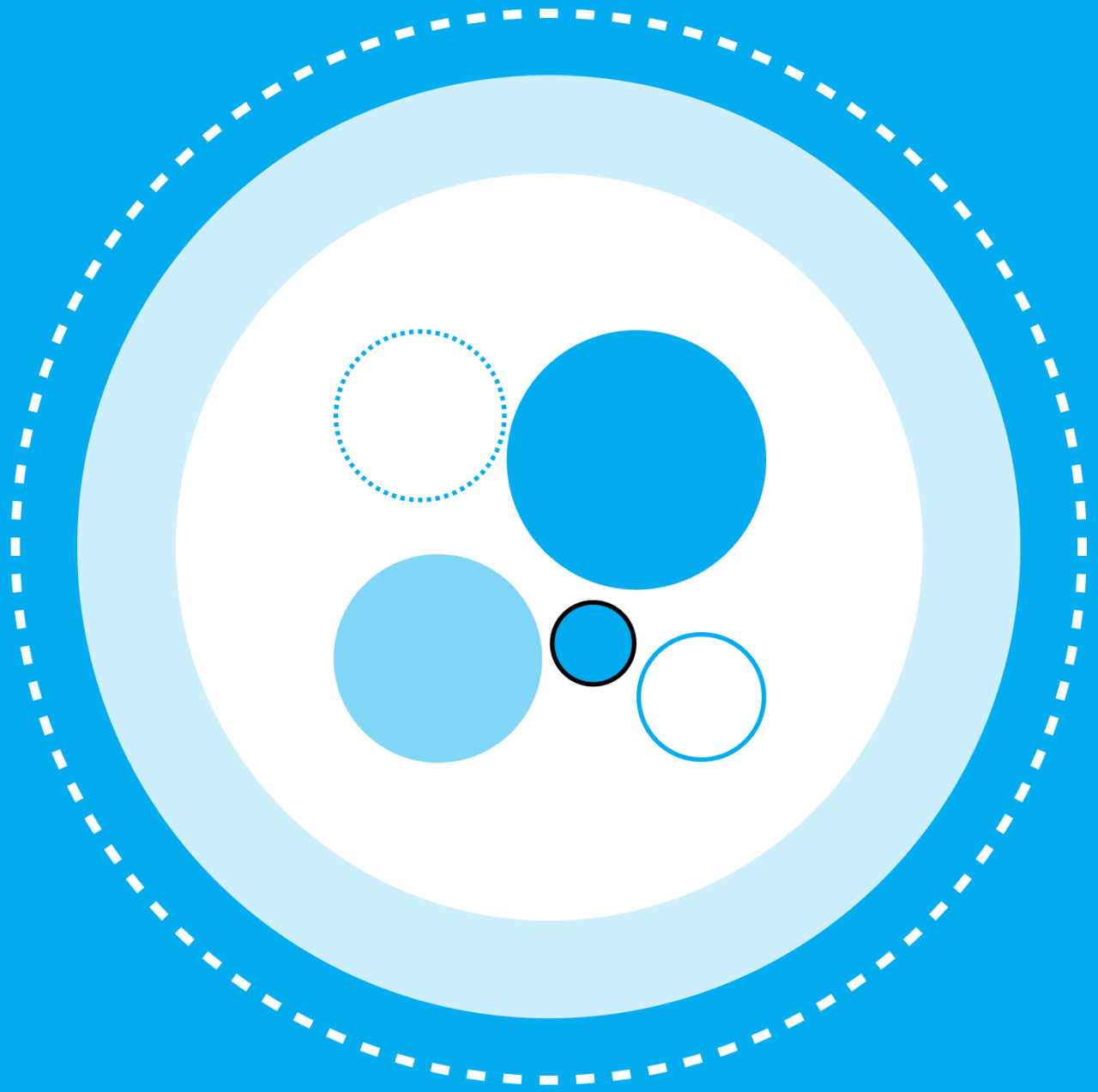
unicef for every child | office of innovation

Innovation Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Toolbox

An essential guide to measuring what matters, from idea to scale



About UNICEF OOI

UNICEF's Office of Innovation (OOI) has an agile business architecture that aligns with diverse partners to discover, co-create and scale bold solutions and technologies to deliver for children today and set a new pace of social impact for coming generations.

Authors

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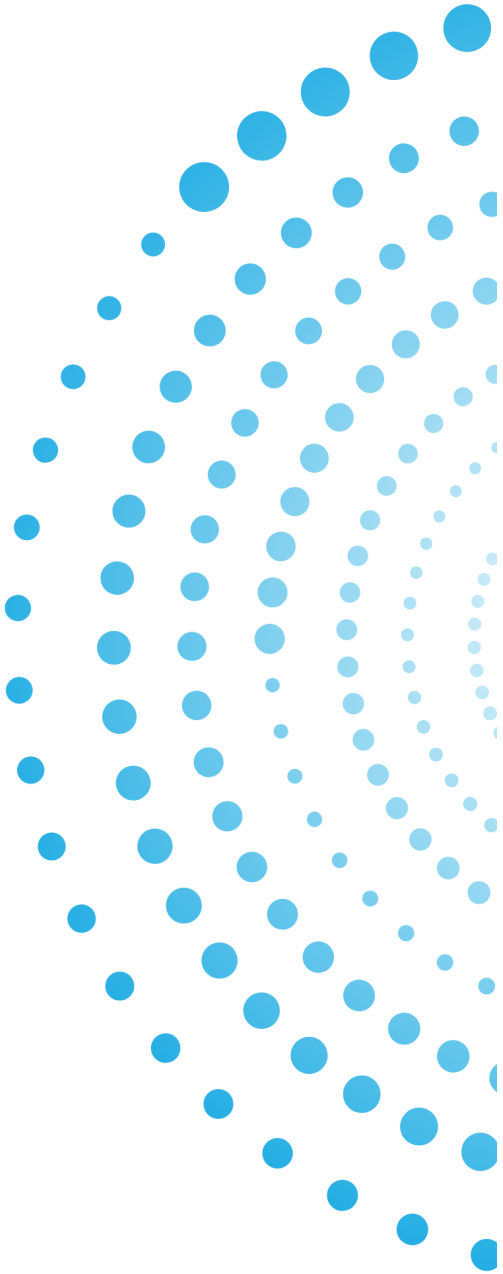

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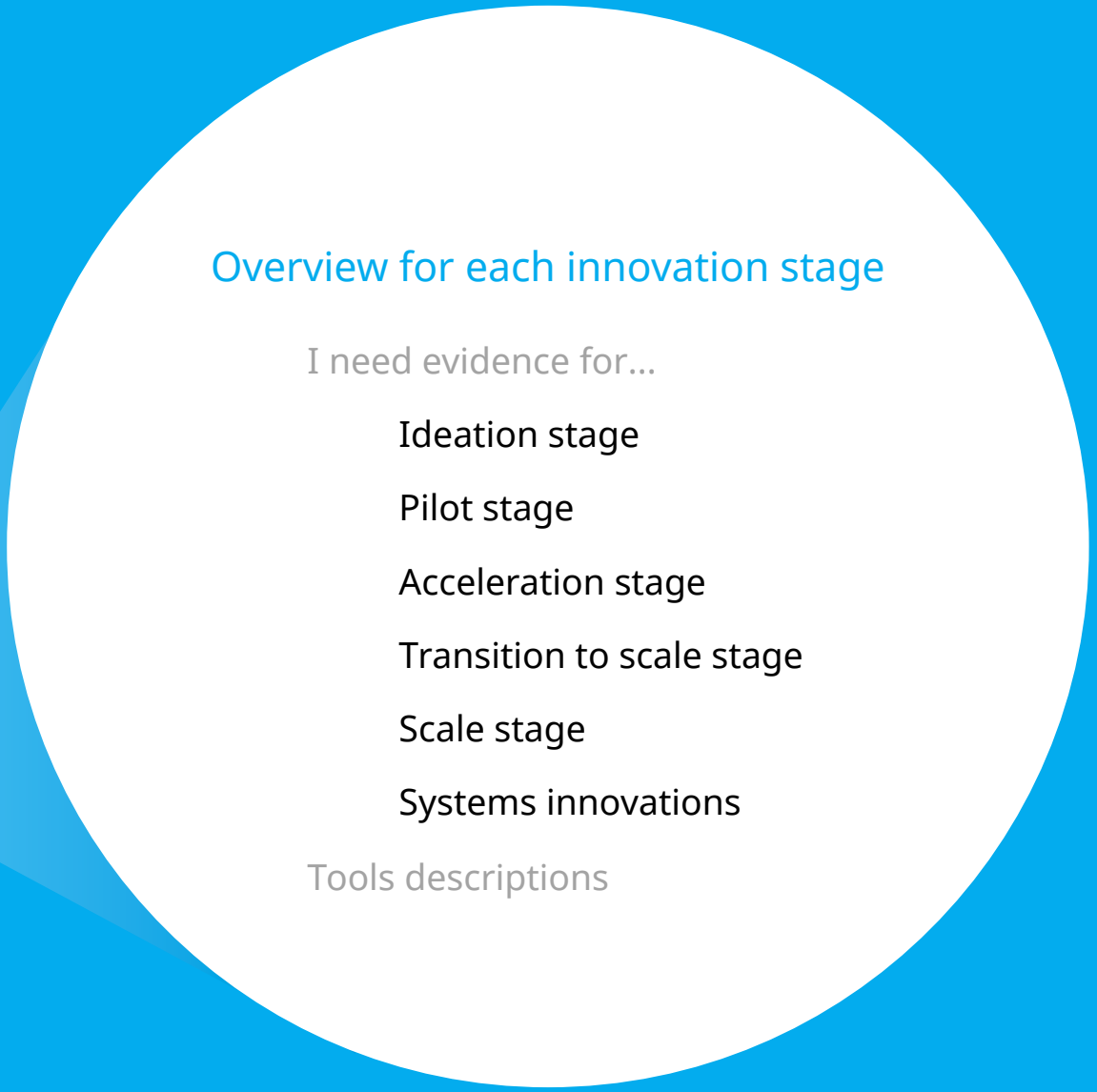


How can we help?

*Click the icons to access respective content.

I need evidence for

See the overview of the recommended tools (with detailed descriptions) that can help obtain the necessary evidence related to innovations in a specific innovation stage or for systemic change.

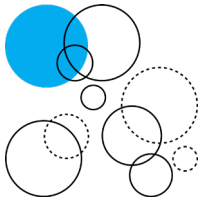
I want to browse

Explore the repository of methodologies, tools, and toolkits related to all innovation stages or for systemic change.

I need evidence for...

*Click the icons to access the cheatsheet for tools recommendation for each innovation stage.

Individual innovation solutions



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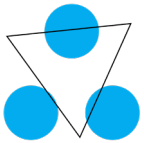
Ideation stage



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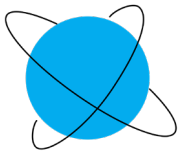
Pilot stage



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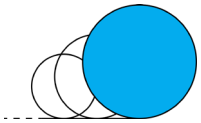
Acceleration stage



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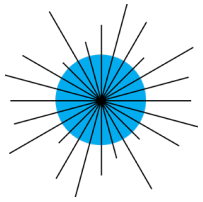
Transition to scale stage



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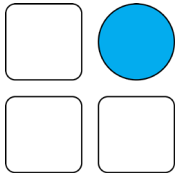
Scale stage

Systems innovation



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Systems innovations

I want to browse

Click to browse

All tools repository

All relevant tools for all innovation stages

Click to browse

Innovation toolkits

Curated toolkits for all innovation stages

Click to browse

Systems Innovations

Recommended tools and toolkits on systems innovations

Foreword

Innovation has become a defining force in UNICEF's mission to deliver transformative solutions for children and communities across the globe. In a world of growing complexity and rapid change, it is both our responsibility and our opportunity to co-create, discover, iterate, and scale bold approaches that tackle the most pressing challenges children face today.

The Innovation Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Toolbox, developed by the UNICEF Office of Innovation, is a comprehensive resource designed to support this mission. It consolidates a wealth of methodologies and tools that support evidence-based decision-making and adaptations throughout the entire innovation process. Drawing on widely used approaches from UNICEF and other leading actors in the humanitarian and development sectors, each tool has been selected, reviewed and refined to ensure that it is not only effective but also responsive to the evolving challenges we face.

Importantly, this toolbox is built on a robust body of insights and learning about what makes scaling successful. It distills years of learning within and beyond UNICEF on how to design for scale from the outset, and how to assess whether a solution is truly scalable. As we look to the future, we now have the knowledge, frameworks, and tools to design innovations with scale in mind. Used together with the 5D Innovation Framework, this toolbox is an easy-to-use guide to help colleagues do just that.

UNICEF's Office of Innovation is committed to working in close collaboration with UNICEF regional and country offices to embed evidence and innovation in the fabric of our everyday work. We also offer this toolbox as a shared resource, freely accessible to others who are advancing innovation for impact. By building and sharing strong evidence for innovation, we strengthen our collective capacity to navigate complexity, tackle complex global challenges and accelerate sustainable, lasting change.

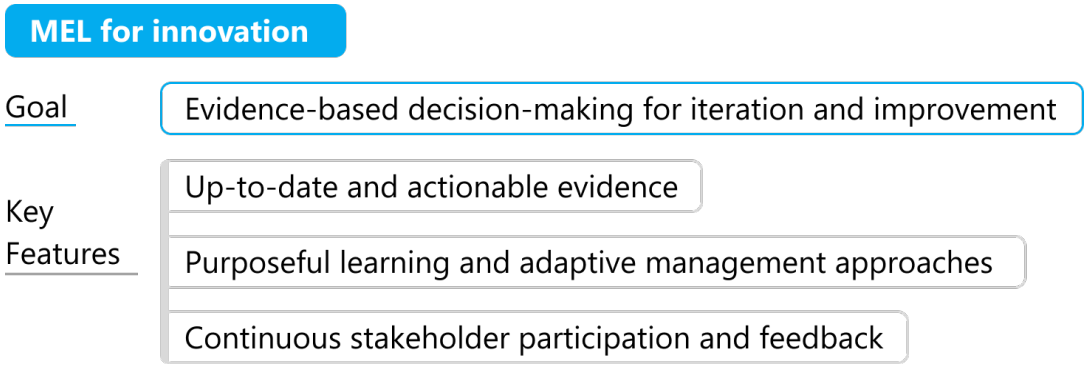
The Innovation MEL Toolbox marks a beginning, a foundation from which to grow MEL practices that are meaningful, adaptable, and rooted in the realities of the children and communities we serve. We invite you to explore the toolbox with an open mind and a spirit of experimentation, embracing the iterative nature of innovation. The journey of innovation is one of discovery and learning, and it is our hope that this resource will serve as a valuable companion along the way.

Thomas Davin
Director, UNICEF Office of Innovation

Get Started

What is the Innovation MEL Toolbox?

Innovation is increasingly recognized as a critical driver and key strategy for addressing complex global challenges, with evidence being a crucial input that informs strategic decisions and adaptations throughout the entire innovation process.[1] In the fast-paced world of innovation, the ability to quickly adapt and respond to new insights is paramount, requiring a shift towards more agile, responsive and utilization-oriented practices that provide more **accessible, up-to-date and actionable** data and evidence on what works, why and under what conditions. There is also a need to align with the **perspectives of beneficiaries and/or users**, ensuring that innovation is problem-driven, appropriate and relevant. Data and information also need to be connected to **purposeful learning and adaptive management approaches** that can effectively capture, apply and share lessons learned in each stage of the innovation cycle.



The Innovation Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Toolbox is a non-prescriptive compendium of resources developed to equip UNICEF staff and partners with the methodologies and tools needed for evidence-based decision-making for iteration and improvement in each stage of an innovation. It also aims to facilitate a systems thinking perspective and related evidence approaches that recognize complexity, uncertainty and change.

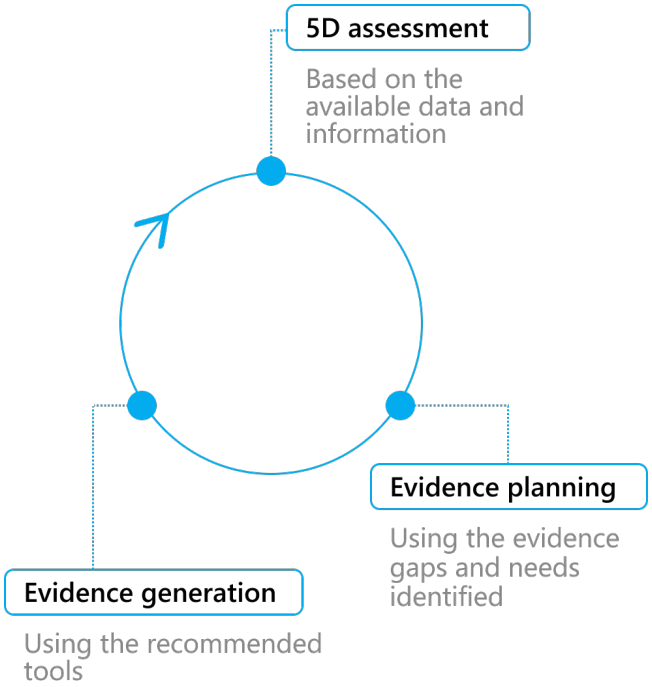
How was the Toolbox developed?

The methodologies and tools included are based on methods and approaches commonly used by UNICEF and other organizations and individuals in the humanitarian and development sectors. They have been selected, edited and adapted based on the needs of UNICEF stakeholders and reviewed by a panel of experts and practitioners.

A repository of all methodologies and tools across the different stages has been created. Simultaneously, a cheat sheet has been created for each innovation stage that features the most essential tools (with detailed descriptions) to help obtain the necessary stage-specific evidence and insights. Evidence for all listed aspects should be available as they are key to decision making. It is important to emphasize that methods and tools can be appropriate and relevant in multiple innovation stages.

The tools included in the cheat sheets reflect the minimum standards. When selecting the tools, the following aspects have been prioritized:

- can be used to measure multiple criteria in the 5D Innovation Framework
- can be appropriate and relevant in multiple innovation stages
- can be appropriate and relevant for different types of evidence use
- require low resource intensity



How to use the Innovation MEL Toolbox in tandem with the 5D Innovation Framework?

The innovation process is not always followed from start to end: some innovations may arise from a process of ideation and prototyping while other existing innovations may be adapted and adopted in new contexts. Therefore, each innovation may have a different starting point in the continuum when entering the UNICEF portfolio. However, it is important that the evidence for the current and past stages is available as it is an important foundation of the innovation, which can and should be used for learning and improvement.

The UNICEF 5D Innovation Framework provides a structure to systematically generate evidence and capture crucial data and insights throughout the innovation journey to ensure success, while the Innovation MEL Toolbox offers methods and tools to capture relevant data and information on each of the 5D sub-dimensions. We recommend starting with an internal rapid **5D assessment** using the available data and information. During this process, **gaps and needs** are identified and used for planning for **evidence generation** (this Evidence Roadmap template can be helpful). Based on this information, you can choose to:

- explore the Tools Repository to browse, filter and access tools that are deemed relevant, and/or
- view the cheat sheets with the recommended tools for specific innovation stages and/or systems innovations.

Once the evidence is obtained, a re-assessment can be conducted with the inclusion of the evidence obtained.

We invite you to explore the Innovation MEL Toolbox with an open mind and a spirit of experimentation, embracing the iterative nature of innovation. The innovation journey is one of discovery and learning, and it is our hope that this resource will serve as a valuable companion along the way. This toolbox represents a starting point, a foundation upon which to build MEL practices that fit the needs of your innovation so meaningful and lasting change can be created for children and communities.

Innovation Basics

What is an innovation?

UNICEF's Global Innovation Strategy and Framework 2.0 defines innovation as **a new or significantly improved solution**[2] that contributes to progress for children and accelerates results for children or young people. It should be noted that creating something new does not require the invention of something completely new – an innovative solution might very well have been tested elsewhere and proven successful. Applying a tested tool in a new context, if the parameters are significantly different, can still be deemed innovative. More specifically, solutions may also be considered an innovation in the following cases:

New Technology, Capability, or Market Approach

when a solution involves the application of a technology, capability, or market approach that is novel to UNICEF and addresses a specific gap or challenge. Examples include blockchain-enabled cash transfer, AI facilitating programmatic results, public-private-partnership financial model developed to improve oxygen supply for babies in hospitals.

New to Country Office (CO)

when a solution is already present within UNICEF but is considered an innovation at the regional or local level and being introduced for the first time in a specific CO.

New to Thematic Section

when a solution already exists within UNICEF or a CO but is adapted for use within a specific thematic area or section.

New Use Case

when an existing technology, capability or market approach within UNICEF or a CO is applied in a new way or for a new purpose.

Modalities of innovation

Innovation at UNICEF is primarily to **accelerate programme results** through new and different approaches, processes, technologies, products and ways of working. A programme innovation can be pursued through **one or more modalities**, including:

Data Innovation

the use of new or non-traditional data sources and applications of data science to gain new insights, including through predictive analytics. An example is anomaly detection and prediction of cash transfer payments.

Innovative Finance

non-traditional mechanisms of making capital available to meet children's development needs. Examples are bridge funds, blended finance, crowdsourcing, catastrophe bonds and cryptocurrency donations, new venture capitalism modalities and new business models for sustainable development.

Product Innovation

new or improved physical goods to meet the needs of children and young people. For example, portable incubators, accessible latrine slabs for children with disabilities, compressed air for pneumonia, new diagnostic tools, multi-purpose lightweight tents.

Digital Innovation

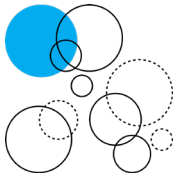
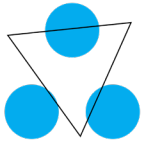
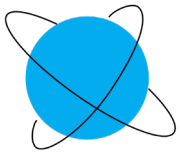
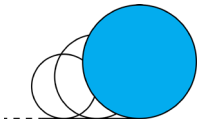
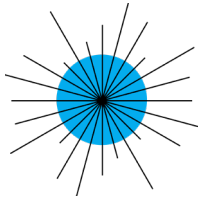
new or existing digital technologies that are developed, adapted or adopted for scale to accelerate results for children. Examples include virtual and augmented reality lessons that improve learning outcomes, new digital health tools that improve government-level stock monitoring to reduce stock-outs of essential commodities, accessible digital textbooks, mobile youth platforms.

Social Innovation

new applications of user-centred participatory approaches, design principles and behavioural science to create meaningful social changes, behaviour changes and norm shifting. Examples include UPSHIFT, human-centred design.

Stages of innovation

UNICEF works across all phases of innovation, The innovation process and stages conceptualized below are representative of the entire end-to-end process of innovation on a continuum from ideation to scale and sustained adoption, not only the key investment and global innovation portfolio management phases.

Ideation

The problem is defined and analysed, then matched with a new or established innovation solution validated and refined through early-stage feedback.
(IDIA, 2017)

Pilot

The innovation solution is field-tested through an early, real-world assessment of effectiveness, relevance, added value and feasibility to gain proof of concept.[3]
(IDIA, 2017)

Acceleration

Model for 'scale-up' (vertical scaling) and 'scale-out' (horizontal scaling)[4] is developed and iterated by simultaneously adding complexity to create a complete and sustainable innovation solution and reducing complexity to create an easily replicable intervention in diverse contexts.[5]
(McClure & Gray, 2015; Mwenda & Tanner, 2020)

Transition to scale

The innovation solution is replicated and/or adapted across geographies and populations for transformational impact.[6]
(IDIA, 2017)

Scale

The innovation solution is adopted and operates at the desired level of scale/exponential growth, sustained by an ecosystem of actors.[7]
(IDIA, 2017)

Innovation at UNICEF

Innovation – UNICEF strategy and positioning

Innovation is identified as a change strategy in UNICEF's 2022–2025 Strategic Plan to accelerate results for children at scale. UNICEF's Global Innovation Strategy and Framework 2.0 outlines the need to tackle problems for which existing approaches and solutions have made insufficient progress and apply new solutions to these intractable problems and stubborn barriers to achieve results. In this process, it is envisioned that fostering a culture of innovation and enabling internal processes to support innovation will accelerate progress towards meeting the goals of the Strategic Plan and achieving the SDGs.

Portfolio approach and the 5-Dimensional (5D) Innovation Framework

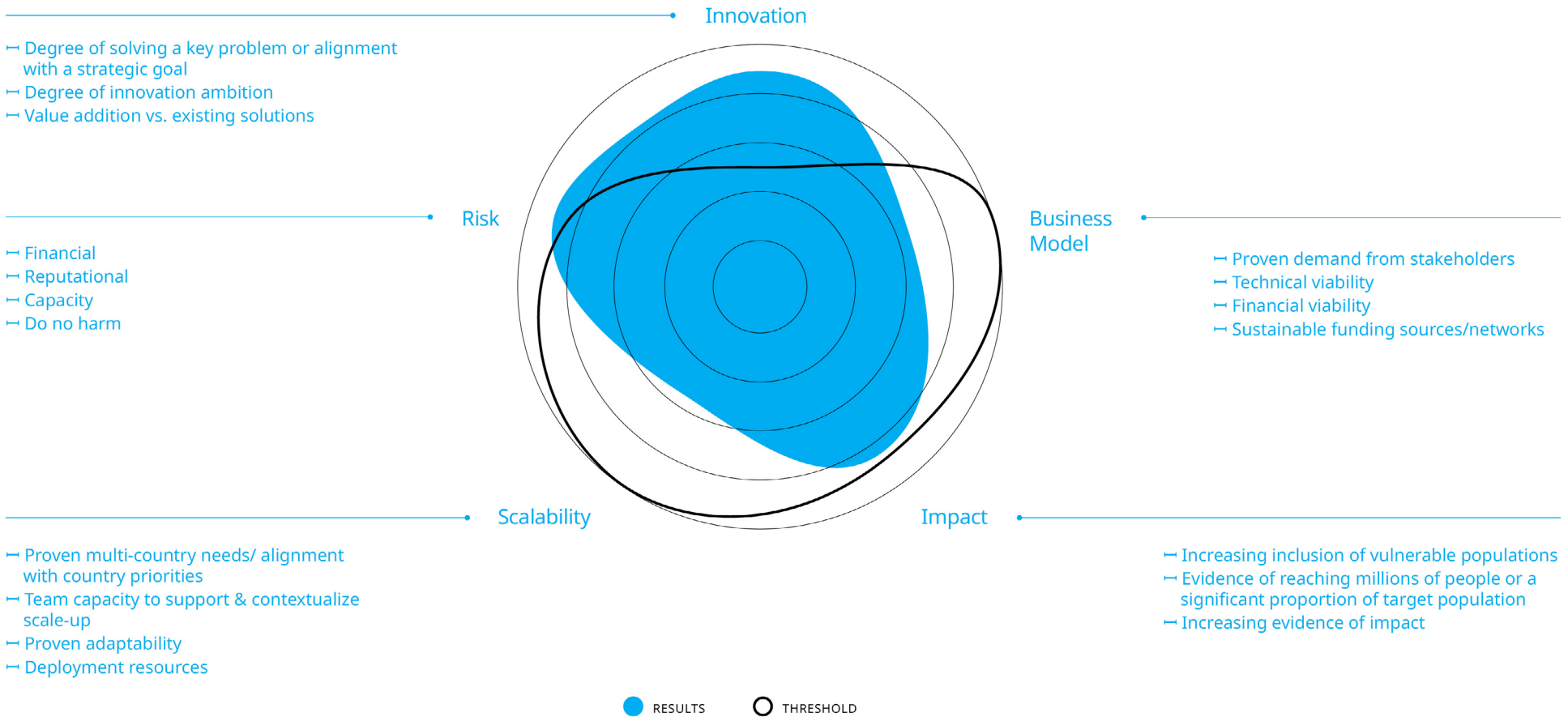
UNICEF's innovation portfolio approach helps countries make evidence-based decisions on programme priorities with a clear problem statement, channel investments to identify the most promising scalable innovations and mobilize organization-wide action. Innovation is leveraged as a **change strategy** to tackle the most difficult challenges and **accelerate results**. This is achieved through a curated set of innovative solutions in nine global innovation portfolios across different programmatic areas. To support the strategic scale-up of innovations, UNICEF has introduced the 5-Dimensional (5D) Innovation Framework to manage the innovation process. The framework allows the **identification, validation and scaling** of potentially transformative innovative ideas and solutions aligned with UNICEF's mission. It outlines a structure to systematically generate evidence and capture crucial data and insights throughout the innovation journey. It also provides a foundation to make strategic decisions and optimize the chance of scaling and, equally critically, an objective basis for rejecting an innovation or discontinuing support.

The 5D Innovation Framework considers that scaling a solution involves a **multidimensional approach** with each dimension playing a crucial role in this process. The five dimensions and 18 sub-dimensions offer insights into different aspects of what it takes to scale.

How it works

Each of the 18 sub-dimensions has a guiding question and is scored 0-3 based on existing evidence, ideally by a panel, and aggregated for each of the five dimensions. The scores aggregated for each dimension serve as tangible indicators that help measure and assess specific elements of the scaling journey. UNICEF illustrates the model through a spider diagram that allows for a visual comparison of the sub-dimensions across the five dimensions. For more details on each dimension and their sub-dimensions, please see the descriptions here.

UNICEF's 5D Innovation Framework



The Innovation MEL Toolbox offers methods and tools to capture relevant data and information on each of the 5D sub-dimensions for tracking progress and identifying areas that require improvement throughout the entire innovation process. COs are encouraged to use the relevant tools for self-assessment, improvement and optimization. The same tools and methods can be applied in multiple innovation stages to compare and assess the progress of each dimension with increasing thresholds as a solution matures.

How can MEL inform the innovation management process?

Effective MEL practices can provide accessible, up-to-date and actionable data and evidence on what works, why and under what conditions, thereby supporting the innovation management and decision-making process focusing on the value and contribution of innovation to programmatic results. In terms of how this happens, there is **no one-size-fits-all approach** given that CO size, capacity and priorities can be very different. (To learn how to develop an innovation strategy and management process at country level, please consult the UNICEF COMPASS website.) In general, the Innovation MEL Toolbox emphasizes the following **key principles** when thinking about the role and contribution of MEL in innovation management:

• **Early and continuous involvement of planning, monitoring and evaluation**

• (PME) colleagues to provide support not only for measuring progress but also to help logically and realistically articulate the connection between innovation and programmatic results – i.e. what you do and what you want to achieve – as well as what is known and what is assumed and therefore needs to be validated by data.

• **Continued collaboration between programme, innovation** and **PME functions** in the entire innovation management cycle so evidence that can inform the decision making and adaptation process.

• **Cross learning** between functions: PME engagement with policy and programming processes, capacity building for programme staff and discussions around evidence and its implications for programme or policy change.

• Planning for how to **use and operationalise evidence** findings.

Overview for each innovation stage

"Cheat Sheet" for Ideation Stage

The Ideation stage involves defining and analysing the problem and understanding the needs and the context, then generating or finding the most appropriate solutions along with the necessary evidence. Some innovations may arise from a process of ideation and prototyping, while in other instances existing innovations are selected and adapted. In either case, it is important that the evidence for ideation and prototyping is available as it is an important foundation of the innovation and should be used for decision making throughout the entire innovation process. The focus is on "building towards the right answer" drawing upon "how much you learned and what it informed"[8] in order to validate the hypothesis so the innovation can confidently move forward into piloting.

Below are the supporting evidence activities for **selecting and adapting an established innovation** with existing evidence base:

Innovation Activity	Corresponding 5D criterion/criteria	What needs to be measured/ tracked/ assessed	Recommended tools and data sources
1. Identifying the specific problem and understanding the context and the target population	Business Model/ Proven demand from stakeholders	Problem scope and severity; target population (beneficiaries) characteristics; cultural and contextual fit; current solutions and gaps	• Secondary data (to establish baseline), literature review, policy analysis, benchmarking reports
2. Selecting the innovative solution	Innovation/ Degree of solving a key problem; Value addition	Relevance; desirability; problem-solution fit (users and beneficiaries)	• Value Proposition Canvas
		The solution addresses the identified problem and aligns with needs; connection between the innovation and the envisioned change	• Initial Theory of Change
3. Adapting, testing and iterating an existing innovation solution	Business Model/ Technical viability	Functionality; performance; ease of use; clarity (users)	• Existing evidence
	Business Model/ Proven demand from stakeholders	Desirability and acceptability; satisfaction (users)	• User feedback survey

If there is no existing solution that closely matches the problem, there is a need to develop a new solution. Below are the most essential supporting evidence activities when a **new innovation is developed:**

Innovation Activity	Corresponding 5D criteria	What needs to be measured/ tracked/ assessed	Recommended tools and data sources
1. Identifying the specific problem and understanding the context and target population	Business Model/ Proven demand from stakeholders	Problem scope and severity; target population (beneficiaries) characteristics; cultural and contextual fit; current solutions and gaps	• Secondary data (to establish baseline), literature reviews, policy analysis, benchmarking reports
2. Generating and refining innovative solution	Innovation/ Degree of solving a key problem; Value addition	Relevance; desirability; problem-solution fit (users and beneficiaries)	• Value Proposition Canvas
		The solution addresses the identified problem and aligns with the needs; connection between the innovation and the envisioned change	• Initial Theory of Change
3. Creating, testing, and iterating Minimum Viable Solution	Business Model/ Technical viability	Functionality and performance; ease of use; clarity (users)	• Wizard of Oz • User Feedback Survey • User Metrics and Analytics (for digital solutions)
	Business Model/ Proven demand from stakeholders	Desirability and acceptability; satisfaction (users)	

Other tools for effective evidence use to capture, apply, and share lessons learned:

Evidence Use	Purpose	Recommended tools
Adaptive management and learning	Evidence-based decision making; improvements and iterations	• Pivot Diary

“Cheat Sheet” for Pilot Stage

The Pilot stage involves testing whether the innovation works as intended in a real-world setting. The focus is on feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness of the innovation on a small scale. Ultimately, a pilot leads to a decision to continue, pivot or stop.[9] It is important to note that the testing process is also applicable to innovations that have previously been deployed successfully and are intended to be used in new contexts.

Below are the **evidence activities** that support the innovation activities of this stage:

Innovation Activity	Corresponding 5D criteria	What needs to be measured/ tracked/ assessed	Recommended tools and data sources
Small-scale field-testing of the innovation	Impact / Increasing evidence of impact Risk/ Do no harm	Effectiveness (beneficiary)	• Pre-post test complemented with The Most Significant Change • UNICEF Safeguarding Implementation Guidance
	Business Model/ Proven demand from stakeholders	User engagement and satisfaction; desirability and acceptability; adoption and usage intent	• User Feedback Survey • User Metrics and Analytics (for digital solutions)
	Business Model/ Technical viability Risk/ Capacity; Financial; Reputational	Feasibility (operational and technical aspects, risks)	• Feasibility Assessment Checklist • User Metrics and Analytics (for digital solutions) • UNICEF Safeguarding Implementation Guidance
	Innovation/ Degree of solving a key problem Innovation/ Value addition Scalability/ Alignment with country priorities	Connection between the innovation and the envisioned change	• Theory of Change for Piloting – revisit ToC created in Ideation stage

Tools for **effective evidence use** to capture, apply, and share lessons learned:

Evidence use	Purpose	Recommended tools
Adaptive management and learning	Evidence based decision making; improvement and iteration	• Pivot Diary
Results measurement; performance tracking	Data quality assurance	• UNICEF Data Quality Framework • How to conduct data quality assessment (USAID)
Advocacy	Thought leadership and mobilization of support	• Innovation Story Tool

“Cheat Sheet” for Acceleration Stage

The Acceleration stage involves iterating the different aspects of the innovation that are crucial to scaling. This includes two simultaneous processes: (1) considering complexity and verifying key assumptions to create a complete and sustainable innovation for ‘scaling-up’ (vertical scaling), and concurrently (2) reducing complexity to develop an easily replicable intervention for new geographies and contexts (‘scale-out’ or horizontal scaling).[10] It is important to note that the adaptation process is also applicable to innovations that have previously been deployed successfully and are intended to be used in new contexts. This stage focuses on the continuous use of data and insights to:

- verify a sustained need for the solution to address a relevant problem and demonstrate the demand in the market. Significant efforts are required to generate and/or sustain demand from stakeholders (individuals, governments, organizations, etc.) to ensure allocation of resources towards the scaling of the solution.
- ensure technical feasibility and viability. Aspects such as design, functionality, and performance against established technical standards and requirements need to be considered. Potential risks, gaps and challenges or uncertainties need to be mapped and addressed.
- ensure financial viability. Revenue model, cost structure and financial projections need to be created for the innovation to remain financially sound and economically viable and sustainable over time. Potential risks, gaps and challenges or uncertainties need to be mapped and addressed.
- map out and select the pathway and approach to scale primarily based on the level of control that needs to be maintained during scaling. When translating this broad strategy into a realistic plan of time-bounded change efforts: (1) identify and test the most critical assumptions on the chosen scaling pathway (including any pivots or modification needed to improve targeting or reaching intended target population); and (2) determine scaling goals to be achieved, during or beyond project/funding period, bearing in mind that innovations might have a longer maturation period, and benefits and values might unfold over years or even decades.
- distinguish the ‘core’ and irreplaceable components of the innovation from the adaptable ones (see examples here) to create deployment resources that can ensure consistent implementation but also tailored to the context.[11] This conversion of tacit knowledge into codified forms that are available to those involved in the scaling helps maintain knowledge and relevant information related to the innovation despite turnover in staff.
- test and prove the replicability of the innovation in different contexts and learn what aspects of the innovations can and need to be adapted or modified because of the contexts, cultural sensitivity, regulatory compliance, technological alignment, etc., and which core elements must remain the same to ensure quality at scale using monitoring data.
- establish evidence of causal contribution[12] or attribution for the innovation and the positive change in immediate and intermediate outcomes (in comparison with data from the earlier stages) and ensure low risks of unintended negative consequences associated with the innovation (in accordance with the do not harm principle). This will strengthen the likelihood that the solution will be effective, reliable, credible and accountable to the beneficiaries in larger and more diverse contexts.

The innovation activities of this stage should be supported by relevant evidence activities:

Innovation Activity	Corresponding 5D criterion/criteria	What needs to be measured/tracked/ assessed	Recommended tools and data sources
Refine different aspects of the innovation and develop/ test a replicable model for "scale-up" (vertical) and/ or "scale-out" (horizontal)	• Innovation/ Degree of solving a key problem • Innovation/ Value addition • Scalability/ Proven multi-country needs/ alignment with country priorities • Impact/ Evidence of reaching millions	Scaling pathway, approach, goals and assumptions	• Scaling Approach and Goals Based on ToC
	• Business Model/ Technical viability • Business Model/ Financial viability • Innovation/ Value addition • Scalability/ Team capability to support and contextualize scale-up • Scalability/ Deployment resources • Scalability/ Proven adaptability • Risk/Reputational • Risk/ Financial • Risk/Capacity	Technical feasibility and financial viability (e.g. operational and technical aspects, delivery channels, funding, risks); social return on investment; codification of the core elements; replicability and adaptability	• Fidelity and Adaptation Monitoring Checklist (with 'Innovation Jenga') • Formative Process Evaluation • SROI Calculation Tool • UNICEF Safeguarding Implementation Guidance
	• Business Model/ Proven demand from the stakeholders	Desirability and acceptability; adoption and usage; user engagement and satisfaction	• User Feedback Survey • User Metrics and Analytics
	• Impact/ Increasing evidence of impact • Risk/ Do no harm	Effectiveness (beneficiary)	• Quasi-Experimental Approaches or Contribution Analysis • UNICEF Safeguarding Implementation Guidance

Tools for **effective evidence use** to capture, apply, and share lessons learned:

Evidence use	Purpose	Recommended tools
Adaptive management and learning	Evidence based decision making; improvement and iteration	• Pivot Diary
Results measurement; performance tracking	Data quality assurance	• UNICEF Data Quality Framework • How to conduct data quality assessment (USAID)
Advocacy	Thought leadership and mobilization of support	• Innovation Story Tool

“Cheat Sheet” for Transition to Scale and Scale Stages

This cheat sheet is applicable to two stages: the Transition to Scale stage focuses on the replication and/or adaption across large geographies and populations for transformational impact; followed by the Scale stage, in which innovation is adopted and operates at the desired level of scale/exponential growth, sustained by an ecosystem of actors.[13] As an innovation reaches the maturity level where it can produce significant results, it would have been adapted for implementation at a larger scale. However, these adaptations and the process of scaling up may affect the validity of evidence gathered during earlier stages of development. This is particularly true when it comes to assessing the innovation’s effectiveness. Therefore, instead of relying solely on evidence from smaller-scale trials or pilot programmes, it is necessary to re-assess effectiveness and impact at scale by connecting and combining process and impact evaluations – an approach that is in accordance with the ‘nested evaluation design’ promoted by the UNICEF Evaluation of Impact: Strategy and Action Framework 2022–2025.

Key focus areas for process and implementation include:

• user engagement and satisfaction, adoption and usage;
• sustained technical feasibility and viability of design, functionality and performance against established technical standards and requirements;
• sustained financial viability, based on revenue model/funding sources, cost structure and financial projections;
• commitment and capacity of partners for adoption and implementation while preserving quality at scale, including both knowledge transfer and integration to reduce dependency (note that transactional partnership is not enough, transformational partnership is needed as sustainable and consistent innovation implementation is highly dependent on behaviour and institutional change, maintained despite possible staff turnover);
• consistent delivery of the innovation in different contexts, preserving fidelity and quality of the innovation;
• replicability in different contexts: innovation adaptation to diverse contexts, while preserving fidelity and quality at scale;
• appropriate risk mitigation and management, including those for AAP/social accountability; and
• efficiency of the chosen pathway and approach to scale comparing the scaling goals vs benefits achieved and expected, during or beyond project/ funding period, respectively.

Key focus areas for effectiveness and impact include:

• causal link between the solution and positive change, as well as the validity of the change pathway in light of evidence on efficiency and implementation fidelity provided by the process evaluation (note that in case of complex interventions with multiple influencing factors, validating and articulating contribution may be more appropriate, given the difficulty of attributing high-level, longer-term outcomes to specific innovations);
• benefits that will accrue to the beneficiary as a result of the investment in the innovation – social, environmental and economic value – in relation to the costs (bearing in mind that innovations might have a longer maturation period and benefits and values might unfold over years or even decades);[14] and
• added value and relative advantage compared to existing approaches for addressing the challenge, both presently and in the foreseeable future.

The innovation activities of this stage should be supported by relevant evidence activities:

Innovation Activity	Corresponding 5D criteria	What needs to be measured/ tracked/ assessed	Recommended tools and data sources
• Replicate and/or adapt innovation across large geographies and populations • Adopt, operate and sustain innovation at the desired level of scale / exponential growth	Business Model/ Technical viability Business Model/ Financial viability Business Model/ Sustainable funding	Technical feasibility and financial viability; sustainability (including operational and technical aspects, funding, delivery channels, risks)	• Theory of Change for evaluation • Hybrid evaluation combining: - process and implementation evaluation utilizing monitoring data on fidelity, dosage, etc. - impact evaluation (quasi-experimental approach complemented with contribution analysis) - cost-effectiveness analysis • UNICEF Safeguarding Implementation Guidance • User Feedback Survey • User Metrics and Analytics • UNICEF AAP indicators and monitoring guidance
	Scalability/ Proven multi-country needs/ alignment with country priorities Impact/ Evidence of reaching millions	Adoption and sustainability (success of the chosen scaling pathway and approach); benefits achieved/ expected	
	Risk/ Reputational Risk/ Financial	Risk management	
	Scalability/ Team capability to support and contextualize scale-up Risk/ Capacity	Capacity and commitment; knowledge transfer and integration (partners) for sustainability	
	Business Model/ Proven demand from the stakeholders	Desirability and acceptability; adoption and usage; reach; user engagement and satisfaction	
	Scalability/ Deployment resources Scalability/ Proven adaptability	Efficient and effective deployment and implementation; replicability of the solution in different contexts (fidelity and quality at scale)	
	Impact / Increasing evidence of impact Innovation/ Degree of solving a key problem Risk/ Do no harm	Effectiveness and impact (beneficiary): causality between the positive change/ benefits and the innovation (in comparison with the previous stages)	
	Innovation/ Value addition	Added value and relative advantage compared to existing approaches	

Tools for **effective evidence use** to capture, apply, and share lessons learned:

Evidence use	Purpose	Recommended tools
Adaptive management and learning	Evidence based decision making; improvement and iteration	• Pivot Diary
Results measurement; performance tracking	Data quality assurance	• UNICEF Data Quality Framework • How to conduct data quality assessment (USAID)
Advocacy	Thought leadership and mobilization of support	• Innovation Story Tool

“Cheat Sheet” for Innovations for Systemic Change

What is systemic change and why is it needed?

In order to tackle **problems that are the results of complex systems** interacting with one another – such as the climate crisis, food insecurity, the energy crisis and growing inequalities – innovations need to reshape and **transform the underlying systems**. It is **not enough to merely strengthen and improve the existing systems**[15], rather the rules of the game need to be changed so a different kind of outcome becomes possible.[16]

What are systems innovations?

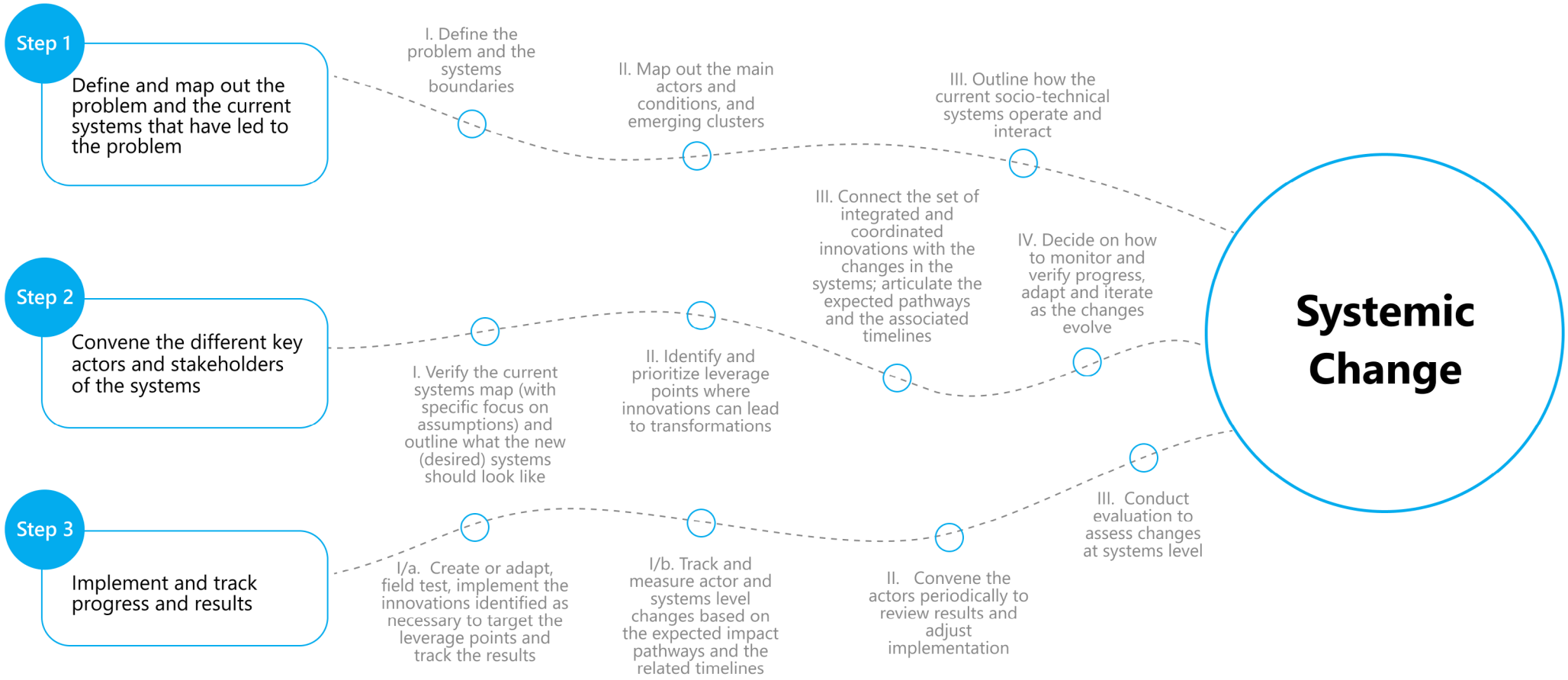
In this context, systems refer to systems of service provision that are determined by the interrelation of technical elements (e.g. technology and infrastructure) and socio-institutional elements (e.g. networks, institutions, regulations, values and behaviours).[17] This means that the deployment of technological innovations alone will not bring about transformation unless policies and behaviours change as well. And conversely, beyond regulations and behaviours, technical infrastructures need to be in place to support the transformation. Therefore, the purpose of systems innovation is to enable a “**transition from one configuration of a socio-technical system to a new one**, in which the system remains able to deliver its key functions but in a different way”[18] (e.g. transforming the entire energy system from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources involves changes in technology, policies, market incentives, infrastructure and public behaviour etc., which also impacts on other sectors).

Key features of systems innovations

Unlike innovation solutions that focus on specific products or services, systems innovations:

- aim for long-term, sustainable, holistic changes in and across broader socio-technical systems.
- recognize and reflect on the interconnectedness of different parts of the system (e.g., policies, institutions, behaviours).
- require interdisciplinary approaches and multi-actor collaboration (e.g. partnerships between governments, private sectors, communities).
- consist of a set of integrated and coordinated interventions.
- rely on constant and collective learning-by-doing and adaptation – as systems are dynamic and change over time – with actors and institutions.

The overview below outlines an approach that includes both the design and planning of systems innovations focusing on the complexity and interconnectedness, along with the relevant supporting evidence activities to track dynamic, nonlinear changes and direct and indirect impact at multiple – individual, institutional, societal – levels.



Activities/ steps	What needs to be measured/ tracked/ assessed	Recommended tools and data sources
1. Define and map out the problem and the current systems that have led to the problem	• definition, scope and boundaries of the current socio-technical systems and the problem; • main actors and conditions in the system associated with the problem; • interconnectedness (causal relationships) and power dynamics, feedback loops	• Systems Mapping using KUMU (based on secondary data, literature reviews, policy analysis, benchmarking reports, etc.)
2. Convene the different key stakeholders of the systems to collaboratively	• future (desired) socio-technical systems; • leverage points for innovations to enable the transition • expected changes and timelines, and how to track progress	• Change Mapping through sensemaking (including Change Agenda, Impact Pathways and Measurement Framework)
3. Implementation and tracking progress and results	• changes at actor and systems level	• Contribution Analysis for Systemic Change or Qualitative Comparative Analysis • Relevant evidence activities based on the stage of the innovation (Ideation stage, Pilot stage, Acceleration stage, Transition to Scale and Scale stages) • Pivot Diary

Tools descriptions

Change Mapping

Contribution Analysis

Contribution Analysis for Systemic Change

Feasibility Assessment Checklist

Fidelity and Adaptation Monitoring Checklist

Formative Process Evaluation

Hybrid Evaluation on Process, Impact and Cost-effectiveness

Innovation Story Tool

Pre-Post Test

Pivot Diary

Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Quasi-Experimental Approaches

SROI Calculation Tool

Systems Mapping

The Most Significant Change

Theory of Change

- Initial Theory of Change
- Theory of Change for Piloting
- Scaling Approach and Goals Based on Theory of Change
- Theory of Change for Evaluation

User Feedback Survey

User Metrics and Analytics

Value Proposition Canvas

Wizard of Oz

Change Mapping

Innovation Category:
Systems innovations

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning

Time:
Medium (less than 6 months) – depending on the project size

***Evidence use**
Advocacy
Adaptive management and learning
Results measurement
Performance tracking
Assessment for design and planning

What it supports

Change Mapping through sensemaking [19] can be used to verify the current system and outline what the new future socio-technical systems should look like once the problem is solved. By comparing the two maps, leverage points can be prioritized for innovations and a change agenda and impact pathways can be created. Through this process, the role and value of each actor and the behavioural conditions that define their practices and relationships are clarified to enable collaboration, as well as shared purpose and understanding.

When to use

After the mapping of the current systems has been completed, key stakeholders should be invited to collectively verify the map, outline the future systems and agree on actions to enable the transition.

Who are involved

Conducted and used by the innovation team together with key actors in the systems.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Step 1

Convene the stakeholders for reflection workshops and present the map of the current systems created earlier with supporting evidence. Reflect on and verify the current systems map, especially with regards to the power/influence, interactions (feedback loops and causality), and interconnectedness. Make participants' assumptions explicit and validate those collectively (also using the evidence presented).

Step 2

Come to a consensus regarding what the new socio-technical systems in the future would need to look like without the problems that exist in the current systems. Outline the new (desired) systems using KUMU. Compare the two maps to identify and prioritize leverage points where a set of integrated and coordinated innovations

Change Mapping

can lead to transformations from a ‘current state’ to a desired ‘future state’. Outline the hypotheses on the leverage points by explaining the connection between the parts of the systems to be targeted and how the innovations are expected to affect the desired changes collectively.

Step 3

Based on the leverage point hypotheses under Step 2, outline a set of integrated and coordinated innovations that target the prioritized leverage points and are expected to lead to transformations. Articulate the changes in the systems components, their relationships, as well as how the future systems will operate.
Create a change agenda[20] with a specific focus on the main actor groups and their behaviours. Outline how behavioural conditions would need to shift over time to drive sustainable change in each actor group by analysing their:
• capability—psychological or physical ability to enact a behaviour;
• opportunity—physical and social environment that enables the behaviour;
• motivation—reflective and automatic mechanisms that activate or inhibit the behaviour.[21]
The change agenda should take into account the fact that actors in the system influence each other: a change in one actor’s practice will inevitably affect the practices of and relationships with others.

Step 4

Based on the change agenda, articulate the pathways starting from the leverage points (and the set of integrated and coordinated innovations). Connect the different levels and mark the change in the relationships and dynamics. Add the expected timelines for the changes, bearing in mind that innovations might have a longer maturation period and systems transformation might unfold over years or even decades.

Step 5

Decide on how to monitor and verify the progress and adapt/ iterate as the changes evolve (including details on how, when and who). Optionally, the template on Miro board can be used as a starting point and alignment tool to develop more specific layered measurement frameworks by actors to capture the immediate, intermediate and long-term changes across the transition stages of the systemic change.

Change Mapping

Strengths

• **Stakeholder engagement** and **collective interpretation**, where diverse perspectives are brought together, foster **collaboration and shared understanding**, which is essential for collective action.
• Sensemaking which can reveal unexpected patterns or dynamics is especially valuable when working in **complex systems** where cause and effect are not always clear.
• Helps **visualize and understand power dynamics and influence** among actors, revealing which stakeholders have control or influence over system outcomes and which are marginalized, allows innovators to focus on **shifting dynamics** or empowering weaker actors, which is often key to driving systemic change.
• Identification and prioritization of **leverage points** can help innovations achieve **cascading effects** across the systems.
• A clear change agenda helps maintain focus on what transformations are needed. This clarity **reduces confusion and misalignment**, making it easier to communicate and **motivate action**.

Weaknesses

• Sensemaking relies on the subjective views of the participants, who may bring their own **biases, assumptions or agendas** to the process. This can lead to conflicting interpretations or blind spots, where key aspects of the system are overlooked. There is also a risk that dominant voices may influence the sensemaking process disproportionately.
• The process can be **resource-heavy** in terms of time, energy and facilitation, requiring significant effort to engage stakeholders in reflection and discussion.
• The strength of sensemaking lies in navigating ambiguity, but this can also be a weakness if it leads to **over-analysis or paralysis**, making it difficult to transition from insights to actionable strategies.
• If the change agenda is **too ambitious** or broad, it can lead to **fragmentation of effort**, with stakeholders working on different priorities that do not effectively converge.

Contribution Analysis [22]

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Impact/ Increasing evidence of impact
Risk/ Do no harm

Innovation stage(s):
Pilot, Acceleration, Transition to Scale, Scale

Evidence use:
Results measurement

Time:
Medium (less than 6 months) – depending on the project size

What it measures

Developed by John Mayne in the early 2000s, Contribution Analysis is a theory-based approach to (1) verify the causal claims of the innovation's contribution to outcomes and (2) to explain the mechanism between the cause and effect.

When to use

Contribution analysis can be used during implementation and scaling or after the innovation projects where:
• experimental or quasi-experimental designs are not possible because of ethical and/or practical constraints;
• isolating the net effect is not feasible and/or desirable because the change is the results of contribution of many actors and factors;
• there is an established and sound ToC with clear pathways and assumptions to be verified;
• there are multiple actors and influencing factors involved;
• adaptive management needs are more important than one-off impact estimate.

Who are involved

Conducted by external evaluators; used by the innovation team.

Contribution Analysis

How it works

Step 1

Use the Theory of Change and its assumptions to determine the **questions to be addressed**. The focus should be “Did the innovation make a difference, and if so, how?” rather than “What is the precise net effect?”.

Step 2

Gather **existing evidence and conduct primary data collection** to assess three areas: (1) whether and why the change has occurred at each level of the ToC, (2) each of the causal link and related assumptions in the ToC, (3) possible influence of other factors that can lead rival, alternative explanations of change.

Step 3

Develop contribution claims about how the innovation and other factors have contributed to the observed results at each level of the ToC.

Step 4

Assess the validity and strength of these claims. This involves testing the claims against evidence from primary and secondary data to determine whether the contribution claims are supported. Look for patterns, correlations and causations that support or refute the claims. Consider the quality and rigor of the evidence and seek additional evidence if necessary.

Step 5

Finalize contribution patterns and conclusions to create a credible **contribution narrative**. Update the ToC accordingly if needed.

Step 6

Use the contribution narrative for **adaptation, advocacy; or to showcase results** to different audiences.

Contribution Analysis

Strengths

• A rigorous and transparent approach to **assess contribution to change**. It is particularly useful for organizations working in complex areas where assessment of **attribution is not feasible**.
• Explains **how and why changes occurred**, which is particularly useful when looking at how to expand or replicate an innovation that has led to positive changes.
• **Does not need a comparison group (counterfactual)** to be established.

Weaknesses

• **Limited generalizability:** context-specific findings limit the ability to apply lessons learned from one analysis to different settings or projects.
• **Cannot** be used to **isolate the net effect** and establish **direct attribution**.
• **Subjectivity and bias**: there might be a focus on evidence that supports the perceived success of the innovation while overlooking evidence of failure or unintended negative consequences.
• **Resource intensive** because evidence should be repeatedly collected and analysed, and narratives gradually refined.

Contribution Analysis for Systemic Change

Innovation Category:
Systems innovations

Evidence use:
Results measurement

Time:
Medium (less than 6 months) – depending on the project size

What it measures

A holistic approach, Contribution Analysis aligns well with frameworks that focus on systems thinking and can be used for evaluating complex systemic change efforts by examining whether various elements plausibly contributed to the observed changes and how various factors interplay over time.

When to use

Contribution analysis can be used for systemic change projects with inherent complexities that are non-linear, multi-stakeholder and context dependent.

Who are involved

Conducted by external evaluators; used by all systems actors.

How it works

Step 1

Use the Systems Maps (current and future), Change Agenda, Impact Pathways created earlier, and the assumptions outlined to determine the **questions to be addressed**.

Step 2

Gather **existing project data and conduct primary data collection** on (1) whether the change has occurred at each level of the Impact Pathways and (2) each of the causal link and related assumptions. It is important at this stage to also assess the evidence regarding the possible influence of other factors that can lead rival, alternative explanations of change.

Step 3

Develop **contribution claims** about how the integrated and coordinated interventions and different factors have contributed to the observed results.

Contribution Analysis for Systemic Change

Step 4

Assess the **validity and strength of these claims**. This involves testing the claims against evidence from primary and secondary data to determine whether the contribution claims are supported. Look for patterns, correlations and causations that support or refute the claims. Consider the quality and rigor of the evidence and seek additional evidence if necessary.

Step 5

Finalize **contribution patterns and conclusions**. Determine whether the integrated and coordinated interventions were influential in achieving the desired outcomes and how they interacted with each other. Update the Impact Pathways accordingly if needed.

Step 6

Use the contribution narrative for **adaptation, advocacy; or to showcase results** to different audiences.

Strengths

• A rigorous and transparent approach to assess **contribution to change**.
• Not only does it assess whether the systemic change efforts have made a difference, but also explains **how and why changes occurred**.
• **Aligns well systems thinking** that recognizes and reflects on the interconnectedness of the parts of the system and how various factors interplay over time.

Weaknesses

• **Limited generalizability**: context-specific findings limit the ability to apply lessons learned from one analysis to different settings or projects.
• **Cannot** be used to **isolate the net effect** and establish **direct attribution**.
• **Subjectivity and bias**: there might be a focus on evidence that supports the perceived success of the innovation while overlooking evidence of failure or unintended negative consequences.
• **Resource intensive** because evidence should be repeatedly collected and analysed, and narratives gradually refined.

Feasibility Assessment Checklist

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Business Model/ Technical viability
Risk/ Capacity
Risk/ Financial
Risk/ Reputational

Innovation stage(s):
Pilot

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it supports

A feasibility assessment examines the operational and technical aspects of an innovation, including the identification of potential risks.

When to use

Feasibility assessment can be used as a reality check based on the information available in the Pilot stage to address implementation related issues before committing significant resources to implementation.

Who are involved

Conducted and used by innovation team and other key project stakeholders.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Step 1

At the outset of the pilot stage, **define the objectives** of the feasibility assessment and **establish criteria** for gauging the feasibility of the innovation solution. A preliminary assessment of the innovation using this template can help identify key areas that require investigation. (The template is based on the UNICEF 5D Innovation Framework and The Djenga Framework.[23]) Adapt the questions if needed and consider appropriate data sources for each key consideration and the guiding questions.

Step 2

Review existing data and information. Gather and review existing data, research and information relevant to the innovation.

Feasibility Assessment Checklist

Step 3

Conduct stakeholder consultations. Seek the inputs and feedback of the key stakeholders involved in the Pilot stage, including project team members, users/ beneficiaries, partners and relevant experts.

Step 4

Assess the key considerations of feasibility as listed in the template based on the data and evidence from STEP 2 and STEP 3.

Step 5

Decide on the follow-up action(s): (1) adjust and refine innovation based on the findings; (2) continuously monitor and assess feasibility throughout the Pilot stage and make adjustments as needed to optimize the solution's chances of success.

Strengths

• provides a **consistent framework** for assessing multiple aspects of feasibility based on available, ensuring that all critical aspects are considered systematically;
• the standardized checklist offers **clear guidance** on what needs to be assessed, reducing biases, ambiguity and confusion and making **comparison** easier;
• facilitates the **quick identification** of potential issues and areas that need attention based on available **data** and **evidence**;
• provides a documented trail of the assessment process and **enhances transparency and accountability**.

Weaknesses

• without customization, **rigidity** and a **one-size-fits-all approach** might not be able to accommodate the specific nuances or unique aspects of different innovation projects;
• may lead to a **box-ticking mentality** and **superficial assessment** where the focus is on completing the checklist rather than analysing feasibility;
• requires ongoing **efforts to review and improve the checklist** based on feedback and evolving project needs to avoid **overlooked factors**.

Fidelity and Adaptation Monitoring Checklist (with “Innovation Jenga”)

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Scalability/ Deployment resources, Proven adaptability

Innovation stage(s):
Acceleration

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning
Performance tracking

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it tracks

Integrated into standard monitoring efforts, this tool can help assess both fidelity and adaptation, as well as the quality of implementation.

When to use

Before and during implementation:
• to ensure fidelity while accommodating necessary, context-specific adaptations that do not compromise the innovation’s core components, quality and added value;
• to refine aspects of implementation and replication, such as codification and deployment resources.

Who are involved

Used by innovation team, the implementation partners, and/or external actors who conduct third-party monitoring.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Implementation fidelity (sometimes termed as integrity) refers to the degree to which the innovation is being implemented as originally designed. High fidelity ensures that the core components, procedures and goals of the innovation are maintained.

Adaptation refers to modifications made to the innovation to better fit specific contexts, such as cultural, geographical or resource-based needs. These adaptations should ideally maintain the core elements while allowing flexibility in how the innovation is delivered.

Excessive adherence to the original design without adapting for context may lead to the innovation being less effective and relevant in diverse contexts. Too much adaptation to the original design can result in loss of the innovation’s core benefits, as the fundamental components that make it effective are changed.

Fidelity and Adaptation Monitoring Checklist (with “Innovation Jenga”)

It is **recommended** to apply the following adaptations:
• altering language, visuals, UX modifications to support the needs of participants;
• adapting content and message so it those are culturally appropriate;
• aligning to local policies and regulations to ensure compliance.

It is **NOT recommended** to:
• completely remove core components, features, activities that define the innovation’s primary value;
• decreasing dosage/ frequency and length over which the innovation is used or implemented;
• altering topics, goals, theories, or delivery format.

When it comes to the following adaptations, it is recommended to apply these **with caution** and to **assess how they impact the effectiveness** of the innovation:
• adding or substituting activities;
• increasing session or programme length;
• changing the profile of the facilitators and/or the agent of delivery;
• tailoring content to fit the participants’ belief system;
• altering the delivery platform.

This checklist is a simple tool that connects fidelity with adaptation, following the logic of ‘planned-adapted-implemented-assessed-adapted’.

Step 1

Contextualize the key components of implementation fidelity as listed in this template to your innovation project. These include:
• adherence: innovation being delivered as intended, preserving its core components and values
• exposure/dose and coverage: the frequency and duration of the intervention as planned/intended; rate/number of participating beneficiaries
• quality of delivery: implementation meeting prescribed technical and quality standards and benchmarks
• participant responsiveness: how participants engage with and respond to the innovation[24]

Optional: if you would like to facilitate a group discussion to identify the different fidelity components and decide on which ones should or can be adapted, you can use ‘Innovation Jenga’ activity (see the step-by-step description in the same template).

Fidelity and Adaptation Monitoring Checklist (with “Innovation Jenga”)

Step 2

Integrate the contextualized key aspects of implementation fidelity into the **monitoring plans** to ensure continuous data collection on these aspects.

Step 3

Based on the monitoring data collected, **record** and **reflect on**:

• Adapted and implemented: what/ how were the different aspects adapted/ modified and what was implemented for each aspect (as demonstrated by supporting evidence)?
• Assessment and conclusions: what is the assessment for each aspect based on what was planned, adapted and implemented?
• Further modifications that need to be made – if any.

Strengths

• Provides a **consistent framework** for the monitoring of the essential components of the innovation – those that are critical to its success and need to be preserved during scaling. This ensures that the **core purpose** and **effectiveness** of the innovation are maintained.
• Facilitates **adaptation** and **local relevance** that are necessary to fit the contexts without compromising the innovation’s core purpose and effectiveness.
• Offers **clear guidance** on what needs to be monitored, reducing ambiguity and confusion.
• Facilitates the **quick** and **early identification** of potential issues and areas that need attention as well as continuous improvement.
• The **standardized** checklist makes **comparison** easier and **reduces biases**.
• Provides a documented trail of the assessment and enhances **transparency and accountability**.

Weaknesses

• Without customization, **rigidity** and a **one-size-fits-all approach** might not be able to accommodate the specific nuances or unique aspects of different innovation projects.
• May lead to a **box-ticking mentality** and **superficial assessment** where the focus is on completing the checklist rather than analysing fidelity and adaptability.
• Requires ongoing effort to **review and improve the checklist** based on feedback and evolving project needs.

Formative Process Evaluation

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Business Model/ Technical viability, Financial Viability, Proven demand from stakeholders
Scalability/ Team capability to support and contextualize scale-up, Deployment resources, Proven adaptability
Risk/ Financial, Capacity, Reputational

Innovation stage(s):
Acceleration

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning
Performance tracking

Time:
Medium (less than 6 months)

What it tracks

Formative evaluation on feasibility and implementation, focusing on scaling process and replicability.

When to use

• It can be used to inform decisions about stop/go in terms of the feasibility and readiness of the innovation and its model for scaling.
• In case the evaluation on the outcomes shows negative result, process and implementation evaluation conducted alongside can help understand whether the negative results are due to implementation issues.
• The findings can be used to refine aspects of implementation and replication, such as codification and deployment resources.

Who are involved

Conducted by internal or external evaluators; used by the innovation team and the implementation partners.

How it works

Step 1

Define objectives and scope
Objectives:
• Determine the objectives of the formative evaluation, i.e. examining feasibility and replicability.

Scope
• Specify the innovation components, target population, timeframe and context to be evaluated.

Stakeholder engagement:
• Identify key stakeholders including staff, beneficiaries, funders and policymakers, and their roles in the evaluation.
• Consult key stakeholders to gather initial inputs and ensure alignment on the scope and objectives of the evaluation.

Step 2

Develop an evaluation framework based on the information from Step 1, the ToC, the scaling approach and the business model.

Formative Process Evaluation

Develop key questions the evaluation seeks to answer considering critical assumptions, scaling pathways, etc. and the following aspects:

• demonstrated need for the solution and demand in the market;

• technical feasibility and viability, including aspects such as design, functionality and performance against established technical standards and requirements, potential risks, gaps, challenges or uncertainties;

• financial viability, including revenue model, cost structure and financial projections, potential risks, gaps, challenges or uncertainties;

• selected pathway and approach to scale, including critical success factors and potential barriers;

• knowledge transfer, i.e. conversion of tacit knowledge into codified forms that are consistent and available for those that are involved in the replication to reduce dependency;

• replicability and adaptability of the innovation in different contexts;

• quality at scale through quality assurance and fidelity monitoring (dosage, adherence to deployment resources, protocols, SOP, etc.).

Step 3

Specify methods and data sources considering existing data and ongoing data collection (e.g. data from Feasibility Assessment during Pilot stage, available project documentation and monitoring data collected during implementation), and additional primary data to be collected using qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, observation) and quantitative methods (surveys).

Step 4

Plan and conduct process evaluation using the evaluation framework to compare what was planned/ intended vs what was implemented.

• Develop an evaluation plan

o Determine where and from whom the data will come from. Data sources may include staff, beneficiaries, implementation partners and project documents.

o Establish a timeline and ensure that it aligns with the evaluation objectives and project schedule.

o Design and test tools and instruments for collecting primary data, such as questionnaires, interview guides and checklists.

• Review and/or collect data

o Review existing data.

o Train enumerators: ensure that data collectors are trained in the use of data collection tools and understand data quality and safeguarding criteria, as well as the purpose of the evaluation.

o Collect data systematically according to the evaluation plan. Ensure that data collection methods are consistently applied to maintain reliability and validity.

• Analyse data and interpret the results

o Use the evaluation framework and the key questions.

o Compare what was planned/ intended (e.g. based on the ToC, the scaling approach and the business model) with what was implemented.

Formative Process Evaluation

Step 5

Summarise findings, validate results and generate actionable recommendations
• Document findings in a clear and comprehensive manner, including descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and interpretations of results.
• Validate the findings with stakeholders. Facilitate discussions on lessons learned, best practices and areas for improvement.
• Develop actionable recommendations based on evaluation findings to enhance project design, implementation and scaling strategies.
• Prepare a comprehensive evaluation report summarizing methods, findings and recommendations.

Step 6

Adjust innovation and implementation
• Develop action plans with clear timelines and responsibilities to implement recommendations.
• Track progress on the implementation of the recommendations and continuously gather data and feedback to inform ongoing improvements.
• Record lessons learned.

Step 7

Communicate results and lessons learned to relevant audiences (e.g. stakeholders, funders) through reports, presentations or publications.

Strengths

• **Comprehensive understanding of and formative insights on** the innovation's implementation process during scaling help stakeholders identify strengths and weaknesses and enabling organisations to proactively address challenges and leverage opportunities.
• **Evidence-based** insights ensures that decisions about scaling are based on solid evidence rather than assumptions.
• **Actionable recommendations** can improve implementation and guide future development efforts.
• Stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process enables the inclusion of **diverse perspectives**, which will enhance the evaluation's validity and reliability. It may also foster **increased buy-in and ownership**, which can be crucial for successful scaling.

Weaknesses

• **Resource-intensive**: the comprehensive nature of the evaluation requires significant time, effort and resources.
• The active involvement of different stakeholders may introduce **bias**, as those may have conflicting interests or agendas that influence findings and recommendations.
• Qualitative data analysis can be **subjective**, and interpretation may vary depending on the evaluators' perspectives and experiences.

Hybrid Evaluation on Process, Impact and Cost-effectiveness

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Business Model/ Technical viability, Financial viability, Sustainable funding sources, Proven demand from stakeholders
Scalability/ Team capability to support and contextualize scale-up, Deployment resources, Proven adaptability, Proven multi-country needs/ priorities
Risk/ Financial, Capacity, Reputational, Do no harm
Innovation/ Value addition, Degree of solving a key problem
Impact/ Increasing evidence of impact, Evidence of reaching millions

Innovation stage(s):
Transition to Scale, Scale

Evidence use:
Performance tracking
Results measurement

Time:
Long (more than 6 months)

What it tracks

This mixed methods, nested approach focusing on both process and impact provides a thorough analysis of both effectiveness of the innovation, quality of implementation, as well as efficiency of the scaling process. This approach enables the generation of contextualized impact evidence on multiple dimensions of the innovation, ensuring the rigour that proves causality and explaining how and why the innovation worked. In case the impact evaluation shows negative results, process and implementation evaluation conducted alongside can help understand whether the negative results are due to implementation issues, or because the design and underlying theory underlying is wrong.

When to use

• There is a need to provide comprehensive and rigorous evidence to prove that the innovation works at scale.
• The innovation has reached the maturity level for significant results to occur.

Who are involved

Conducted by external evaluators; used by the innovation team and the implementation partners.

How it works

This approach integrates process and implementation evaluation, impact evaluation (quasi-experimental approach complemented with contribution analysis) and cost-effectiveness analysis to comprehensively assess the innovation at scale. This is in alignment with the principle of complementarity of methods and the nested impact evaluation designs

Hybrid Evaluation on process, impact, and cost-effectiveness

promoted by the UNICEF Impact Strategy that combine "a strategic focus on outcome and long-term change with process-related questions"[25] and ensures a more multidimensional picture of impact.

Step 1

Define objectives and scope

• Determine the objectives of the evaluation (e.g. evaluating implementation and scaling, impact at scale, cost-effectiveness)
• Specify the innovation components, target population, timeframe and context to be evaluated.
• Identify key stakeholders including staff, beneficiaries, funders and policymakers, and their roles in the evaluation. Consult key stakeholders to gather initial inputs and ensure alignment on the scope and objectives of the evaluation.

Step 2

Develop an evaluation framework with key questions based on the information from Step 1 and the Theory of Change for Evaluation, considering critical assumptions, scaling goals and pathways, associated success indicators, etc.

Step 3

Specify methods and data sources for
• process and implementation evaluation;
• impact evaluation using quasi-experimental approach along with contribution analysis;
• cost-effectiveness analysis.
Consider existing data, ongoing data collection and additional data to be collected using qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, observation), quantitative methods (surveys) and available secondary data and project documentation including monitoring data collected during implementation.

Step 4a

Plan and conduct process and implementation evaluation: what was planned/ intended vs what was implemented?
• Define key measurement aspects
o user engagement and satisfaction, adoption and usage;
o sustained technical feasibility and viability of design, functionality and performance against established technical standards and requirements;
o sustained financial viability, based on revenue model/funding sources, cost structure and financial projections;
o commitment and capacity of partners for adoption and implementation while preserving quality at scale, including both knowledge transfer and integration to reduce dependency (note that transactional partnership is not enough, transformational partnership is needed as sustainable and consistent innovation implementation is highly dependent on behaviour and institutional change, maintained despite possible staff turnover);
o consistent delivery of the innovation in different contexts, preserving fidelity and quality of the innovation;
o replicability in different contexts: innovation adaptation to diverse contexts, while

Hybrid Evaluation on process, impact, and cost-effectiveness

preserving fidelity and quality at scale;

o appropriate risk mitigation and management, including those for AAP/social accountability; and

o efficiency of the chosen pathway and approach to scale comparing the scaling goals vs benefits achieved and expected, during or beyond project/ funding period, respectively.

• Develop data collection plan

o Based on Step 3, determine where and from whom the data will be collected. Data sources may include staff, beneficiaries, implementation partners and project documents.

o Establish a timeline to ensure that it aligns with the evaluation objectives and project schedule.

o Design and test tools and instruments for collecting primary data, such as questionnaires, interview guides and checklists.

• Review and/or collect data

o Review existing data.

o Train enumerators: ensure that data collectors are trained in the use of data collection tools and understand data quality and safeguarding criteria, as well as the purpose of the evaluation.

o Collect data systematically according to the evaluation plan. Ensure that data collection methods are consistently applied to maintain reliability and validity.

• Analyse data and interpret the results

o Use the evaluation framework and the key questions.

o Compare what was planned/ intended vs what was implemented.

Step 4b

Design and conduct impact evaluation

• **Quasi-experimental approach** to establish whether there is observable outcome that can be attributed to the innovation

Hybrid Evaluation on process, impact, and cost-effectiveness

o Select an appropriate quasi-experimental design considering factors such as feasibility, resource and data availability, as well as the nature of the intervention.

• Non-equivalent Control Group Design: choosing treatment and comparison groups from similar locations to the target population or with similar profiles and measuring outcomes before and after the intervention in both groups.

• Propensity Score Matching: directly 'matching' individual units that have received an intervention with those that have not, using a set of statistical analysis techniques to create a comparison group that is as similar as possible to the sample in the target population (i.e. the two groups would have similar average characteristics).

• Regression Discontinuity Design: the treatment and comparison groups are selected using a numerical eligibility cutoff, based on the assumption that units just above and just below the cutoff are comparable aside from treatment status

• Difference-in-Difference: comparing the change in outcomes over time between treated and control groups, assuming both would have followed parallel trends.

o Develop a detailed research plan

• Define sample of units and sampling strategy balancing statistical requirements with practical considerations like budget, time and resources.

o Establish inclusion and exclusion criteria (e.g. include students enrolled in grades 9-12 and exclude students with prior exposure to similar educational apps).

o Use power analysis to calculate the minimum sample size needed to detect a significant effect.

o Identify and define the treatment group (beneficiaries of the innovation) and the comparison group (similar individuals or communities that did not receive the intervention) based on the quasi-experimental design selected. The two groups should be as identical as possible. This is a key step as the main challenge of quasi-experimental approaches is to avoid (or mitigate) the selection bias and make the two groups comparable because if the two groups are systematically different, difference in results may be due to these differences rather than the treatment/ intervention.

• Design and test the instrument: (1) identify outcome measures based on Step 3; (2) create assessment tools such as surveys, questionnaires, tests, or rating scales to measure the identified outcomes and ensure that these tools are valid, reliable and appropriate for the target population and measurement objectives.

• Establish a timeline for data collection to ensure that it aligns with the objectives and project schedule

o Data collection

In most circumstances a baseline is carried out on the intervention and comparison groups. But in some cases, a retrospective baseline may be developed using secondary data sources, such as previous surveys that have been carried out in the same area or government statistics. It can also be done by asking people to recall what the situation was prior to an intervention. A second round of data collection is then applied after the project or programme has finished (or partway through) using the same tools or methodologies as for the baseline.

Hybrid Evaluation on process, impact, and cost-effectiveness

o Data preparation and analysis

• Clean and organize the collected data; check for completeness, accuracy and consistency.

• Use statistical methods suitable for the selected quasi-experimental design. Compare outcomes between the treatment and control groups and/or analyse changes over time.

• Assess the statistical significance and practical relevance of the findings.

• **Contribution Analysis**

o Gather existing evidence and conduct primary data collection to assess three areas: (1) whether and why the change has occurred at each level of the ToC; (2) each of the causal link and related assumptions in the ToC; (3) possible influence of other factors that can lead rival, alternative explanations of change.

o Develop contribution claims about how the innovation and other factors have contributed to the observed results at each level of the ToC.

o Assess the validity and strength of these claims. This involves testing the claims against evidence from primary and secondary data to determine whether the contribution claims are supported. Look for patterns, correlations and causations that support or refute the claims. Consider the quality and rigor of the evidence and seek additional evidence if necessary.

o Finalize contribution patterns and conclusions to create a credible contribution narrative. Update the ToC accordingly if needed.

• **Synthesize results** by triangulating the quantitative findings from the Quasi-Experimental Approach with the qualitative insights from the Contribution Analysis. This will verify the attributable results of the innovation and help understand both the extent of the impact and the mechanisms through which the innovation worked.

Hybrid Evaluation on process, impact, and cost-effectiveness

Step 4c

Conduct Cost-Effectiveness Analysis[26]

• Quantifying **impact**

o Based on quantitative and qualitative data from Step 4b, select the outcome and specify:

• effectiveness measures (e.g. increased life expectancy);

• units of measurement for impact (e.g. life years gained).

o Calculate the total impact following this formula: Total Impact = Impact (per unit) × Sample Size × Program Duration

• Quantifying **costs**

o Based on (1) financial data from multiple sources, such as financial statements, invoices and budgets; (2) cost valuation, using actual expenses or estimates when necessary, adjusting costs for inflation and discounting future costs to present value, specify costs, including:

• direct costs related to scaling of the innovation (e.g., production, distribution, implementation costs);

• indirect costs, such as training and capacity building, infrastructure adjustments, or support services;

• fixed (e.g., initial setup) costs and variable costs (e.g., ongoing operational expenses).

o Calculate the total costs. Verify currency consistency if multiple currencies are involved.

• Verify that the timeframe for impact and costs are aligned, then **calculate and interpret cost-effectiveness ratio** by

o dividing total costs by total impact;

o comparing the cost per unit of cost-effectiveness with similar interventions or benchmarks.

Innovations for Poverty Action's tool[27] can help calculate CEA automatically based on the inputted costs and impact measures.

Hybrid Evaluation on process, impact, and cost-effectiveness

Step 5

Integrate findings, validate results and generate actionable recommendations

• Integrate findings from process and implementation evaluation, impact evaluation and cost-effectiveness analysis. Use triangulation to validate results and provide a holistic understanding.
• Document findings in a clear and comprehensive manner, including descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and interpretations of results.
• Present and validate evaluation findings with stakeholders. Facilitate discussions on lessons learned, best practice and areas for improvement.
• Develop actionable recommendations based on the evaluation findings.
• Prepare a comprehensive evaluation report summarizing methods, findings and recommendations.

Step 6

Communicate results to relevant audiences, e.g. funders and the broader development community through reports, presentations or publications

Step 7

Implement recommendations and document lessons learned

• Develop action plans with clear timelines and responsibilities to implement recommendations.
• Track progress on implementing recommendations and continuously gather data and feedback to inform ongoing improvements.
• Record lessons learned and best practices to inform future innovation evaluations.

Hybrid Evaluation on process, impact, and cost-effectiveness

Strengths

• Provides a **holistic view and robust evidence** of the innovation's scaling and implementation, impact and cost-effectiveness.
• Combining various evaluation methods can yield **richer and more nuanced data** for informed decision-making, resource allocation and strategic planning.
• Using multiple methods helps triangulate findings, increasing the **credibility and reliability** of the results.
• **Actionable recommendations** and **solid evidence base** can guide future innovation efforts.
• **Enhanced learning and accountability** through implementation insights on what works and what can be improved can enable timely adjustments and improvements.
• Stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process enables the inclusion of **diverse perspectives**, which will enhance the evaluation's validity and reliability. It may also foster **increased buy-in and ownership**, which can be crucial for successful scaling.

Weaknesses

• **Resource-intensive**: the comprehensive nature of the evaluation requires significant time effort and resources.
• **Complex data integration**: combining data from different evaluation components can be complex and challenging, requiring careful integration and interpretation to ensure coherence.
• **Methodological limitations and challenges**: quasi-experimental methods can have difficulties in achieving comparability between treatment and control groups, and potential issues with external validity; while contribution analysis relies on qualitative judgments, which can be subjective, and interpretation may vary depending on the evaluators' perspectives and experiences.
• There may be **overlap between the different evaluation** components, potentially leading to redundant data collection and analysis efforts.
• Integrating findings from diverse methods may sometimes lead to **conflicting results**, which can be challenging to reconcile and interpret.
• Engaging a broad range of stakeholders can lead to diverse and sometimes **conflicting expectations**. Managing these expectations and **communicating complex findings** effectively can be challenging.

Innovation Story Tool 28

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
All

Innovation stage(s):
Pilot, Accelerate, Transition to Scale, Scale

Evidence use:
Advocacy

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it supports

Innovation Story Tool can be used to describe the innovation process and results, as well as the important success factors and barriers supported by evidence. It can help demonstrate the innovation work to both internal and external stakeholders through a thoughtful, evidence-based approach for learning, thought leadership and mobilization of support.

When to use

Use this tool intermittently, after major events and pivots (e.g. completing a pilot or a failed scale up). The frequency is up to the needs of the innovation team and the pace of change.

Who are involved

Conducted and used by the innovation team.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Step 1

Plan for the innovation story
• Develop a compelling theme for your story: what is the sentiment or conclusion that the audience should ultimately walk away with?
• Identify your audience and its characteristics. Prioritize the key stakeholders and audience segments to whom you wish to communicate your innovation story.
• Write a bulleted list of key figures and data points that would be of interest to the target audience and help articulate the story.
• Choose the appropriate storytelling method (e.g. infographic, article/ blog, written report, video, meeting/ presentation) and channel (e.g. social media, physical materials, intranet) that match the interests, characteristics, and needs of the target audience.
• Determine the frequency of communications.

Innovation Story Tool

Step 2

Create the innovation story, including
• title;
• introduction: a very brief opening to present the innovation and desired future it seeks to create;
• the context: information about the context (e.g. location and community, specific sector, organisation, partners, etc.) that will help the audience understand why the innovation;
• the problem and its significance (based on the available data and evidence);
• the innovation solution that targets the problem and the innovation journey, highlighting the important events and turning points in relevant innovation stages;
• whether the innovation was successful, highlighting the contributing factors;
• key learnings.

Step 3

Verify the most important aspects
• Focus on impact: illustrate the value and positive change the innovation has created through both figures/ numbers and vignettes.
• Draw upon emotions: stories that generate an emotional connection in the target audience are always memorable.
• Highlight partner successes: show how joint efforts have created value and highlight the contributions of partner organizations.
• Spotlight risk-takers: did your innovation result from an experiment or risk taken by a staff member, partner, or stakeholder?
• Promote persistence: did the innovation require persistence and were there failures along the way?
• Lead the pack: focus on what is new and different about the innovation.
• Simplicity: is the story simple and easy to follow and is the key message clear to the key audience?
• Supported by evidence: are the results or impact supported by evidence?
• Effective visuals: are the visual (both evidence and non-evidence related) contents effective?

Strengths

• engages the audience by conveying the narrative arc of the project, highlighting challenges, successes and lessons learned in a compelling manner;
• can mobilize support for the innovation project, encouraging investment, collaboration and participation;
• captures the complexity of the innovation process, including the iterative nature of development, pivot points and the evolution of ideas over time;
• recognizes the contributions of team members and partners to the success;
• promotes learning and knowledge sharing within the team and across organizations;
• allows for tailored messaging, ensuring that the story resonates with different audiences.

Weaknesses

• subjectivity and simplification might lead to a biased or incomplete narrative;
• may selectively represent the innovation's achievements and impact, omitting less favourable outcomes or unintended consequences;
• may lack empirical data or evidence to support its claims, relying more on anecdotal evidence or personal accounts;
• requires strong narrative skills to avoid ineffective communication or storytelling.

Pre-Post Test

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Impact/ Increasing evidence of impact
Risk/ Do no harm

Innovation stage(s):
Pilot

Evidence use:
Results measurement

Time:
Medium (less than 6 months)

What it measures

The simplest, most basic approach to compare outcome measures before and after an intervention to see what has changed.

When to use

A pre-post test can be used to gain pertinent information about participants and the outcomes that are relevant to the innovation before and after it is introduced. A pre-post design is generally appropriate if:
• not much 'outside influence' on the outcome is expected;
• the duration of the pilot is reasonably short;
• there is limited budget and resources for testing and evidence creation.[29]

Who are involved

Conducted by researchers/ evaluation specialists with participants; used by the innovation team.

How it works

Step 1

Define the objectives and hypotheses
(e.g. determine whether a new educational app has influenced student engagement and performance)

Step 2

Define the population, the sample size and sampling strategy
• Establish inclusion and exclusion criteria (e.g. include students enrolled in grades 9-12 and exclude students with prior exposure to similar educational apps).
• Use a power analysis to calculate the minimum sample size needed to detect a significant effect. Balance statistical requirements with practical considerations like budget, time, and resources. Minimize selection bias and ensure representation from different subgroups (e.g. different schools, grades and demographic backgrounds).

Pre-Post Test

Step 3

Design the assessment instrument: (1) identify outcome measures; (2) create assessment tools such as surveys, questionnaires, tests or rating scales to measure the identified outcomes and ensure that these tools are valid, reliable and appropriate for your target population and measurement objectives.

Step 4

Collect pre-intervention data: (1) administer the pre-test assessment to the participants to collect baseline data on the selected outcome measures and ensure that participants understand the instructions and provide informed consent; (2) record participants' responses to the pre-test assessment accurately and securely – maintaining confidentiality and anonymity as appropriate.

Step 5

Collect post-intervention data: after the intervention period, (1) administer the same assessment tools to the participants to collect post-intervention data on the outcome measures, while ensuring that the post-test is conducted under similar conditions as the pre-test; (2) record participants' responses to the post-test assessment accurately and securely, using the same procedures as for the pre-test.

Step 6

Data preparation and analysis:

• Data cleaning: clean and organize the collected data, check for completeness, accuracy and consistency.
• Calculate the change scores for each participant on the outcome measures of interest.
• Use appropriate statistical tests to analyse the pre-post differences - the magnitude and direction of change in the outcome measures - and determine whether any observed changes are statistically significant.

Step 7

Interpret results

• Evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention based on the observed changes in outcome measures. Consider one-by-one the factors that might compromise the internal validity of the test.[30]
• Acknowledge any limitations of the pre-post test design, such as potential confounding factors, sample bias or measurement error when interpreting the results.

Step 8

Communicate results

• Document findings in a clear and comprehensive manner, including descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and interpretations of results.
• Present the results of the pre-post test to relevant audiences through reports, presentations or publications.

Pre-Post Test

Strengths

• **A straightforward** and **simple design** that is easy to administer and analyse, particularly in settings with limited resources or expertise.
• **Cost-effective** compared to other designs.
• **Longitudinal comparison**: assessments of changes can be administered over time, providing insights into the sustainability and long-term effects of interventions.

Weaknesses

• **Lack of control or comparison group** means that it is very possible that any differences between outcomes could be due to a factor other than the introduction of an intervention, **limiting the ability to establish causal relationships** between the intervention and observed outcomes.
• May be susceptible to **selection bias** if participants who drop out or are lost to follow-up differ systematically from those who remain in the study, potentially biasing the results.
• **Measurement error** in the assessment instruments used for the pre-test and post-test may contribute to inaccuracies in estimating effects, particularly if the instruments lack reliability or validity.

Pivot Diary 31

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
All

Innovation stage(s):
All

Evidence use:
Adaptive management and learning

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it supports

Pivot Diary can help (1) document and reflect on decisions, changes in direction and adaptations; (2) consider the evidence that supports the changes to be made; (3) compare expectations with actual results; and (4) facilitate collaboration and alignment.

When to use

Use this tool every time you decide to make changes related to the innovation. For systems innovation projects, use when systems actors are convened periodically to review the results and adjust the actions.

Who are involved

Innovation team; in case of systems innovation projects, systems actors.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Step 1

Understanding the project:
- What is the goal?
- What is the scope?
- What stage is the project in?

Step 2

Discuss decisions and fill in the **"Changes and Decisions"** part in this worksheet
- Date when decision was made
- Description of the decision
- Cause and supporting evidence
- Expected results

Step 3

Fill in the **"Actual results"** part in the worksheet 2-4 weeks later
- Date
- Description of changes and results (if any)
- Supporting evidence
- Follow-up actions

Pivot Diary

Strengths

• provides a **structured framework for reflection, decision making** and **adaptation**;
• serves as a **documented record** of the pivot process, capturing key insights, decisions and lessons learned along the way;
• facilitates **collaboration** and ensures that everyone is aligned on the pivots;
• by documenting the **rationale** and **outcomes** of the previous pivots, the diary enables **informed decision-making** and **reduces the risk** of repeating mistakes.

Weaknesses

• maintaining a pivot diary requires **time** and **effort**, which may detract from other activities and priorities;
• **if the pivot diary is not easily accessible or regularly reviewed** by team members, its effectiveness as a collaboration tool may be compromised.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Innovation Category:
Systems innovations

Evidence use:
Results measurement

Time:
Long (more than 6 months) – depending on the project size

What it supports

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is a powerful tool for evaluating complex systemic change efforts and is particularly useful for exploring conjunctional causation – if and how different combinations of factors/ conditions contribute to specific outcomes and impact – which linear models or simple correlations may not adequately capture. QCA emphasizes equifinality, that is: change is not the result of one individual factor – different combinations of factors can produce similar changes. Therefore, it a holistic approach that aligns well with frameworks that focus on systems thinking.

When to use

QCA bridges the gap between purely qualitative case studies and quantitative analysis, allowing for meaningful pattern recognition with collection of new data and/ or data that has been collected previously. Relying on a cross-case comparison approach, it can help understand why some changes happen and others don't.[32]

Who are involved

Conducted by external evaluators; used by all systems actors.

How it works

Step 1

Specify the scope (i.e. the systems boundaries), outcomes/ impact variables and conditions (usually max 4-8) that might influence the outcomes/ impact using Systems Map, Change Agenda and Impact Pathways created earlier.

Step 2

Select 5 or more comparable cases that exemplify systemic change efforts in different contexts but with different degrees of success in terms of the outcomes and different assumed contributing conditions. Ensure that each case has sufficient data available.

Step 3

Define scoring system and set thresholds/ standards for each condition

Qualitative Comparative Analysis

and the outcomes based on theoretical or empirical benchmarks. Choose between:
• crisp set: use binary (0 OR 1) values for clear presence or absence of a condition or outcome/ impact; or
• fuzzy set: use a range (0 TO 1) to capture varying degrees of presence (e.g. full presence = 1, partial presence = 0.5, absence = 0).

Step 4

Review existing primary and secondary data collected at the innovation project level, as well as data recorded through Pivot Diary and Measurement Framework to assess the conditions and outcomes/ impact across cases. **Collect additional data if needed** using methods like interviews, document analysis, focus group and survey. Cross-check data from multiple sources to ensure reliability and validity.

Step 5

Translate the data into scores and summarize the findings:
• **Score the outcomes and factors/ conditions** based on the data and the scoring system and thresholds defined under Step 3.
• Use a free QCA software (e.g., fsQCA, Tosmana) to create a **Truth Table** with all the cases and their configurations and scorings of conditions and corresponding outcomes. **Identify simplified combinations of conditions** that are sufficient and necessary conditions. **Assess the consistency** (how often a configuration leads to the outcome) and **coverage** (proportion of outcomes explained by the configuration).

Step 6

Identify patterns: which combinations of conditions contribute most significantly to successful outcomes?
• Examine equifinality: note that different causal pathways that can lead to the same outcome, revealing the complexity and potential trade-offs in multi-stakeholder systemic change.
• Relate findings back to the Systems Map, Change Agenda and Impact Pathways to enhance understanding and guide practical recommendations.
• Reflect on contextual factors, such as socio-political or economic environments, that may influence the efficacy of certain pathways.

Step 7

Validate findings by performing sensitivity analyses to test the stability of results (e.g., change calibration thresholds, test for different subsets of cases) and discussing results with stakeholders and experts to confirm the practical relevance and insights from the analysis.

Step 8

Draw conclusions and make recommendations: highlight which conditions or combinations of conditions are most critical for driving systemic change and provide actionable advice based on the findings. Acknowledge any limitations of the study, such as data availability or potential biases.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Step 9

Create detailed reports, policy briefs and presentations tailored to various audiences. **Share findings with stakeholders** involved in the systemic change process to foster discussion, continuous learning and further actions.

Strengths

• **Captures complexity** through combinatorial analysis: QCA is well-suited for analysing complex systemic change where multiple factors interact. It allows the identification of how different combinations of conditions lead to specific outcomes, reflecting the non-linear, multifactorial nature of systemic change, as well as the distinction between conditions that are necessary for an outcome and those that are sufficient.
• **Flexibility in data types**: QCA can handle both qualitative and quantitative data, making it adaptable for evaluations that require rich, context-specific information as well as numerical data.
• **Applicability to small and medium sample sizes**: QCA is effective with a relatively small number of cases, making it practical for real-world scenarios where large datasets are unavailable.
• By reducing **complex data into a simpler format**, QCA makes it easier to analyse and communicate findings to stakeholders.
• **Participatory validation** can enhance the credibility and relevance of the analysis, fostering collaborative learning.

Weaknesses

• **Complex calibration process** requires **time and specialized expertise**. Also, the thresholds need to be well-defined to minimise the risk of bias or inconsistency.
• While the findings provide deep insights into the cases studied, **their applicability to different contexts may be limited.**
• If the sample of cases is not representative or is too homogenous, the findings may not capture the full range of possible pathways or **may overlook key conditions**, Also the quality of insights gained from QCA **relies heavily on the quality of the case data**.
• Analysing and interpreting QCA results, especially when complex interactions of many conditions and outcomes are involved, can become cumbersome.
• QCA may struggle with measuring interactions or conditions that that require **more nuanced gradation than offered by crisp or fuzzy sets**.
• To confirm the robustness of the findings, **detailed sensitivity analyses are needed** to ensure that results are not dependent on arbitrary decisions.
• There is a **risk of oversimplifying** the relationships between conditions, which might overlook important subtleties in how complex systems function.

Quasi-Experimental Approaches [33]

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Impact/ Increasing evidence of impact
Risk/ Do no harm

Innovation stage(s):
Acceleration

Evidence use:
Results measurement

Time:
Medium (less than 6 months)

What it measures

Quasi-experimental approaches can be used to establish whether there is an observable outcome that can be attributed to the innovation through non-random counterfactual methods.

When to use

• When there is a need to establish causality, but randomization is not feasible and/or ethical (e.g. humanitarian or development contexts) as quasi-experimental approaches do not require withholding potentially beneficial interventions from a control group.
• As opposed to RCT, a quasi-experimental approach can be carried out even if it was not planned at the start of the project.
• The size of the target population is sufficiently large as quantitative inquiry requires large sample sizes.
• Necessary research resources and expertise are in place.
• The benefits of implementing the quasi-experimental approach outweigh the costs.

Who are involved

Conducted by external evaluators; used by the innovation team

How it works

Step 1

Define objectives and scope based on the Theory of Change, considering critical causal assumptions
• Is the innovation effective? Is there a measurable effect that can be attributed to the innovation?
• What are the outcomes/ effects, the innovation components, the target population, the timeframe and the context?

Step 2

Develop analytical framework with key research questions based on Step 1

Step 3

Select an appropriate quasi-experimental design considering factors such as feasibility, resource and data

Quasi-Experimental Approaches

availability, as well as the nature of the intervention.

• Non-equivalent Control Group Design: choosing treatment and comparison groups from similar locations to the target population or with similar profiles and measuring outcomes before and after the intervention in both groups.

• Propensity Score Matching: directly 'matching' individual units that have received an intervention with those that have not, using a set of statistical analysis techniques to create a comparison group that is as similar as possible to the sample in the target population (i.e. the two groups would have similar average characteristics).

• Regression Discontinuity Design: the treatment and comparison groups are selected using a numerical eligibility cutoff, based on the assumption that units just above and just below the cutoff are comparable aside from treatment status.

• Difference-in-Difference: comparing the change in outcomes over time between treated and control groups, assuming both would have followed parallel trends.

Step 4

Develop a detailed research plan

• Define sample of units and sampling strategy balancing statistical requirements with practical considerations like budget, time and resources.

o Establish inclusion and exclusion criteria (e.g. include students enrolled in grades 9-12 and exclude students with prior exposure to similar educational apps).

o Use power analysis to calculate the minimum sample size needed to detect a significant effect.

o Identify and define the treatment group (beneficiaries of the innovation) and the comparison group (similar individuals or communities that did not receive the intervention) based on the quasi-experimental design selected. The two groups should be as identical as possible. This is a key step as the main challenge of quasi-experimental approaches is to avoid (or mitigate) the selection bias and make the two groups comparable because if the two groups are systematically different, difference in results may be due to these differences rather than the treatment/ intervention.

• Design and test the instrument: (1) identify outcome measures based on Step 3; (2) create assessment tools such as surveys, questionnaires, tests, or rating scales to measure the identified outcomes and ensure that these tools are valid, reliable and appropriate for the target population and measurement objectives.

• Establish a timeline for data collection to ensure that it aligns with the objectives and project schedule.

Step 5

Data collection:

In most circumstances a baseline is carried out on the intervention and comparison groups. But in some cases, a retrospective baseline may be developed using secondary data sources, such as previous surveys that have been carried out in the same area or government statistics. It can also be done by asking people to recall what the situation was prior to an intervention. A second round of data collection is then applied after the project or programme has finished (or partway through) using the same tools or methodologies as for the baseline.

Quasi-Experimental Approaches

Step 6

Data preparation and analysis:

• Clean and organize the collected data; check for completeness, accuracy and consistency.
• Use statistical methods suitable for the selected quasi-experimental design. Compare outcomes between the treatment and control groups and/or analyse changes over time.
• Assess the statistical significance and practical relevance of the findings.

Step 7

Interpret results

• Determine whether the observed changes can be attributed to the intervention. Consider alternative explanations for the results.
• Evaluate the extent to which the innovation achieved the intended outcomes.

Step 8

Communicate, share, and use results

• Write a comprehensive report in a clear and comprehensive manner, detailing the methodology, results and implications of the research.
• If appropriate, include recommendations for modifying the intervention based on the findings.
• Disseminate findings to stakeholders, including funders, policymakers and community members.
• Use the results to guide future decisions and improvements.

Strengths

• has **rigor** but **less rigid** than an RCT;
• **more feasible than RCTs** in real-world settings, especially in humanitarian or development contexts where **randomization may not be possible or ethical**;
• **can be adapted** to fit the specific conditions of the project and can work with the available data, infrastructure and resources;
• can exploit naturally occurring variations in exposure to the intervention, making them well-suited for evaluating large-scale or complex interventions.

Weaknesses

• without random assignment, these designs are more susceptible to **selection bias** and **confounding variables**, potentially affecting the validity of the results;
• uncontrolled variables may influence the results, leading to **incorrect inferences** about the effectiveness of the innovation;
• ensuring that treatment and control groups are **comparable is challenging**, especially in diverse development contexts;
• **matching limitations**: methods like propensity score matching rely on observable characteristics, which may not capture all relevant differences between groups;
• **advanced skills** and **specialized expertise** are needed to design the research, and statistical techniques are needed to analyse data and control for biases;
• **limitations on external validity**: findings may not be generalizable to other contexts or populations, particularly if the study sample is not representative.

SROI Calculation Tool 34

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Business Model/ Financial Viability
Innovation/Value addition

Innovation stage(s):
Acceleration, Transition to Scale, Scale

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning
Performance tracking

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it tracks

As a prognostic tool that connects costs and benefits, the Social Return on Investment (SROI) Calculation Tool estimates and accounts the current and/or future value – beyond financial gains – created by an innovation.

When to use

Quantify current and estimate future returns – including intangible benefits – to demonstrate the value of investing financial resources into the innovation in comparison to current products or other innovations.

Who are involved

Conducted and used by the innovation team.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Return on Investment (ROI) and Value for Money (VfM) metrics are usually expressed in monetary terms to fit the private sector perspective from which these terms originate. Some effective interventions might initially increase costs or add new expenses to existing programs. In these cases, it is important to reflect gains using alternative 'currencies' that better reflect social return (for example time saved, risks mitigated, improvements in individual or community well-being etc.). SROI accounts for these non-financial benefits, providing a more comprehensive assessment of an innovation's true impact. However, since the ultimate goal is still to evaluate the benefits of financial investments in an innovation, these alternative measures of value should be translated back into monetary terms which allows for a more holistic comparison of costs and benefits, even when the primary outcomes are not directly financial (see examples and the template here).

SROI Calculation Tool

Step 1

Identify "returns currency".
Based on the Theory of Change and scaling goals, look for a measurable unit of results that is directly linked to the deployment of the innovation. Changes in the chosen unit should be clearly understood as a net gain by the user, beneficiary or implementing agent. The emphasis should be on the clearest improvement generated by introducing the innovation (as compared to the baseline condition). If the innovation is designed to lead to more than one outcome that are not related to one another, more than one distinct currency can be used and included in one SROI calculation.

It is important to note that using a single 'returns currency' to justify a complex ToC is clearly simplistic and it is unlikely that a single unit of measurement can accurately convey the full benefits of the innovation solution. But it is a useful approach to think of it as a proxy indicator – one that suggests a larger change without necessarily fully demonstrating it. Here are some examples:

• An app that helps community health workers better plan their routes and schedule visits may lead to an increased number of household visits performed over a period of time. The 'returns currency' in this case would be 'number of community health worker visits performed per time period'.
• An improved cookstove may immediately lower consumption of charcoal (or firewood) by households. The 'returns currency' here would be 'kilograms of charcoal (or firewood) consumed per week, month or year'.
• An innovative campaign to sensitize children on gender inequalities seeks to bring awareness of harmful and positive behaviour to boys and girls. The 'return currency' here may be the 'number of children who have been exposed to these new types of messages'.
• A remote training solution can help reduce the costs of sending trainers to provide in-person sessions. Here the returns can be measured in 'money saved'.
• A drone survey may help identify the extent of damage from a natural disaster in hours rather than days – 'time saved' would be the 'return currency' here.

Step 2

Select the 'innovation unit'
Defining the cost of implementing a unit of the product, service or approach is essential to demonstrating its scalability and sustainability, whether it is a product (cookstove, solar lamp, creative video content, water filter, etc.), a service (training curriculum, virtual coaching, automated referrals, online platform, etc.) or a more general approach (digital safeguarding, innovative financing, etc.). Units can be small in scale and individually used (a single water filter, book, reusable sanitary pad), very large and distributed (a national Information Management System, global youth engagement platform, new social enterprise model) and everything in between. For innovations that combine multiple products or services, the unit may be a package of things. Keep the following in mind when choosing the unit:

• Units must be something that the innovation produces and cannot rely on external uptake by users, participants, beneficiaries, etc. For instance, if you are setting up a new kind of volunteer engagement platform, the unit will be the platform itself, not the number of

SROI Calculation Tool

volunteers (and the hours of volunteering generated may be the currency).
• There is no advantage to making the unit as small and distinct as possible. Since SROI will be ultimately calculated on a dollar per returns currency basis, there is no harm in selecting a very large unit that will yield a higher level of results.
• The pricing of the selected unit (current and future) should be available or can be estimated.

Step 3

Calculate the current per unit cost
Because implementation costs tend to be much higher during early stages of development and implementation than for solutions operating at full scale, it is recommended that you calculate SROI for at least two stages – 'current' and 'at scale'. Implementation of the 'current' stage should consider the costs of implementing the solution at whatever scale you are currently planning or managing (i.e. not yet full scale). This may include the costs of further refining the solution, added cost of evidence generation, initial capital investments (equipment, construction, etc.), maintenance/upkeep and trainings (initial and refresher), etc.

Step 4a

Calculate the current SROI.
First, calculate the amount of the 'total returns', then divide this by number of units to get 'returns per unit'. Finally, divide the 'returns per unit' by the 'cost per unit' from Step 3 to get to the SROI for each USD invested.

Step 4b

Calculate the future SROI
Estimating the expected Social Return on Investment is essential to demonstrating the scalability and eventual financial sustainability of the innovation.

• Based on the ToC and scaling goals, determine what "at scale" implementation means.
• Then using the current cost structure as a starting point, develop a budget for the at-scale scenario. Estimate how costs will change over time given the projected scaling pathway and the potential economies of scale. You will likely need to make several assumptions about lower production costs, more distributed management and support costs, and more availability of trained personnel (amongst other things). Make sure to keep the calculations and rationale on record.
• Calculate the projected at-scale per unit cost and estimate what projected at-scale returns it will yield. Again, think of a possible scenario of at-scale deployment of the innovation and calculate what you would expect to see happen on a per unit basis.
• Consider whether the innovation would accumulate extra value over time. For example, if the beneficiaries can keep a product and its expected lifespan is five years, this would yield a much higher return. Conversely, your currency may have no 'lifespan' to speak of – i.e. it does not accumulate extra value over time. This would be the case with a training course: once the course is finished the knowledge acquisition ends. For an expensive product such as a drone capable of delivering heavy payload to remote areas, it may take several years of increased production efficiency to reach the point when its costs

SROI Calculation Tool

become affordable to the programs serving these communities or the communities themselves. But for a low-cost digital product such as a mobile application, this may happen quickly.
• Finally, divide the projected 'returns per unit' by the projected 'cost per unit' to get to the projected SROI.

Step 5

Indicate evidence and/or assumptions
It is important to indicate the basis of calculation for the current SROI and make assumptions about the future SROI explicit.

Strengths

• Considers a wide range of results, including social, environmental and economic outcomes, providing a more complete picture of the value of an innovation.
• Quantifies intangible benefits that are not captured by traditional financial metrics.
• Provides evidence-based insights that can guide strategic decisions and resource allocation.
• Creates a transparent framework for reporting returns on investment, which can be valuable for investors, funders and the public.
• Enables comparison of different innovation solutions offering similar results.
• Can be used to demonstrate the scalability and eventual financial sustainability of the innovation.

Weaknesses

• While questions related to financial or social gains are important and legitimate, assigning monetary values to social outcomes can be subjective and controversial, leading to debates over the accuracy and fairness of valuations.
• The emphasis on converting social outcomes into financial terms can sometimes overshadow qualitative aspects of impact that are equally important. The complexity of social change may be oversimplified by reducing impacts to a single financial metric.
• It is difficult to gain conclusive answers during early stages of development and implementation. Reliable data may not always be available, especially for intangible or long-term outcomes, which can limit the accuracy of the analysis.
• Some social benefits are difficult to quantify, and choosing appropriate financial proxies can be challenging.

Systems Mapping

Innovation Category:
Systems innovations

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it supports

This approach helps clarify and understand the dynamics of the current systems in terms of the problem to be addressed, the relevant actor groups and conditions associated with the problem, as well as their interconnectedness.

When to use

As the first step to create holistic changes in and across broader socio-technical systems to solve complex problems.

Who are involved

Conducted and used by the innovation team.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Step 1

Define the problem and the scope (scale and sectors) based on relevant secondary data, literature reviews, policy analysis, benchmarking reports, etc.

Step 2

Determine the boundaries and the components of the current socio-technical systems that have led to the root and/or the results of the problem:
• main actors and their behaviours;
• technical conditions (resources, infrastructure, technology, etc);
• social and structural conditions (policies, norms/ values, etc.).
Note that depending on the problem definition and scope identified under Step 1, boundaries can be drawn around a single system or domain OR a set of interconnected (sub-)systems.

Systems Mapping

Step 3

Based on the information under Step 1 and 2, place the actors and their behaviours and the different social and technical conditions on a map using KUMU:

• start with the primary problem in the middle in blue;
• place the main actors and their behaviours, the technical and social conditions – each should be one node – based on how far they are from the problem/ primary beneficiary;
• use different colours for main actors and their behaviours (pink), technical conditions (purple), and social and structural conditions (grey).

Step 4

Visualize how the current socio-technical systems operate and interact by marking the relationships and interconnectedness with arrows. If possible, also mark the direction (one or bi-directional) of the influence and whether it is positive (+) or negative (-).

Figure 1 illustrates how it could look like.

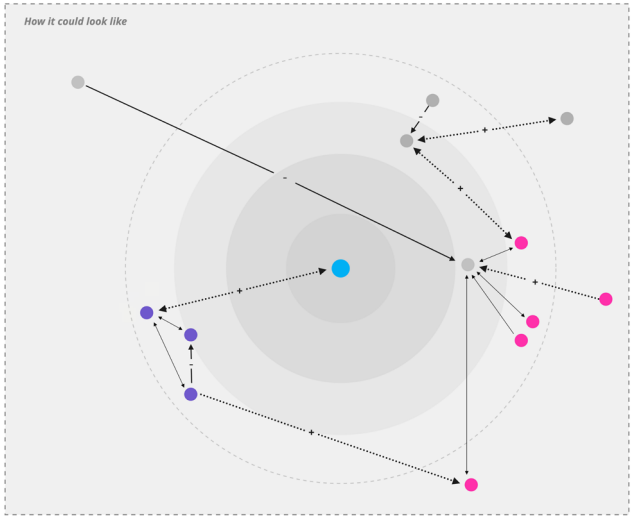


Figure 1: Current system

Strengths

• A **clear visual representation** of who the key actors are within the system, how they interact with each other and where interventions might be critical.
• **Non-linear structure** is useful for making complex systems more understandable for a wide audience and **communicating complexity** to diverse audiences, making the case for system interventions clearer.
• A visualization of **interdependencies** between different actors and their roles within the system (e.g., who depends on whom for resources, information or action).
• The map helps to **define system boundaries**, showing the actors within a particular scope of the system (e.g., geographic, sectoral or thematic boundaries).
• Maps are **visually intuitive**, making it easier for different stakeholders (e.g. policymakers, community members, experts) to understand the structure and relationships.

Systems Mapping

Weaknesses

• While the map shows relationships, it may **lack the depth** needed to capture the full complexity of the systems (e.g., hidden dynamics, historical context).
• Actor-based system maps tend to be **static snapshots**, representing a system at a single point in time. It also focuses on individual **actors and their roles**, sometimes at the expense of understanding the broader structural factors (e.g., policies, economic conditions, historical legacies) and systemic forces (e.g., market structures, cultural norms) that require transformation for true innovation to take hold. Actor-based maps can **struggle to include informal actors** (e.g., community networks, local influencers) or **unofficial relationships** that are not easily visible or documented and not including these may lead to overlooking crucial drivers of change or sources of resistance. The relationships between actors in the map may be **oversimplified** and not considering the true nature of interactions, particularly when it comes to **conflicting interests, coercion**, or **informal power structures**.
• Often do not fully represent **feedback loops, time delays** or **systemic bottlenecks** that affect how the systems function.
• Can become outdated quickly and requires **constant updating** as the systems evolve, which can be **resource-intensive**.

The Most Significant Change [35] for innovation projects

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Impact/ Increasing evidence of impact
Risk/ Do no harm

Innovation stage(s):
Pilot

Evidence use:
Results measurement

Time:
Medium (less than 6 months) to Long (more than 6 months) – depending on the project size

What it measures

Developed by Rick Davies, The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory M&E that can be effectively adapted for innovation projects to capture qualitative data on impact, understand the narratives of success and drive iterative improvements.

When to use

The MSC can be used to assess change during implementation, but it can also be adapted for evaluations. It is a highly relevant tool for innovation projects in which:
• it is not possible to predict in any detail, or with any certainty, what the outcome of a project or programme will be;
• outcomes vary widely across beneficiaries;
• there is no agreement between stakeholders on which outcomes are the most important.

Who are involved

It is a participatory technique which relies on engaging stakeholders in a process of discussing, analysing and recording change. Stakeholders may include project or programme staff, staff at other levels of an organisation, targeted beneficiaries and donor representatives, etc.

How it works

The MSC involves the collection and selection of stories of change, produced by programme or project stakeholders. At its best it can provide an accepted and validated methodology for generating and using purposefully sampled stories of change. There are many ways of implementing the MSC, depending on the context and the type of intervention. The following steps are normally included:

Step 1

Define domains of change (typically 3-5), i.e. broad areas where change at individual, community or organisational level is expected to occur due to the innovation solution. Examples might include:
• User experience: changes in how users interact with an innovation product or service.

The Most Significant Change for innovation projects

• Internal processes: improvements in the processes through innovation.
• Social inclusion: increased participation and integration of marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

Step 2

Decide how and when to collect stories, that is, how the stories will be identified, recorded, discussed, selected and analysed. If the MSC is used as an ongoing monitoring process, then it is also important to decide at this stage how often stories will be produced. Other decisions that might be taken include the criteria used to select stories, the makeup of the groups that will select stories at different levels and how the stories will be used.

Step 3

Collect significant change stories. Methods to gather stories include:
• Participatory workshops where participants can share their stories in a group setting.
• Narrative interviews with open-ended questions that allow respondents to share detailed narratives.
• Digital or non-digital storytelling and sharing platforms where individuals can submit written, audio or video stories.
In addition to a description of the story, MSC also requires some further information to be recorded for each story. This can include information such as:
• who provided the story;
• when and where the change happened; and
• what the storyteller believes is the significance of the events described in the story.
A standard template[36] is often used to record the stories and associated information. This helps ensure that important details are not omitted.

Step 4

Select the most significant stories. Once the stories have been produced, people read the stories (or listen to the audio or watch the videos) and discuss the value of each story. They then decide which they consider to be the most significant stories of all, within each domain. In an individual project this may be done in a single location with a single group. When implemented in large projects or programmes, the most significant stories selected are passed up to the next level. So, for instance, stories developed from several groups within a community could be brought together at the community level. Stories from different communities could be analysed at programme level. In this way, stories are progressively discussed and analysed at successive levels within a hierarchy. Each level chooses the most significant story in each domain, and then passes them on to the next level. Eventually, a few stories emerge as the most significant of all. It is very important that the process used to select the stories is open and transparent, as this is part of what separates the MSC from more ad-hoc or subjective methods of identifying stories. This means every

The Most Significant Change for innovation projects

time stories are selected, the selection criteria and an explanation of the decision should also be recorded and fed back to all stakeholders involved.

Step 5

Verify the stories. Ideally, all stories should be checked for accuracy before being used or passed on to the next level of the hierarchy. This often involves talking to different stakeholders to find out their views of the change story. Sometimes this can be done during the meetings designed to collect and select stories, but sometimes additional work may be required. If the stories do not pass the verification test and are rejected, other stories can be included instead.

Step 6

Analysis and use of data for adaptation, advocacy and reporting results. The MSC is a flexible technique, and its application depends on the purpose of evidence use, the type and need of the innovation project and the nature of the organisation using it. As a qualitative methodology, it is not normally used to generate quantitative data. However, quantification can add further legitimacy and rigour to the process. Three ways of way of generating and analysing quantitative data:

- Within individual stories of change it is sometimes possible to report on basic statistical data, such as how many people benefited from a change, and how they benefited (e.g. increased assets or higher nutritional intake).
- Thematic coding of all stories collected can reveal the frequency of a certain type of change.
- Select the most significant stories in each domain and then ask all other stakeholders involved in the process whether they have observed or experienced similar change. This helps show not only the nature of the most significant change occurring, but also how widespread that change is.

The Most Significant Change for innovation projects

Strengths

• **Complexity**: MSC was developed partly to overcome the perceived weaknesses of more conventional monitoring and evaluation processes that are not always able to deal with complexity.
• **Participatory**: It is a participatory technique that helps to identify changes in people's lives from their own perspectives. This helps projects and programmes understand how changes are seen through the eyes of different stakeholders.
• **Previous experience/ training**: Unlike some other methodologies, project and programme staff often feel comfortable experimenting with MSC even if they have no previous experience or training.
• **Unexpected change**: MSC is better equipped to handle unexpected changes than many other methodologies.

Weaknesses

• **Not capturing expected changes across large numbers of stakeholders** and not designed to capture information on finance, inputs or activities.
• **No comprehensive information on the typical change**, i.e. where assessment of the typical change is needed, MSC needs to be complemented by other methodologies.
• **Resource intensive** when implemented rigorously; on the other hand, if it is simply treated as a way to get stories for communication and advocacy, it often has little value as a participatory monitoring exercise.
• **Negative changes** are not always captured. However, this can be overcome by developing a domain of change that specifically covers negative changes.
• **Bias** towards stories of success and/or towards those who are good at telling (or writing) stories, and subjectivity in the story selection process.

Theory of Change / Initial Theory of Change

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Innovation/ Degree of solving a key problem
Innovation/ Value addition

Innovation stage(s):
Ideation – revisit and update in later stages

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning
Adaptive management and learning

Time:
Short (less than a month) to Medium (less than 6 months)

What it supports

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a causal model – often represented as a conceptual map – with underlying assumptions that focuses on the dynamics of change and the drivers through which change happens. In case of innovation, it also used to clarify its entry point and potential contributions to the results. Applying a nested approach, the logical change pathway created can connect the preconditions of the innovation activities all the way to the higher-level results.

When to use

Develop an initial Theory of Change during the Ideation stage to ensure that (1) the innovation selected or developed addresses a relevant problem and contributes to higher level results; and (2) planning includes creating enabling and supporting environment for innovation activities.

Who are involved

Conducted by one or more facilitators with innovation team/CO staff and key project stakeholders; used by innovation team/CO staff and key project stakeholders.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

The ToC process requires logical thinking and reflection on the possible cause-effect relationships between the activities and the intended results. Since all information relevant to the success is rarely known at this stage, ToC is used for the formulation and testing of hypotheses about how change is likely to occur, and how best to catalyse it, drawing from an understanding of actions that are known to have worked to produce change.[37]

Step 1

Construct a **Problem Tree** illustrating the core problem, the main causes (immediate, underlying and structural) and the effects/ consequences using the information obtained through review of secondary data and the Country Programme Document

Theory of Change / Initial Theory of Change

(see Figure 1). Do not mix between the root of the problem and the result of the problem. While it is tempting to skip this step, the discipline of beginning with problem analysis helps to validate the relevance and design of the innovation.[38]

Step 2

Convert the problems, causes and effects into their opposites—descriptions of objectives or desirable situation/results to create an **Objective Tree**. Keep in mind that both effects and causes in the Problem Tree can have solutions. Begin with the core objective (the inverse of the core problem) and broaden the analysis by asking (1) why the objective matters, (2) how the objective will be accomplished, and (3) what else is needed at each level to accomplish a higher objective. Objectives that contribute to the same desired outcome can be clustered and used as a basis to stimulate discussion about drivers, entry points and indispensable elements.[39] Verify it with the findings of the Value Proposition Canvas and the objectives/results outlined in the CPD.

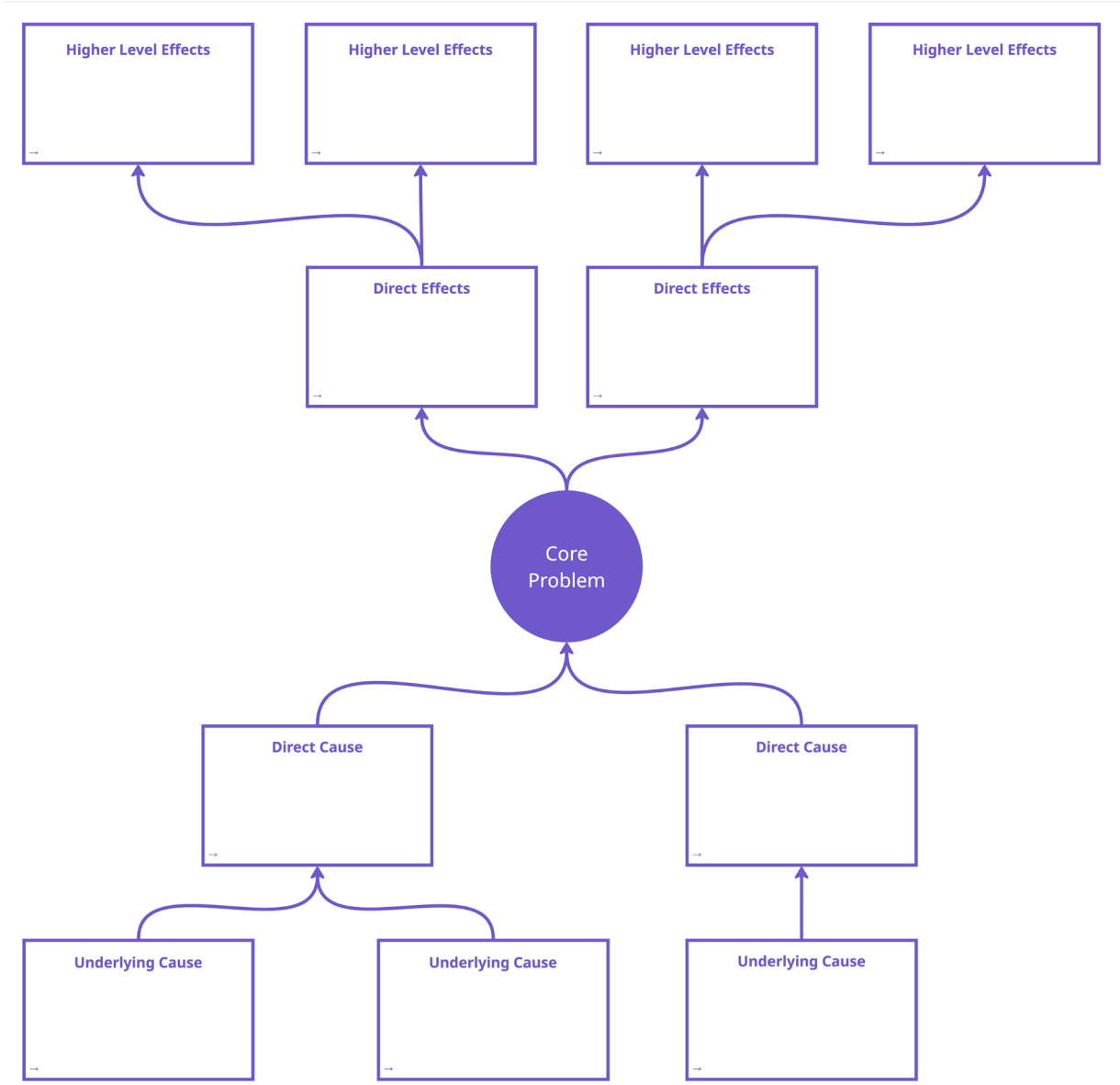


Figure 1

Theory of Change / Initial Theory of Change

Step 3

Identify which/where the selected/ planned **innovation fits within the Objective Tree** (see Figure 2). Consider whether the innovation addresses the root and/or the result of the problem. Be aware that there are solutions for both roots and the results.

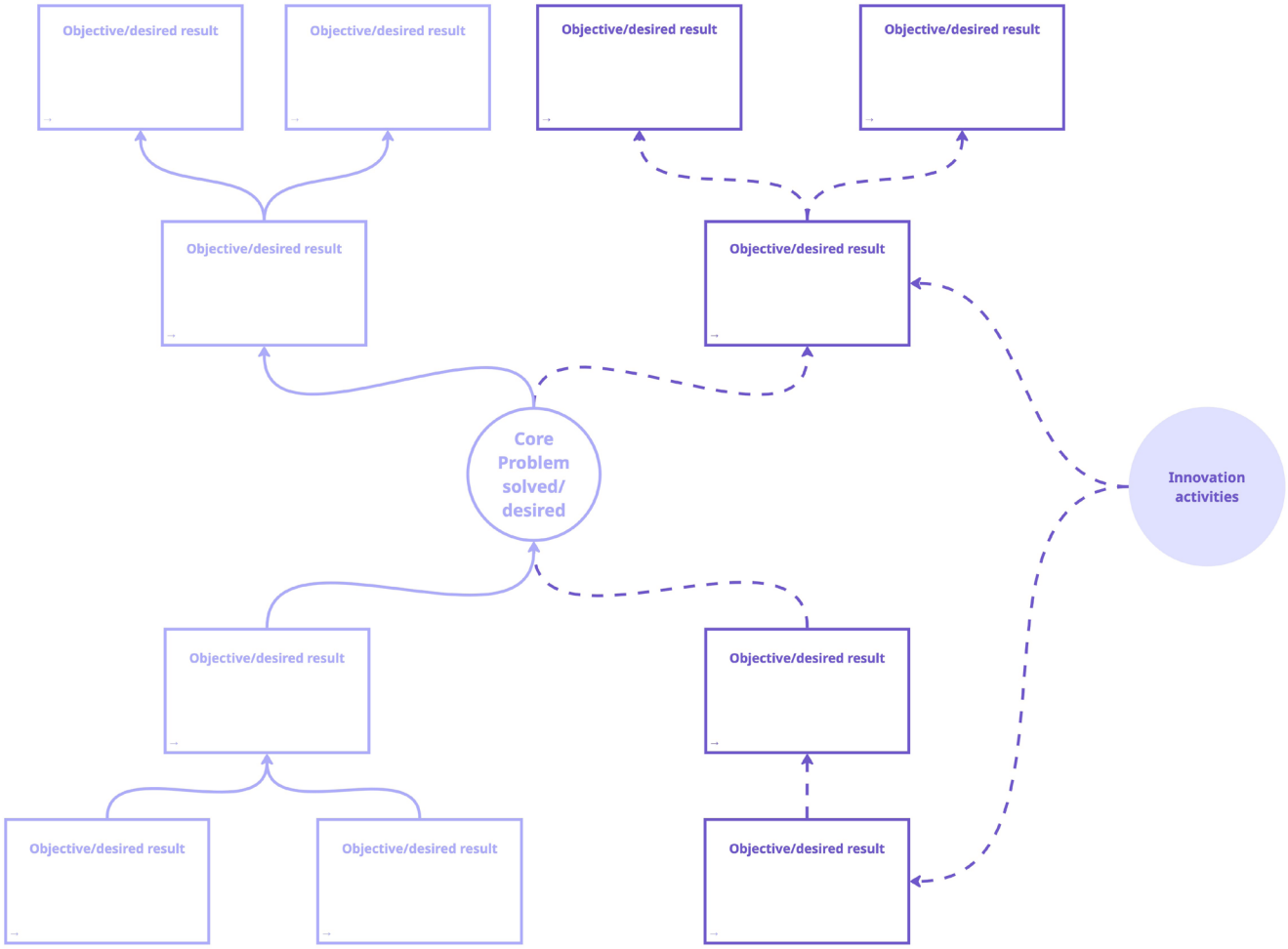


Figure 2

Theory of Change / Initial Theory of Change

Step 4

Take the part of the Objective Tree that is relevant to the innovation and complement it with the **hierarchy and logical flow** from the activities that can ensure enabling environment at CO level all the way to the higher-level results outlined in the CPD (see Figure 3).

Step 5

Identify what you do and do not know: make **causal assumptions** between each level explicit (see Figure 3). Causal assumptions are often related to the underlying causes of the problem to be addressed, and as such, they need to be monitored and validated throughout the innovation process.

Step 6

After visualizing the ToC and clearly indicating the change pathway(s) and the causal assumptions, write a short narrative that explains the conceptual map.

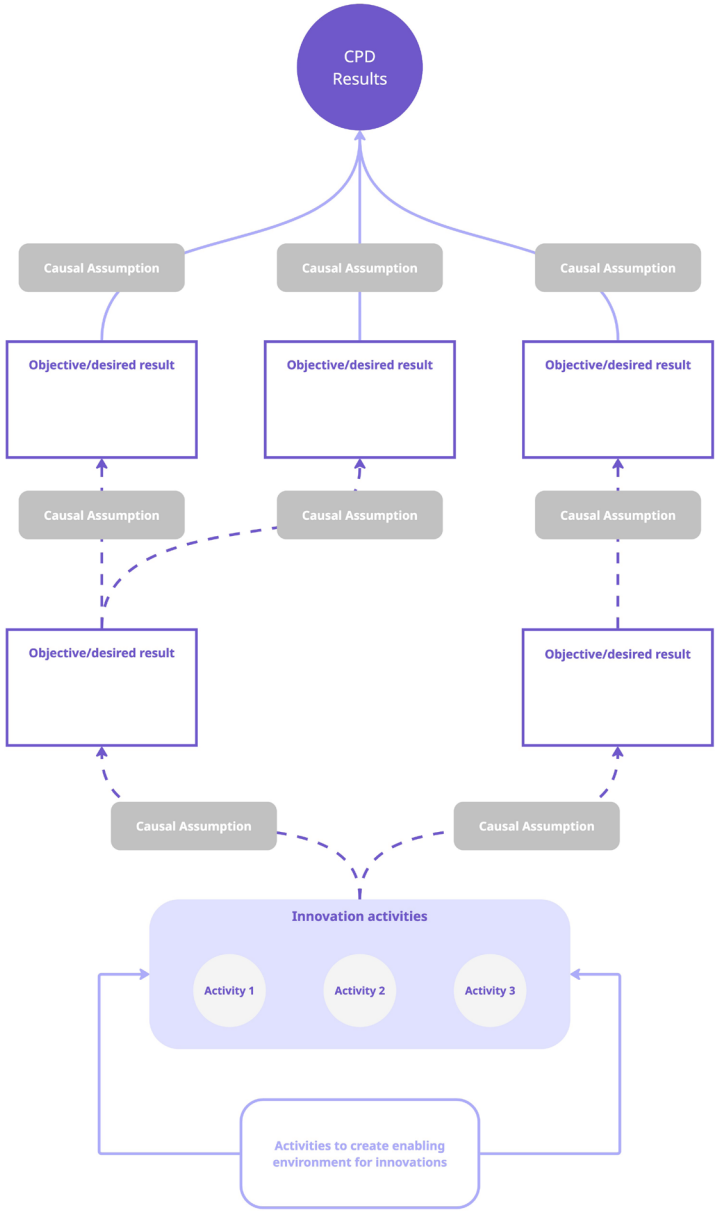


Figure 3

Theory of Change / Initial Theory of Change

Strengths

• **clarity** and **logic**: clarifies logic and helps articulate the innovation's vision matched to the needs clearly from the outset;
• **strategic learning** and **adaptive management**: provides a structured framework for strategic planning, decision-making, as well as adaptive management and iterative learning;
• **alignment**: helps create a shared understanding of goals and strategies;
• **entry point** and **contribution**: helps determine the entry point of the innovation and enables assessment of its contribution to change.

Weaknesses

• **limited data** and **information**: lack of comprehensive data and information in the early stages may lead to incomplete or inaccurate assumptions;
• **assumption bias**: ToCs in this stage rely heavily on assumptions, which may introduce bias and overlook critical factors or alternative pathways;
• **overreliance on linear logic**: an initial ToC often relies on linear cause-and-effect logic, which may not fully capture the complexity and non-linearity of real-world change processes.

Theory of Change / Theory of Change for Piloting

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Innovation/ Degree of solving a key problem
Innovation/ Value addition
Scalability/ Alignment with country priorities

Innovation stage(s):
Pilot – revisit and update in later stages

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning
Adaptive management and learning

Time:
Short (less than a month) to
Medium (less than 6 months)

What it supports

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a causal model – often represented as a conceptual map – with underlying assumptions that focuses on the dynamics of change and the drivers through which change happens. Applying a nested approach, the logical change pathway created can connect the preconditions of the innovation activities all the way to the higher-level results. In the Pilot stage, the initial ToC created during Ideation is to be updated – both the logic pathway and causal assumptions – and complemented by contextual assumptions and risks, as well as a list of indicators that can measure success and monitor progress and can be used for adaptive management.

When to use

Revisit and update the Initial Theory of Change developed in the Ideation stage when more information is available – including findings on effectiveness, user feedback, feasibility assessment – and select indicators that can measure the progress at each level.

Who are involved

Conducted by one or more facilitators with the innovation team/CO staff and key project stakeholders; used by the innovation team/CO staff and key project stakeholders.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Step 1

Update the causal assumptions to reflect the changes – if any – based on findings on effectiveness, user feedback, and feasibility assessment. **Add contextual assumptions and risks** primarily related to the piloting context. Remember that a condition can be formulated both as an assumption or risk depending on the circumstances – whether it is anticipated to hold true, or to require attention and proactive steps.[40]

Theory of Change / Theory of Change for Piloting

Step 2

Based on Step 1, **update the logic pathway** to reflect the changes – if needed.

Step 3

Update the narrative that accompanies the conceptual map.

Step 4

Decide on indicators at each level that can be used for results measurement and performance tracking, as well as learning and adaptive management.

Strengths

• **clarity and logic**: provides a clear roadmap of intended outcomes, activities and causal and contextual assumptions with a logical sequence, promoting systematic planning, implementation and evaluation of the innovation pilot;
• **strategic learning and adaptive management**: provides a structured framework for strategic planning, decision-making, as well as adaptive management and iterative learning;
• **alignment**: helps create a shared understanding of goals, activities and strategies;
• **a framework for evaluating effectiveness** and **implementation**: help guide the selection of appropriate indicators, data collection methods and evaluation criteria.

Weaknesses

• developing and updating the ToC of a complex intervention in specific context can be **resource intensive**;
• **identifying and measuring intermediate and long-term outcomes** of the pilot can be **challenging**, particularly if there is an expectation to attribute results causally to the intervention;
• **unverified assumptions** about how the changes occur and the relationships between activities and outcomes can lead to potential gaps or inaccuracies in planning;
• **overreliance on linear logic**: ToC may overemphasize linear cause-and-effect relationships between activities and outcomes, overlooking the complexity of social change processes and the role of non-linear dynamics, feedback loops and unintended consequences;
• rigid adherence to the ToC may **constrain the flexibility, limiting experimentation** and response to emergent opportunities or challenges.

Theory of Change / Scaling Approach and Goals Based on Theory of Change

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Innovation/ Degree of solving a key problem
Innovation/ Value addition
Scalability/ Proven multi-country needs/ alignment with country priorities
Impact/ Evidence of reaching millions

Innovation stage(s):
Acceleration – revisit and update in later stages

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning
Adaptive management and learning

Time:
Short (less than a month) to
Medium (less than 6 months)

What it supports

In the Acceleration stage, the Theory of Change from the Pilot stage is to be expanded with **pathways and approach to scale**, the most critical **assumptions** on scaling pathways and the **scaling goals** to be achieved during or expected beyond project/ funding period.

When to use

Revisit and update the ToC used in the Pilot stage when preparing for scaling.

Who are involved

Conducted and used by the innovation team and other key project stakeholders.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Step 1

Map out and **select one or more strategies and approaches to scale** – expansion, replication or collaboration – primarily based on the level of control that needs to be maintained during scaling[41] (see template on Miro board). Provide a contextualized and specific description of the selected approach(es) using the insights from the business model of the innovation.

Step 2

Determine scaling goals to be achieved during or expected beyond project/ funding period along with the innovation results (use and if necessary, update the ones outlined in the ToC from the Pilot stage). Bear in mind that innovations might have a longer maturation period and benefits and values might unfold over years or even decades.

Step 3

STEP 3: Identify and verify the most critical assumptions on the chosen scaling pathway.

Theory of Change / Scaling Approach and Goals Based on Theory of Change

Strengths

• **clarity and logic**: outlines a contextualised scaling approach and goals with assumptions, promoting systematic planning, implementation and evaluation of the innovation scaling;
• translating broad strategy into a **realistic plan of time-bounded** change efforts, distinguishing what can be achieved from what can be expected/ projected;
• provides a structured framework for **strategic planning, decision-making**, as well as **adaptive management** and **iterative learning**;
• **alignment**: helps create a shared understanding of goals and strategies;
• **framework for evaluating scaling**: help guide the selection of appropriate indicators, data collection methods, and evaluation criteria.

Weaknesses

• **prognosis** on the scaling progress and the intermediate and long-term outcomes can be **inaccurate**;
• **unverified assumptions** on the scaling pathways can lead to potential gaps or inaccuracies in planning;
• rigid adherence to the scaling approach may **constrain the flexibility, limiting experimentation** and response to emergent opportunities or challenges.

Theory of Change / Theory of Change for Evaluation

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Innovation/ Degree of solving a key problem, Value addition
Scalability/ Proven multi-country needs/ country priorities
Impact/ Evidence of reaching millions of people

Innovation stage(s):
Transition to Scale, Scale

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning
Adaptive management and learning

Time:
Short (less than a month) to Medium (less than 6 months)

What it supports

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a causal model – often represented as a conceptual map – with underlying assumptions that focuses on the dynamics of change and the drivers through which change happens. Applying a nested approach, the logical change pathway created can connect the preconditions of the innovation activities all the way to the higher-level results. In the Transition to Scale and Scale stages, the ToC created and used earlier is to be updated and used for evaluation.

When to use

Revisit and review the ToC for Piloting and the Scaling Approach and Goals created and used in the earlier stages so they can serve as a starting point for the evaluation.

Who are involved

Conducted by external evaluators; used by the innovation team and other key project stakeholders.

How it works

Click to browse **template**

Step 1

Review the ToC for Piloting and the Scaling Approach and Goals and update if necessary.

Step 2

Identify key components that can serve as the basis for the evaluation framework and evaluation questions.

Step 3

Once the evaluation findings are available, update and refine the ToC and the Scaling Approach and Goals to reflect any necessary changes in program design or implementation strategies.

Theory of Change / Theory of Change for Evaluation

Strengths

• **clarity and logic**: provides a clear roadmap of intended outcomes, activities and causal and contextual assumptions with a logical sequence, enabling evaluation of the innovation;
• **A framework for evaluating effectiveness** and **implementation**: help guide the selection of appropriate indicators, data collection methods and evaluation criteria;
• **strategic learning and adaptive management**: provides a structured framework for strategic decision-making, as well as adaptive management and iterative learning;
• **alignment**: helps create a shared understanding of goals, activities and strategies.

Weaknesses

• updating the ToC of a complex intervention in specific context can be **resource intensive**;
• **unverified assumptions** about how the changes occur and the relationships between activities and outcomes can lead to potential gaps or inaccuracies;
• **overreliance on linear logic**: ToC may overemphasize linear cause-and-effect relationships between activities and outcomes, overlooking the complexity of social change processes and the role of non-linear dynamics, feedback loops and unintended consequences.

User Feedback Survey

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Business Model/ Technical viability
Business Model/ Proven demand from stakeholders

Innovation stage(s):
All

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning
Performance tracking

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it measures

A user feedback survey measures various aspects of user experiences, perceptions, opinions and behaviours related to a product or service. The specific dimensions or attributes measured for innovation may include desirability/ acceptability, usability, functionality, satisfaction, quality, etc.

When to use

Use this method to gather user feedback before fully developing the product or service and in later stages of the innovation to verify desirability/ acceptability, usability, functionality, satisfaction, quality, etc.

Who are involved

Conducted by the innovation team with users; used by the innovation team.

How it works

Step 1

Design: (1) define the specific aspects you want to collect feedback on (e.g. usability, functionality, user experience, suggestions for improvement); (2) choose the most appropriate method for distributing the survey questionnaire (e.g. online, paper-based); (3) create a comprehensive survey questionnaire that includes both a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights; (4) test the questions and platform with a small group of users.

Step 2

Participant selection: select participants who represent your target users and determine the appropriate sample size. Note that as the data used for quantitative analysis is to produce findings that represent a wider population with a specific degree of precision, samples generated for the purposes of quantitative analysis should be large enough and based on random

User Feedback Survey

selection. However, online surveys are often sent out to all users and if response rates are low – below 50% –, the responses are to be treated as a convenience or quota sample, which may be biased because the responses of the group that provided information may considerably differ from the responses that would have been received from the parts of the users who did not provide information. Therefore, it is important to weigh the trade-offs between what is desirable methodologically and what is practical, and to consider how these decisions can impact the value of the data and analyses generated.

Step 3

Collect feedback: (1) share the survey with clear instructions and deadline for completion; (2) monitor the collection of survey responses as they come in and follow up with reminders or additional outreach to maximize response rate.

Step 4

Compile and analyse data: (1) compile and organize the responses for analysis (including resolving any discrepancies or missing data); (2) analyse the compiled responses to identify trends, patterns, and insights using both quantitative analysis techniques to summarize and interpret closed-ended responses (e.g., calculating frequencies, percentages) and qualitative analysis techniques to analyse open-ended responses (e.g., thematic coding, content analysis).

Step 5

Make adjustments: refine and improve innovation based on the feedback received.

Strengths

- **efficiency and scalability**: collect feedback from a large number of participants in a relatively short period of time;
- **standardization**: standardized questions make it easier to compare responses and analyse data objectively;
- **anonymity**: participants can provide feedback anonymously, which may encourage honest and candid responses;
- **quantitative and qualitative data** together provides a comprehensive understanding of user experiences.

Weaknesses

- **limited depth**: surveys may not capture detailed or nuanced feedback as clarification or probing responses in real-time are not possible;
- **low response rates**: surveys may suffer from low response rates, especially if participants perceive them as time-consuming or irrelevant;
- **lack of context** makes it challenging to fully understand responses and interpret findings accurately.

User Metrics and Analytics

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Business Model/ Technical viability
Business Model/ Proven demand from stakeholders

Innovation stage(s):
All

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning
Performance tracking

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it tracks

User metrics and analytics track patterns and trends of user interaction, which can inform decisions for refinement and improvement. Key components include
• usage metrics: number of interactions (clicks, taps, swipes or other actions), average session duration, frequency of use, retention;
• engagement metrics: feature interaction, navigation patterns, time spent on tasks;
• behavioural metrics: errors and confusion, drop-off points, task success rates;
• performance metrics: page load time, responsiveness, stability and reliability (frequency of crashes, errors, or other performance issues);
• user segmentation: demographic information, user roles and personas.

When to use

User metrics and analytics can provide insights into the functionality and performance of digital innovation solutions in real time so adjustment and iterative improvement can be made throughout the innovation stages.

Who are involved

Users and the innovation team.

User Metrics and Analytics

How it works

Here are some approaches to **obtain and visualize data** effectively:
• **Integrate analytics software or tools** directly into the digital solution to track user interactions, behaviours, and performance metrics. Examples include
    o **Google Analytics**: track user sessions, page views, events and user flows;
    o **Hotjar**: capture user behaviour through heatmaps, session recordings, and surveys to understand how users interact with specific elements;
    o **Mixpanel**: analyse user engagement, retention, and conversion metrics to gain insights into user behaviour and product usage patterns.
• Implement **event tracking** to capture specific user actions, such as clicks, taps, form submissions or navigation paths. Use JavaScript libraries or frameworks to trigger and log events based on user interactions.
• Utilize **usability testing platforms** that offer built-in data collection capabilities for conducting testing sessions and gathering user feedback. Platforms like UserTesting, UsabilityHub, or Maze provide tools for creating tasks, collecting user responses and analysing usability metrics.
• Use **dashboard platforms** like Tableau, Power BI, or Google Data Studio or develop custom web-based dashboards for interactive visualizations that aggregate and display multiple user metrics and analytics.

Strengths

• can help identify **emerging trends** and **patterns in user behaviour**;
• **data-driven insights** from user metrics and analytics can help (1) identify potential **risks, issues** and **challenges** early in the process and (2) inform **decision-making, early validation** and **iterative improvements**.

Weaknesses

• **overemphasis on quantitative data** may overlook qualitative insights and subjective user experiences;
• user data may **lack context**, making it challenging to fully understand the underlying reasons behind user behaviours or to anticipate future trends and changes (to avoid a shallow understanding of user needs and motivations, complimentary tools like user feedback survey should be used);
• collecting and analysing user data can raise **privacy concerns** and **ethical considerations**, particularly if users' personal information is involved.

Value Proposition Canvas [42]

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Innovation/ Value addition

Innovation stage(s):
Ideation

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it supports

The term 'value proposition' first appeared in 1988 referring to the benefits a company promises to create and deliver.[43] When it comes to the social sector, a broader definition of 'value proposition' is needed: simultaneously create value for both users and beneficiaries – if they are not the same. Introduced in 2014 by Alex Osterwalder, the Value Proposition Canvas (VPC) is a visual tool to explore the potential fit between the target groups and the value proposition offered.[44]

When to use

Use this tool to (1) map out user and beneficiary needs and demands and (2) understand if (and how) a certain product/service can deliver benefits and value to them; (3) create and communicate a shared understanding of the value proposition. VPC can also function as a plug-in to Social Business Model Canvas.

Who are involved

Conducted by the innovation team with users and beneficiaries.
As the data are used for qualitative analyses, whenever possible different perspectives within the target population should be covered. Purposive sampling—a method of selecting informants based on researchers' existing knowledge and professional judgement about who will provide the most useful information—or quota sampling—a method in which samples are selected to reflect the target population's characteristics—may be most applicable. Note that it is important to weigh the trade-offs between what is desirable methodologically and what is practical, and to consider how these decisions can impact the value of the data and analyses generated.

Value Proposition Canvas

How it works

This tool is based on the idea that people don't just 'buy' products and services, but that they are looking for something to do a particular 'job' for them. The focus therefore is less on the product or the service itself but more on what the user would like to achieve by buying or accessing it. VPC is comprised of six building blocks. On the right side, there is the user/ beneficiary profile:

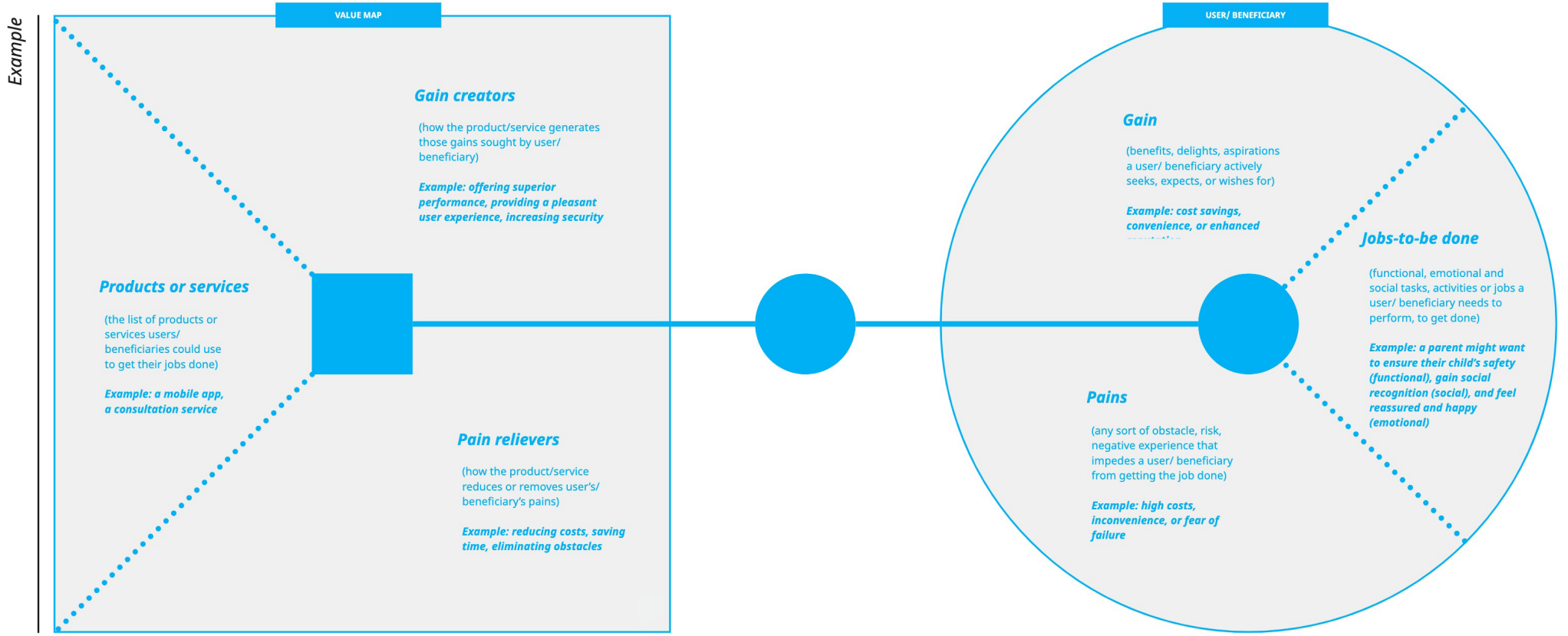
- Jobs-to-be-done = functional, emotional and social tasks, activities or jobs a user/ beneficiary needs to perform, to get done
    - example: a parent might want to ensure their child's safety (functional), gain social recognition (social), and feel reassured and happy (emotional)
- Pains = any sort of obstacle, risk, negative experience that impedes a user/ beneficiary from getting the job done
    - example: high costs, inconvenience, or fear of failure
- Gains = benefits, delights, aspirations a user/ beneficiary actively seeks, expects, or wishes for
    - example: cost savings, convenience, or enhanced reputation

On the left side, there is the value map:

- Products/services = the list of products or services a user/ beneficiary could use to get their jobs done
    - example: a mobile app, a consultation service
- Pain relievers = how the product/service reduces or removes user's/ beneficiary's pains
    - example: reducing costs, saving time, eliminating obstacles
- Gain creators = how the product/service generates those gains sought by user/ beneficiary
    - example: offering superior performance, providing a pleasant user experience, increasing security[45]

Click to browse **template**

Value Proposition Canvas



Adapted from Strategyzer, 'The Value Proposition Cavnas', 2025.

Value Proposition Canvas

How it works

Step 1

Define the groups of users and beneficiaries.

Step 2

Collect inputs separately (one canvas for one user/ beneficiary) for all user and beneficiary profiles using the right side of this worksheet.

Step 3

Fill in the left side of the worksheet.

Step 4

Match the two sides: ensure that the products and services, pain relievers, and gain creators are aligned with the jobs, pains, and gains.

Step 5

Test and validate through user/ beneficiary feedback.

Step 6

Iterate and refine the innovation based on the information obtained.
See a video here that explains the VPC in detail.

Strengths

- **user and beneficiary centric**: helps understand needs and ensures that the value propositions align closely with expectations and desires;
- **clarity and simplicity**: a visual tool that is simple to use and breaks down complex ideas into simpler, more manageable components;
- **prioritization**: helps prioritize features and solutions that address the most significant pains and gains;
- **communication**: facilitates better communication and alignment, providing a shared understanding of the value proposition; and can also be used to explain and justify strategies to external stakeholders.

Weaknesses

- **limited depth** and **oversimplification**: may provide only surface-level insights and oversimplify complexities of needs;
- **need for complementary tools**: to ensure effectiveness and accuracy, it should be used in conjunction with other tools and frameworks;
- **potential for bias**: if the inputs are not validated (see Step 5), the value proposition will not accurately reflect the needs.

Wizard of Oz

Key measurement aspect / 5D equivalent:
Business Model/ Technical viability
Business Model/ Proven demand from stakeholders

Innovation stage(s):
Ideation

Evidence use:
Assessment for design and planning

Time:
Short (less than a month)

What it supports

The Wizard of Oz[46] is a method to test different aspects of a planned product or service by simulating its functionalities. It is also a way of assessing demand from potential users.

When to use

Use this method of low fidelity prototyping to test different aspects of the innovation and gather user feedback before fully developing the product or service. It is especially suitable for testing using limited resources and designing products or services that require a lot of physical interaction with the users.

Who are involved

Conducted by the innovation team with users and beneficiaries; used by the innovation team.
As the data are used for qualitative analyses, whenever possible different perspectives within the target population should be covered. Purposive sampling—a method of selecting informants based on researchers' existing knowledge and professional judgement about who will provide the most useful information—or quota sampling—a method in which samples are selected to reflect the target population's characteristics—may be most applicable. Note that it is important to weigh the trade-offs between what is desirable methodologically and what is practical, and to consider how these decisions can impact the value of the data and analyses generated.

How it works

Step 1

Preparation: (1) define what you want to test and what you want to learn from the testing (e.g. user interactions, validating a new service concept, refining a feature); (2) create simulated service environment and functionality, including front-end user interfaces and back-end systems—for example, the unseen 'wizard' that can oversee and respond to user interactions;

Wizard of Oz

(3) choose the format/ setting the testing will be implemented (e.g. workshop, one-on-one sessions, 'Pop-Up' setups that mimic the final service environment in a real-world setting, mock-ups and low fidelity prototypes).

Step 2

Participant recruitment: select participants who represent your target users and inform participants that they will be part of a study to test a new concept.

Step 3

Testing using the selected format and setting: participants interact with the mock interface or environment while the 'wizard' controls the responses and interactions.

Step 4

Observation and **collection of feedback**: (1) observe how participants use the service, noting any challenges, confusions or areas of satisfaction and record user behaviours, such as how they navigate the interface, the time spent on tasks and any repeated actions; (2) collect user feedback from participants about their experiences (thoughts, feelings, and suggestions).

Step 5

Analysing results and making adjustments: (1) look for patterns in the feedback and observation data and draw insights about the feasibility, desirability and usability of the innovation; (2) refine and improve innovation (e.g. changes to the interface, process or overall design).

Conduct additional rounds of Wizard of Oz testing if needed to refine the innovation further before moving into piloting.

Strengths

• allows for **early validation** of the concept and user experience **with minimal setup** before significant investment in infrastructure and resources;
• **lower initial costs** compared to fully developing and deploying a comprehensive solution;
• provides both **observation** and **nuanced feedback data**;
• helps identify potential **risks, issues** and **challenges** early in the process.

Weaknesses

• the manual nature of the testing process is **not scalable for larger populations**;
• requires **human resources** and **time** to manage interactions and gather feedback;
• participants might respond differently knowing they are part of a test, potentially leading to **biased feedback**.

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CEA	Cost-Effectiveness Analysis
CO	Country Office
CPD	Country Programme Document
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MSC	Most Significant Change
OECD-DAC	The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PME	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PSM	Propensity Score Matching
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
ROI	Return on Investment
SOP	Standard Operation Procedures
SROI	Social Return on Investment
ToC	Theory of Change
VfM	Value for Money
VPC	Value Proposition Canvas

Glossary of Key Terms

Acceleration is the innovation stage in which a model for 'scale-up' (see vertical scaling below) and 'scale-out' (see horizontal scaling below)[47] is developed and iterated by simultaneously adding complexity to create a complete and sustainable innovation solution, and reducing complexity to create an easily replicable intervention in diverse contexts.[48]

Activities are actions taken or work performed through which inputs (such as funds, capacity-building, workshops, publications, technical assistance or other types of resources) are mobilized to produce specific outputs.[49]

Adaptability is the extent to which aspects of an innovation can be modified so it becomes a better fit to specific contexts and cultural, geographical or resource-based needs. Adaptations should maintain the core elements of the innovation while allowing flexibility in how it is delivered.

Adaptive management is an approach to working on complex problems or contexts which focuses on acting, sensing and responding.[50]

Adoption (used synonymously with uptake) is when an innovation is accepted and used or implemented by a relevant person or independent entity.

Assumptions can refer to: (1) underlying hypotheses about how change will happen in a programme, i.e. causal assumptions; or (2) the internal or external variables or factors that need to be in place for results to be achieved, i.e. contextual assumptions.[51] A condition can be formulated both as a contextual assumption or risk, depending on whether it is anticipated to hold true, or to require attention and proactive steps.[52]

Attribution refers to the ascription of a causal link between observed (or expected to be observed) changes and a specific intervention.[53] Attribution can be claimed when: (1) an agency or intervention was the sole cause of a change or set of changes; or (2) other influences were involved, but the change(s) would not have happened without the agency or intervention; or (3) it is possible to calculate with some degree of accuracy the proportion of a change or set of changes that was produced through the agency or intervention.[54]

Beneficiaries (or target impact groups) refers to the people who are expected to benefit from an innovation. This group may overlap with those who interface with the innovation

(see users below).

Collaboration includes various forms of division of labour through formal partnerships, strategic alliances and coalitions. They include a growing array of innovative structures and governance arrangements reflecting the need to leverage the strengths and motives of various types of organizations.[55]

Contribution is understood to mean that an intervention or agency was one amongst a number of influences that helped produce a change or set of changes.[56]

Cost-effectiveness refers to the relationship of costs to a unit of outcome (e.g. how much investment generates a higher employment rate).[57]

Counterfactual provides a theory about what would have happened to the target population had the intervention not taken place. In experimental approaches, the counterfactual is developed by assessing the situation of a control or comparison group. These are groups that are as similar as possible to the population targeted by the intervention but were not themselves influenced by the intervention.[58]

Effectiveness is the "extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups",[59] while impact (see below) is the measured effect caused by the intervention (generally found by isolating the effect using experimental, or quasi-experimental methods).[60] In this sense, impact evidence is distinct from other measures of effectiveness, which does not necessarily refer to attribution.

Evidence[61] is interpreted in its broadest and most basic sense as quantitative or qualitative information that "helps to substantiate or prove/disprove the truth of a specific proposition".[62] It must be "supported by data and based on a process that you can describe and repeat".[63] However, the understanding and scope of evidence can vary depending on the environment and the purpose of evidence use:

	Data	**Information**	**Insights**	**Knowledge**
Definition	An observation that is captured, observed or described: • qualitative data describes narrative responses to who, which, what, where and why questions • quantitative data answers "how many", "to what extent" or "how much" questions	Patterns or sequences between data points that describe the significance of something	Theoretical or practical understanding based on the experience and/or assumptions about patterns and trends of information	Synthesized and contextualized information that provides deeper understanding
Example	Rainfall	Pattern of rainfall	Analysis of pattern of rainfall	Research findings on the impact of rainfall variability on different crop types Best practices for water management in agriculture

Source: Table[64] adapted from Morgan, Kuranda, et al., 'Engaging with Evidence Toolkit: A practical resource to strengthen capabilities for evidence use and expert engagement', Nesta, London, 2020.

Expansion is a scaling approach that focuses on increasing organizational size, operational scope or geographic spread.[65]

Horizontal scaling (or 'scale-out') refers to distilling complexity to create an easily replicable innovation solution in diverse contexts[66] and scaling via different geographies, organizations or end user populations.[67]

Ideation is the innovation stage in which a problem is defined and analysed, then matched with a new or established innovation solution, validated and refined through early-stage feedback.

Impact is the highest-level positive or negative long-term change for identifiable population groups produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. Impact implies changes in the economic, social, cultural, civil, political and environmental conditions of people and is the consequence of one or more outcomes.[68]

Implementation fidelity refers to the degree to which the innovation is being implemented as originally designed. High fidelity ensures that the core components, procedures and goals of the innovation are maintained. The key aspects of implementation fidelity are:

- *adherence*: innovation being delivered as intended, preserving its core components and values
- *exposure/dose and coverage:* the frequency and duration of the intervention as planned/intended; rate/number of participating beneficiaries
- *quality of delivery:* implementation meeting prescribed technical and quality standards and benchmarks
- *participant responsiveness:* how participants engage with and respond to the innovation[69]

Indicator is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts, with the intention of gauging the performance of a programme or investment. It specifies what is to be measured along a scale or dimension but does not indicate the direction or change.[70]

Innovation refers to a new or significantly improved solution that contributes to progress for children and accelerates results for children or young people.[71] It is defined as a change strategy in the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025 to accelerate results for children at scale.

Outcomes are medium-term changes that are logically expected to occur once the activities have achieved one or more outputs. Outcomes correspond to changes in individual or institutional performance, such as changes in access and quality of services for children, behaviour and practices, decision-making, policy-making and increased efficiency or effectiveness. These are expected to lead to changes in conditions for children, women and families (impact).[72]

Outputs are changes in skills or abilities and capacities of individuals or institutions, directly attributable to the activities of an organization, policy, program, or intervention.[73]

Pilot is the innovation stage in which an innovation solution is field-tested through an early, real-world assessment of effectiveness, relevance, added value and feasibility to gain proof of concept.[74]

Proof of concept refers to initial evidence that the innovation works, is effective and improves lives. It helps build credibility and establish the innovation's status as an effective solution. It is important to note that maturity level of the innovation needs to be considered when thinking about the methods to be applied as early-stage innovations cannot reasonably be expected to produce rigorous or experimental evidence.[75]

Prototype is an initial model of an innovation solution built to test and improve design and functional features and processes before piloting and implementing in real-world contexts.[76]

Purposive sampling is a sampling method whereby researchers select informants based on their own existing knowledge and professional judgement. This sampling method should be used in cases where the knowledge of the researcher can produce better quality results than if other non-probability sampling techniques were implemented. As the researcher is able to specifically select people of interest and exclude those who do not suit the purpose of the study, this sampling method is mainly used for case studies on a particular subset of people.[77]

Quota sampling is a sampling method whereby the samples are selected based on the probability proportionate to the distribution of a variable in the population.[78] This method is used to maintain the proportions that are representative of the population. For instance, if the proportion of females in a given population is 60 per cent and the required sample size needs is 1,000 then a total of 600 female respondents are needed in order to conduct a quota sampling.

Replication is a scaling approach that focuses on persuading other organizations – including public sector institutions – to take up or mandate an innovation, process, concept or model. In most cases, methods under this approach involve an arms-length relationship between the originating and adopting organizations.[79] Replication can also happen within an organization or in other contexts/geographic areas.

Results are describable or measurable changes in a state or condition that derive from a cause-and-effect relationship. There are three types of such changes – outputs, outcomes and impact – all of which may be intended or unintended, positive and/or negative.[80]

Risks refer to potential events, occurrences or conditions – both internal and external to the innovation – that could adversely affect the achievement of results.[81] A condition can be formulated both as a contextual assumption or risk depending on the circumstances – whether it is anticipated to hold true, or it requires attention and proactive steps.[82]

Scale is the innovation stage in which an innovation solution is adopted and operates at the desired level of scale/exponential growth, sustained by an ecosystem of actors.[83]

Sourcing refers to searching for and finding existing innovation solutions to a problem.

Systemic change tackles problems that are the results of complex systems interacting with one another – such as the climate crisis, food insecurity, energy crisis and growing inequalities – where it is not enough merely to strengthen and improve the existing systems[84], rather the rules of the game need to be changed so a different kind of outcome becomes possible.[85]

Systems refer to systems of service provision that are determined by joint goals and purpose, as well as the interrelation of technical (e.g. technology and infrastructure) and socio-institutional elements (e.g. networks, institutions, regulations, values and behaviours).[86]

Systems innovations enable the "transition from one configuration of a socio-technical system to a new one, in which the system remains able to deliver its key functions but in a different way"[87] (e.g. transforming the energy system from fossil fuels to renewable sources involves changes in technology, policies, market incentives, infrastructure and public behaviour, and also has an impact on other sectors). Key features of systems innovations are to:

• aim for long-term, sustainable, holistic changes in and across broader socio-technical systems;

• recognize and reflect on the interconnectedness of different parts of the system (e.g., policies, institutions, behaviours);

• require interdisciplinary approaches and multi-actor collaboration (e.g. partnerships between governments, private sectors, communities);

• consist of a set of integrated and coordinated interventions; and

• rely on constant and collective learning-by-doing and adaptation – as systems are dynamic and change over time – with actors and institutions.

Target specifies a particular value that an indicator should reach by a specific date in the future or within a certain period of time (e.g. X% literacy rate among group Y by the year 2010).[88]

Transition to scale is the innovation stage in which the innovation solution is replicated and/or adapted across geographies and populations for transformational impact.[89]

Users (or end users) refer to those who will use an innovation but are not necessarily the primary target group the innovation is seeking to benefit.[90]

Vertical scaling (or 'scale-up') refers to adding complexity to create a complete and sustainable innovation solution[91] and reaching scales within an individual geography/context.[92]

References & Notes

1 Ramalingam, Ben and Kirsten Bound, Innovation for international development: Navigating the paths and pitfalls, Nesta, London, April 2016.
2 Innovations can be incremental: existing products and services optimized to be more efficient and effective; substantial: new platforms, products, services, materials and processes scaled up in new contexts; or breakthrough: unproven technologies or approaches, new bets and new challenges.
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