well aware of them, or our efforts will be less likely to bear the fruits we really seek.

However, it is never trivial to reach a full understanding of our individual innermost "whys?" If questioned, our immediate responses are often automatic - answers we prepared for others, or just some general presumptions which seem unchallengeable.

A good initial way to understand our core whys is to question ourselves carefully, and delve deeply, seeing fundamental truths behind early (and superficial?) responses.

There is a model for this in the traditional "5 whys", originally used for business problem-solving. With every successive "why?" question, we can try to find out where our response and interest originate from.

Taking the questions seriously, after a few rounds we will truly start to talk about ourselves, and not about others. With every round we are getting closer to finding out where crucial extra energy will come from.



How to understand benefits to others

Social Impact projects are by nature aimed to benefit some groups of people. Their lives will become better, happier, as a result of the projects, if successful.

A word like "better" is a very subjective human term....

Still, as a social species, we are born with an amazing gauge for judging other people's well-being. We have a sense of empathy built in to us, projecting a future vision in our minds that we can use to build decisions on.

Arguably, empathy and judgement can certainly differ from one person to another, but these abilities have kept our species alive and very successful for millions of years, so that is an outstanding record of success (and source of pride!). These are very powerful tools and can give very clear indications if we practise and use them.

A very good start is to ask ourselves a set of questions about core aspects of human life. For example, how will our Social Impact actions cause change improvements in areas such as in these four categories?

- 1 individuals' SAFETY
- 2 relieving PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT
- 3 answering BODILY, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL and SPIRITUAL NEEDS
- 4 enabling individual and social RESPECT for people

(Note: we provide a full sample questionnaire at the end of this document.)

Since these questions relate to core human values - not dependent on culture, time or location - they can also serve as the basis for comparisons between different projects.

Scientific measurement and assessment



How to do qualitative and quantitative assessment and measurement

Don't believe everything you think: take the trouble to "measure" it.

However, this is easier said than done. The "what", the "how" and the "when" all provide their own challenges for each individual project.

In the first place, we will have to find some causal links between what we can measure and the outcome we're actually seeking. We will also have to be aware that our decision of measuring a certain aspect will affect actions and goals of others and of ourselves. (This is called the observer effect.)

Very often, we will have to prioritize what we measure, as there is no way it will be possible to measure everything.

For the "how" we will have to consider different evaluation methods, based on their accuracy, feasibility and credibility.

For the "when", ideally, we should measure before, during and after.

- before to have a comparative point
- during to see the direction we are going
- after to compare the changes with expected outcomes

A conscientious Social Impact questionnaire

For assessment of Social Impact projects, we need to ask questions about the fundamental improvements in beneficiaries' lives that we seek.

To do so, we'll need to think insightfully and honestly about such concepts and words as "happiness" and "well-being", for which our own built-in consciences are significant assistance.

This questionnaire's specific pointers deal with fundamental human areas of safety, physical conditions, needs and respect.

For safety and needs, the questions address the four "quadrants" of body, mind, spirit and heart (or emotions).

For physical conditions, questions deal with hydration, nutrition, rest and general health.

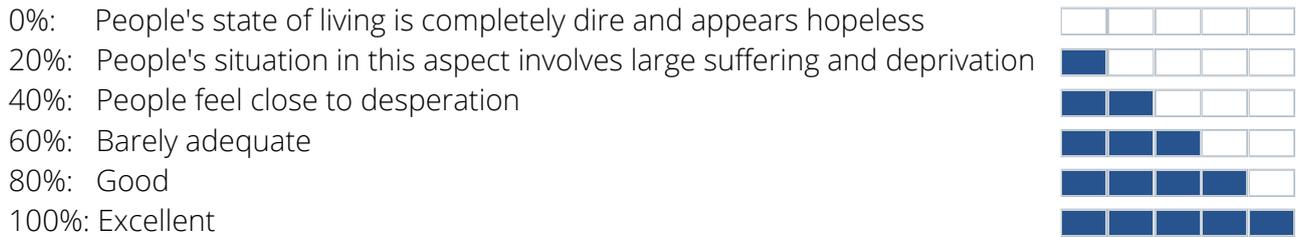
In respect, questions range from the self to the ever-widening communities surrounding the individual.

Some questions may not apply to a particular project, and some projects may need other questions added to the list. These questions are a starting point and offer a comparative basis for varied projects.

SUBJECTIVE CHARTING OF PARTICIPANTS' BENEFITS THROUGH SOCIAL IMPACT

Estimate the current situation where your Social Impact project is change-making.

Select an approximate percentage, corresponding to how things look -



Mark boxes in two colours, to show -

- how things are now (pre-project or mid-project)
- also, how much do you judge that you can achieve in positive change

(For example: improve an aspect from 40% "People feel close to desperation" in one colour, to 80% "Good" in the second colour.)





PARTICIPANTS' BENEFITS QUESTIONNAIRE

Security and safety

- People have physical safety from violence and most accidents
- People have mental safety, without deceptive or excessive information
- People can hold and use beneficial principles, values and beliefs
- People can protect themselves from threats to their emotional health

Physical conditions

- People have access to plenty of clean water
- People have access to sufficient nourishing food
- People can maintain good rest and sleep practices
- People's circumstances support well-maintained physical health

Well-being preferences

- People can make choices to fulfil their bodily needs
- Each person's mind is actively and positively engaged
- People can respond to ideas and ideals which fulfil their destiny
- Individuals feel emotionally safe, equally and mutually in their communities

Respect

- Each person can have good self-awareness and good self-respect
- People are able to gain and enjoy the respect and support of their families
- Each working person can gain and benefit from colleagues' respect
- Every person is duly respected in their local and larger communities
- The individual is respected by his/her society
