YOUTH 4 CHANGE NETWORK

WHITE PAPER
Social Impact Assessment

How can organizations working in favour of Youth inclusion measure the social consequences of their intervention? How can they ensure the sustainability and equitability of their actions?

As MIT professor Esther Duflo states in her 2010 Ted Conference* as well as in her book *Poor Economics***, *"Maybe you turn to the past, after all we have spent billions of dollars on aid. Maybe you look at the past and see: has it done any good? And sadly, we don't know. And worst of all, we will never know."*

She underlines that in our fight against poverty, we don't know what actually works. We don't know what has the desired impact, and we don't know how to measure that impact. Duflo compares us - NGOs, social entrepreneurs and philanthropists - to "Medieval doctors", spending a lot of time and energy developing medicines, without knowing if it cures anything – or makes things even worse.

That's why more than ever, **Social Impact Assessment (SIA) has become a crucial topic for NGOs, social entrepreneurs, foundations, funders, states, and the whole ecosystem of the social economy.**

SIA can play a critical part for communication and obtaining new funding. It can also allow foundations and funds to have a clear vision of what their money is being used for, and whether it is well used.

SIA is also a growing concern for institutions worldwide. With the increasing role of NGOs and social entrepreneurs, often being financed by states, governments are indeed forced to take a deeper look into this new segment of the economy.

In this context, Youth 4 Change Network has decided to work on its first white paper to help its members understand better the stakes of SIA. We have based our work on your own experiences and insights, so that one's knowledge can benefit the others.

We are pleased to present to you our work and hope that it will provide you the keys to perfectly implement your own SIA.

We wish you a happy reading!

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* Esther Duflo, TED (2010), *Social experiments to fight poverty*

** Abhijit V. Banerjee, Esther Duflo (2012), *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*

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1. INTRODUCTION

OUR METHODOLOGY

▸ To write this white paper, we started reading publications and research that have been released in France, Europe, India and other countries around the world.

From this first analysis, we realized that a lot has been published on SIA. We also saw that we had the possibility to gather information and data from NGOs members of Y4CN. **For these reasons, we decided to focus our work on organizations acting in favour of Youth inclusion.**

In March 2018, we conducted an online survey among members of our network. **17 NGOs answered it**, showing a great variety in terms of budget, number of volunteers, and countries (Brazil, Burkina Faso, France, India and Philippines), which reflects the diversity of Y4CN members.

We also decided to **conduct interviews with experts of SIA** to provide us with more insight. First, we met Hassan Hajam who works for Yunus Social Business – the social fund created by Nobel Prize winner Mohammad Yunus – in Mumbai. Then, we interviewed Laure de Solère, from (IM)PROVE, a French consulting firm specialized in SIA. Our third interview was with Ramesh Swamy, the director of Unnati, a member of Y4CN. It is an Indian NGO, based in Bangalore, that aims at empowering underprivileged Youth by helping them secure stable jobs. Fourth, we interviewed Patrick Mashanda from IkamvaYouth, a South African NGO providing mentoring and tutoring to disadvantaged Youth.

We then organized a **webinar** – Y4CN's regular e-meetings – with our member organizations so that they could share about SIA. And finally, we worked on building our analysis, trying to offer **a complete and concrete approach** on how NGOs working with Youth can assess their social impact efficiently.

KEY-FIGURES

71% of our members* declare having already implemented a SIA.

Among those →

67% assess their social impact every year, and 8% on an ongoing basis.

83% were globally satisfied with their analysis.

However, **82%** regretted not being able to compare their results because they lacked **benchmarks and data** from other NGOs.

* By *members*, we refer to the respondents to our survey.

2. DEFINITIONS

A. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL IMPACT: IMPACT VALUE CHAIN

▸ According to the *International Principles for Social Impact Assessment*, **social impacts** "include all the issues associated with a planned intervention – for example an action, a program or a project – that affect or concern people, whether directly or indirectly".

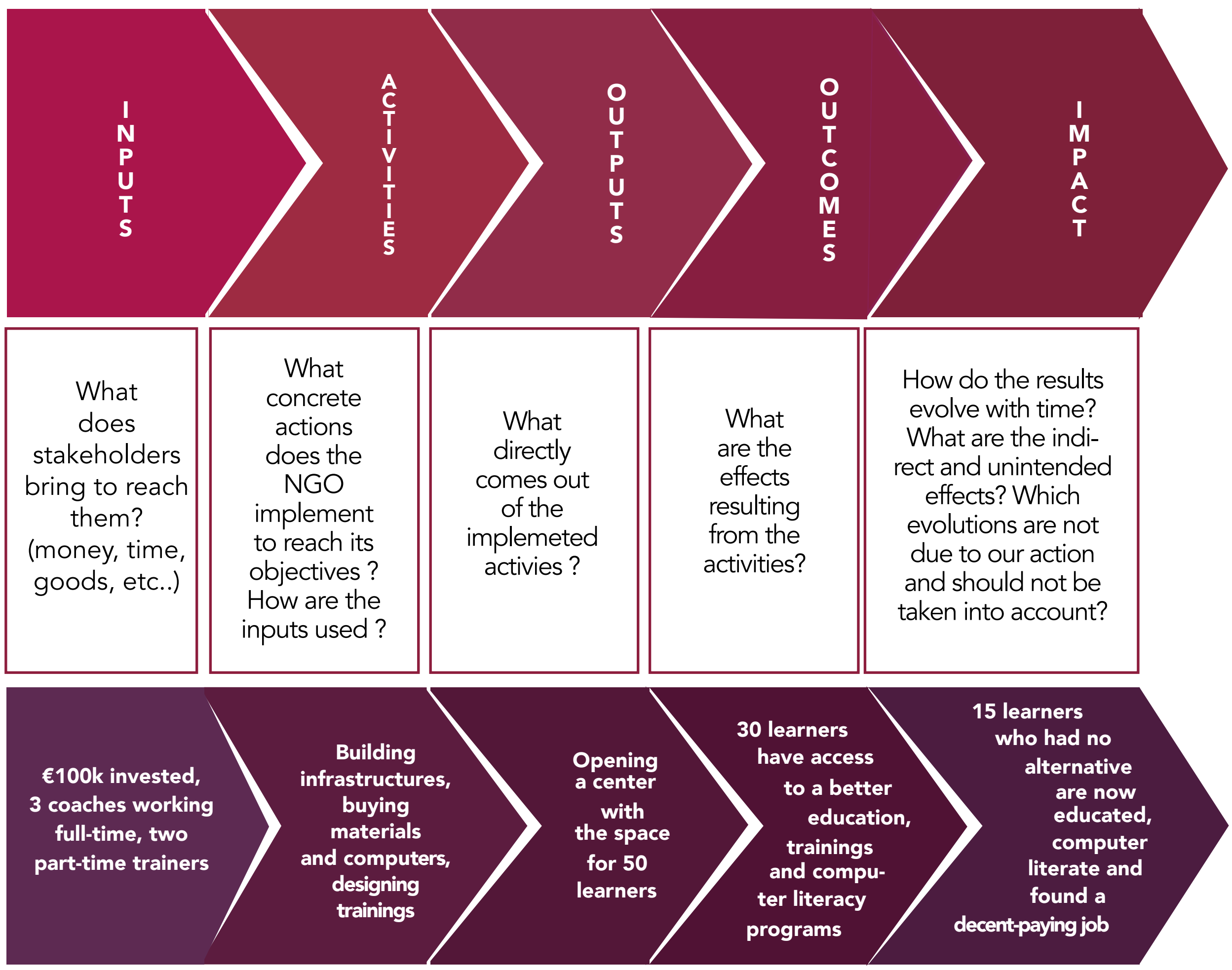
More specifically, the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)* defines social impact as what is experienced or felt in either a *perceptual* – cognitive – or a *physical* sense at any level. For example, it can be at the level of an *individual person*, an *economic unit* (family/household), a *social group* (circle of friends), a *workplace*, or by a *community/society* in general.

Social impact is therefore a **complex notion**, that can be difficult to perceive.

▸ The measurement of impact is based on a widely recognized logic model known as the **Impact Value Chain**.

This framework aims at explaining social change through 5 steps: the organization defines objectives and gathers **inputs**, then implements **activities** to reach them. These activities create **outputs**, or immediate measurable results, that will in turn produce **outcomes**, or mid-term effects. Finally, by adding long term indirect effects and subtracting effects not due to the organization's work, we can evaluate the **impact**.

The Impact Value Chain



Source : *adapted from AVISE, EVPA and European commission*

* *Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impact of projects*, Frank Vanclay, IAIA, 2015

B. THE MULTIPLE REALITIES OF SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

▸ According to the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), **assessing social impact** consists in "analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended **social consequences**, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions."

▸ The European Commission* has a similar definition but adds that both "**long-term and short-term**" effects should be considered. More importantly, it underlines that **all measured evolutions should be adjusted** "for the effects achieved by others, for effects that would have happened anyway, for negative consequences, and for effects declining over time."

▸ While we usually talk about measuring impact, we should keep in mind that **most organizations will only be able to measure outputs or outcomes.** Measuring impact comes with many constraints: it requires a lot of time and resources, and causality can be difficult to assess. Measuring outputs and linking them to longer-term effects thanks to literature review or expert analysis can be a way to address this issue.**

▸ Moreover, SIA does **not** measure the relevance of the project's objectives as regards the **actual needs of society and beneficiaries**.

3. OBJECTIVES OF ASSESSING SOCIAL IMPACT

A. SIA FOLLOWS 3 TYPES OF OBJECTIVES

SIA can be a useful tool at each and every step of your activity. **Anticipating** your social impact will help you even before actually launching the assessment, **monitoring** will help during your activity, and finally **assessing** the impact of an action after its end can provide great opportunities for improvement and potentially increase your chances to get funded for future projects.

Activity timeline

UPSTREAM

Select projects and activities to finance
Determine/adjust your scope of intervention
Build a partnership
Obtain funds for a project
Request a label

MIDSTREAM

Understand the effects of the projects
Manage efficiently
Improve work and resource allocation all along

DOWNSTREAM

Improve work and resource allocation for future projects
Communicate externally
Communicate internally
Prepare to scale up

▸ Upstream of the launch of a new program, the entrance into a new country, etc.
Before a new decision, thinking about your social impact and its assessment will be useful at the **strategy level**. 64% of our survey participants who have assessed their impact quote **"take better decisions"** as one of their objectives.

▸ Midstream of the activity
During activities, SIA is conducted to get a better understanding and eventually **improve actions, team management or resource allocation**. 100% of our respondents chose "understanding the effects of the projects" as one of the reasons why they implemented a SIA.

▸ Downstream, when the operation (or its first batch) is over
Assessing impact downstream of a program is probably the most common type of objective, as it is the most intuitive. For example, Patrick Mashanda from IkamvaYouth explains that the initiative of his first SIA came from one of the funders of the NGO, who wanted to know if they had an actual impact, and to measure it.

Assessing the activity's impact after its end can help the organization **improve its people and resource management** by learning from its successes... and mistakes. According to Hassan Hajam, Program Manager at Yunus Social Business in Mumbai (India), the key question that SIA should answer is "**should we continue the program?**" This question can be divided into two others: "do we reach our social mission?" and "what should we change to reach our social mission?"

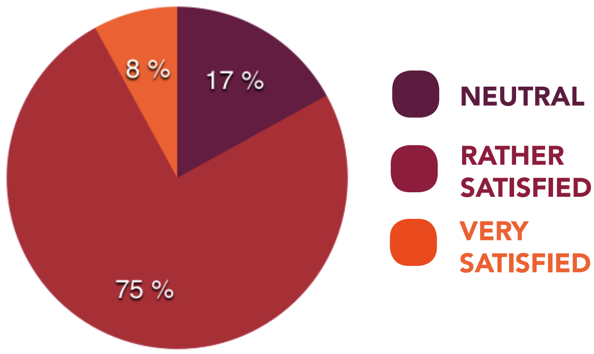
* *Proposed Approaches to Social Impact Measurement*, GECES Subgroup on Impact Measurement, adopted by the GECES in June 2014
** *Let's be realistic about measuring impact*, Alnoor Ebrahim, 2013

SIA can also help **prove the effectiveness of an organization** and, for instance, provide useful figures for an awareness-raising campaign. Indeed, 55% of our respondents use SIA to improve their communication.

B. ORGANIZATIONS' FEEDBACK SHOW THAT SIA IS GLOBALLY SATISFYING

Among the Y4CN members who have implemented SIA, **83% declared to be fully satisfied or rather satisfied** by the results of their analysis. Only 17% were neutral, and **none of them unsatisfied**.

Were you globally satisfied of your analysis?



Indeed, according to our survey, NGOs saw most of the objectives of their SIA reached, even sometimes ones that they had not considered at first.

4. METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF AN NGO

A. PUNCTUAL ASSESSMENT AND FOLLOW-UP MUST BE COMBINED

An important aspect of defining your methodology – underlined by the Avise* – is the question of the pace of impact assessment:

▸ **Punctual evaluation**

A punctual approach is prefered when the organization has a precise need in mind, like understanding exactly its action, scaling up, or looking for new funding.

First, it is necessary to think ahead about how long after your program you want to launch your SIA. It will depend on the program and the kind of indicators you are interested in, as a program can have an impact on an infinite period. Second, the question of periodicity needs to be answered. It might seem better to launch a SIA regularly, but of course it requires high investments.

▸ **Follow-up SIA**

This approach can be used for the everyday control and management of the organization's activity. Very often, an organization will first make a punctual evaluation to have an overview of its activities and define the indicators it will follow, and then it will be able to compute these indicators on a regular basis. However, **only 9% of our respondents declare to assess their social impact on an ongoing basis**.

It is very common for NGOs that start with a simple assessment and to **move to more complex methodologies over the years**. Patrick Mashanda explains that IkamvaYouth, an NGO offering coaching and mentoring to guide Youth to find a job, started with a simple methodology that was measuring its immediate outputs – for example, they used a database called EdAdmin to follow grades, graduation rates, and dropouts.

Then a first improvement was to try to explain those figures and put them into perspective, especially the drop-out rate: why were some learners leaving the program? Why was the attendance not at 100%? What part was due to issues in the programs, and what part to other personal factors?

But after a few years, he explains that they wanted to "dig into data and comparisons and see what the students had become two years later". This led to a deeper methodology, helped by the consulting firm Acumen, to assess the actual impact of the several programs on the Youth, for example assessing the impact of the program on their access to scholarships and universities.

* Avise, ESS and value creation, « A prospective approach to social impact measurement », December 2017

B. THE 5 STEPS TO AN EFFICIENT APPROACH

We have chosen to base our analysis on the 5-step model used by the European Commission:

1 SETTING OBJECTIVES

This first step, the planning step, will enable you to **define objectives** and **allocate resources** to target what is most likely to deliver the desired outcomes.

First, it is important to make sure that your social mission is defined with precision. **The social mission is the overarching social problem that your organization is trying to solve.** Hassan Hajam, from Yunus Social Business, explained to us that *"the social mission is overriding for NGOs as well as social entrepreneurs. I usually spend at least one week with the entrepreneurs I work with just to define it precisely, considering their visions and their means"*.

From your social mission, you can derive your Impact Value Chain (cf. page 3). This is essential to fully understand how your organization works and what problem exactly it tackles.

Then from the Impact Value Chain, you can define the objectives of your SIA. Defining detailed objectives is crucial to determine what you will try to prove with the SIA, what resources you will dedicate to it, what data you will collect, which indicators you will compute, etc. Moreover, the Impact Value Chain helps understand that SIA objectives should always concern **impact**, or if not possible at least **outcomes**. Otherwise, it might result in irrelevant indicators.*

Additionally, this step includes **defining the scope of the SIA in terms of duration and concerned program**. It is also important to think about **the target of the SIA** from the beginning, as it will have a huge impact on the SIA and on the choice of indicators that you will use.

In the end of this first step, you should come out with the route of your SIA and a first draft of the indicators.

2 ANALYSING STAKEHOLDERS

This second step consists in defining exactly which stakeholders take part in your activities, at which point of your Impact Value Chain, what they receive or give, and how they will be involved in your SIA. Stakeholders can include funders, partners, volunteers, workers, beneficiaries, etc.

As the targets of your NGO, it is crucial to consider **beneficiaries**. This step should help you identify who benefits from your programs - directly and indirectly -, what successes and failures they have experienced during the activities, what they expect and how they can be involved in the SIA process. You can also ask their advice on which stakeholders have been impacted and should be interviewed. Indeed, it is **very important to acknowledge all kinds of stakeholders**, even those who could be poorly or negatively impacted by your activities. This will help create an exhaustive vision of your organization's impact.

This step should also be the time to confront your draft of indicators with the **feedbacks** from all your stakeholders and with the **best practices** that you can get from other NGOs.

* This issue will be developed more in part 5.

These first two steps are the most important ones. According to Laure de Solère, they will require **50% of the work of the SIA and will be crucial for the quality of the results**.

At this point, you should have a precise stakeholders mapping, a vision of how you will involve each of them, what interviews/surveys you will conduct and which indicators you will compute.

3 MEASURING RESULTS

The third step consists in collecting data and gathering knowledge to transform the objectives set in Step 1 into measurable results, the indicators.

Various methodologies include online surveys, face-to-face surveys, group work, interviews with all stakeholders, etc. Data should always be precise and observe any increase or decrease, measure changes, impacted stakeholders, exact limits...

During this step, it is also crucial to gather comparison data. As explained in the definition, SIA should always assess the **net contribution** of the program, therefore excluding the effects of other programs, natural trends, and negative effects.

At (IM)PROVE, Laure de Solère says that she always tries to **create a comparison group**. This can easily be done in schools for instance, where she can find a class that has not followed the program. When not possible, she will:

- Compare the situation before and after the program
- Ask stakeholders and beneficiaries what effects can truly be attributed to the program
- Look for national or regional data for comparison
- Look for data of other organizations

According to her, *"the most important is to be totally transparent about the approach adopted."*

In the end of this third step, you should have gathered all data and computed the defined indicators.

4 VERIFYING & VALIDATING IMPACT

After gathering data and computing indicators, you may have different outcomes from what you expected. It is therefore necessary to **verify the results**, first within your SIA taskforce, then at the level of stakeholders – especially beneficiaries – by discussing with them and checking that no mistakes were made.
You also need to verify whether the positive social impact that your organization claims to have is real, and if so, to what extent. The answers to these questions will allow you to refine the target outcomes of your SIA and the associated indicators, creating a positive feedback loop in the impact measurement process and enabling you to effectively manage impact.

There are three principal approaches for this:

- **Desk research**
By looking at external research reports, databases, government statistics, etc., it is possible to confirm the trends that your organization has detected through the outcome indicators.
- **Competitive analysis**
You can compare the data collected with data of other organizations working on similar issues. Consulting firms, that have already assessed the impact of multiple organizations, can help on that matter.
- **Interviews / focus groups**
Again, requesting the assistance of your stakeholders can help a lot. An excellent way to check your results is to ask them directly, using personal interviews or focus groups.

In the end of this step, you should have completed your indicators and have them validated by your stakeholders.

5 MONITORING & REPORTING

The final step of your SIA is monitoring the indicators set in the third step and reporting them, i.e. turning raw data into information that you will be able to understand easily and to share with your employees, potential funders, public or any stakeholder that you might want to target.

▸ **Monitoring**

After gathering a first batch of data, it is crucial to systematize the collection process, for example by establishing procedures to follow and creating tools to help stakeholders automatically report information. The objective is to be able to follow the potential evolution of the indicators over time.

▸ **Reporting**

The way of driving and presenting your analysis will differ depending on your objectives – as defined in the first step –, but also on the stakeholders that you target as the main audience of your SIA.
The results of your analysis will allow you to assess your impact and **see if you reach your social mission**.

After this final step, it is time for action. Think about your results and how to use them to improve your activities and increase your impact!

C. INDICATORS SHOULD BE ADAPTED TO EACH NGO, ITS MISSION AND ITS OBJECTIVES

1 DIFFERENT TYPES OF INDICATORS

Different kinds of indicators can be used, and the most important dichotomy is between qualitative and quantitative:

▸ **Qualitative**

This category regroups qualitative comments and feedback given by stakeholders about the organization and its projects. **It can include storytelling, satisfaction surveys or focus groups.**

Looking at qualitative indicators does not mean that you will not be able to compare with others. For instance, Laure de Solère from (IM)PROVE explains that she always includes a qualitative benchmark of what comparable actions have been implemented by other organizations.

▸ **Quantitative**

Quantitative indicators will allow organizations to measure different elements and have an exhaustive panorama of a program. Since they involve numbers, they can seem easy to share, but they should also be coupled with qualitative analysis that will help understand ***how*** value is created.*

Here are a few examples of quantitative indicators that can be used by organizations working with Youth:

- Youth satisfaction with the programs
- Attendance evolution
- Test scores or auto-evaluation of the skills acqueried
- Number of relatives of the Youth who were indirectly impacted by their participation to the programs
- Percentage of Youth who found a job with a regular contract
- Etc.

Additionally, the European Commission identifies **three dimensions** that must be considered based on **objectives** as well as on the **needs** of stakeholders:

Viewpoint: from whose perspective is the measurement taken? Funders, beneficiaries, state, etc.?

Timescale: over what period are the effects (outcomes and impacts) expected to last and over what period is it relevant to compute them? A short-term measure could be more appropriate to convince potential funders, whereas a long term follow-up might be better to pilot your activity.

Purview: where is the horizon? Which areas of measurement are to be excluded as being irrelevant to the decisions being taken?

* Avise, ESS and value creation, « A prospective approach to social impact measurement », December 2017

2 HOW TO DEFINE INDICATORS

One truth should always be kept in mind, and all our interviews and readings have confirmed it: **there is no such thing as a perfect indicator.** Indicators should be specific to each organization, and even to each SIA. However, a best practice can be to check what similar organizations do, in order to have an idea of what can be explored or not.

To define the right indicators, **the first step is to start from the objectives of your SIA**, as explained above.

For example, if your objective is to assess whether your program has improved students' working skills, you will need to define which measurable parameters can be looked at, i.e.:

- ▸ Improved teamwork capability
- ▸ Increased computer literacy
- ▸ Improved English speaking
- ▸ Increased access to decent job opportunities
- ▸ Etc.

It is that type of evidence that needs to form the basis of the indicator. We recommend selecting what seems to demonstrate the objective the best.

The second step is to make sure that the target of your SIA has been clearly defined. Whether you want to target the general public, funders, administrations or your own organization, the needs are different, and the choice of indicators must therefore vary. Let's take the example of a NGO that wants to target funders:

The funder wants to know if its funding is effective, how its money is being used, what projects have been launched and what are their impacts.

▸ Therefore, he will need a full explanation about investments, a performance benchmark, a comparison between investment and outcomes, etc.

Then from those parameters, you will be able to define your indicators. Some indicators will be simple, but if you have more resources available, you might also be able to compute more elaborate indicators.

▸ Teamwork capability: focus groups on teamwork with a group of Youth who have beneficiated from the program

▸ Computer knowledge: surveys on ability to use Office, conducted before and after a program

▸ English speaking: performance on a normalized test before and after a program ▸ Job opportunities:

▸ Percentage of Youth selected through randomized controlled trials who have secured a decent job after the program

▸ Average salary after one year

▸ Survey on professional life satisfaction after one year

Each can be measured in different ways, so it's important to adapt the indicator measurement to the target of the SIA. For example, job opportunities can be measured thanks to a qualitative focus group or thanks to quantitative data collection on salary.

After defining the object of the indicator, it is important to specify all its dimensions, as explained before – viewpoint, timescale, purview. **Indeed, indicators must be precisely defined to be measurable, comparable and to be used to create insight.**

In a nutshell, the EVPA (European Venture Philanthropy Association)* identifies **four factors** that constitute a "good" indicator:

▸ Indicators should generally be **aligned with the social mission of the organization.** This should come naturally if you have followed the first step of our model.

▸ Indicators should be **SMART:**

S - *Specific*
M - *Measurable*
A - *Achievable*
R - *Relevant*
T - *Time-based*

▸ Indicators should be **clearly defined,** so that they can be **reliably measured** and **compared to those used by others**. Performance can then be better benchmarked and understood in a broader context.

▸ **More than one indicator should be used for each objective**. Considered alone, an indicator is not enough to appreciate an increase or a decrease in a parameter, for example health – *beneficiaries could visit a doctor more often either because they have a better access to health facilities, or because they are sick more often*. **Other indicators – as well as a comparison with a test group – would be required to draw a conclusion**.

* EVPA, *A practical guide to measuring and managing impact*, June 2015

Indicator definition process and examples

	1. **Define** social mission and impact value chain	2. **Set** objectives and targets of the SIA	3. **Select** related parameters	4. **Create** relevant indicators	5. **Precise** indicators' dimensions
Ex. 1	**Act** in favor of Youth integration by empowering them to find a job	**Prove to potential funders** that our program has an Effective effect on Youth employment	**Improve** teamwork capability **Increase** computer literacy **Raise** access to decent job opportunities **Improve** English speaking	**Percentage of Youth** who have secured a decent job **Average salary** **Survey** on professional life satisfaction **Focus group** on empowerment	Compute **one year** after the program "**Decent job**" corresponds to a salary of $10 a day and a full-time contract **A representative group** of 10 beneficiaries for the focus Etc.
Ex. 2	**Improve** health among Youth	**Understand** how the program affects the health of beneficiaries	**Increase** in access to vaccines **Improve** access to medical facilities **Reduce** illness **Improve** access to quality water	**Focus group** on health and facilities **Number of medical specialities** available **Number of beds available** in nearby hospitals **Average distance** to closest hospital	**A representative group** of 10 beneficiaries for the focus **Measure** the impact on close family **Define "**nearby" as less than 10 km Etc.
Ex. 3	**Help** Youth reach a longer education thanks to after-school programs	**Measure** the impact of the program to launch a public awareness campaign	**Improve** school results **Increase** duration of studies **Enable** girls to go to school **Increase** the share of Youth who attend university	**Average grades** in all subjects **Focus group** with students and teachers **Randomization** among schools within the area **Test** students	**Measure** before and after the program **Test** English and maths results **Define** "area" as the state Etc.

5. DIFFICULTIES TO KEEP IN MIND DURING THE SIA PROCESS

A. COMMON MISTAKES THAT CAN BE TACKLED EASILY

▸ The European Commission* identifies 8 common mistakes that should be considered and avoided during a SIA.

1. Outputs being treated as outcomes or impacts: this is probably the most important concern when conceiving your SIA. Outputs are interesting to follow, for instance in order to manage your activity or improve your productivity, but they cannot be the final objective of a SIA.

Hassan Hajam gives the example of a social entrepreneur in Haiti: *"he wanted to act in favor of education. Therefore, he had the idea of launching an agricultural business, breeding chickens, that would finance a school. And to assess the impact of his business, he had chosen an indicator: the number of chickens he was selling per month"*. This is a very good example to see that **producing outputs is very different from actually creating an impact**.

2. Forgetting that measurement drives behaviours: it is crucial to remember that the act of measuring can have an impact on stakeholders, including on beneficiaries. If it is well understood, it can help you make beneficiaries understand better how to use from your programs and services, and therefore improve their efficiency.

3. Perverse incentives: measuring objectives may prompt your team to select "easier" beneficiaries – meaning ones that would show results faster than others – in order to fulfil particular goals, at the expense of the NGO's social mission.

4. Manipulation or "circumvention": as with any measurement, some people might try to manipulate results to make non-reached targets perceived as actually achieved. This risk always exists – even in an NGO – and should be considered, with actions taken to counter it.

5. Inflexibility: as intended social outcomes are achieved, or as the environment changes, social needs of beneficiaries also change. **Don't forget to make your SIA evolve over time as well,** otherwise you will risk measuring irrelevant indicators. It is important to regularly renew your methodology and indicators, and to involve all stakeholders in the process so that they can share about potential evolutions.

6. Quantification at the expense of understanding: don't forget that figures are only the reflection of a deeper reality that cannot be understood through numbers only! Qualitative indicators are very important for this reason, as they allow to put forward the story of how change impacts human lives.

7. Forgetting to maintain proportionality: don't put too much effort, time and accuracy into your SIA if these are not required for your objective and target. Remember that SIA is just a tool to improve your action and should not be too time and money-consuming.

8. Excessive bureaucracy: measuring your impact should help you improve your activities, so don't spend too much of your time and resources on bureaucracy. Try to be as efficient as possible during your SIA, as well as during the action phase.

▸ Our interviews have also highlighted frequent pitfalls:

1. Not putting data into perspective: when assessing their impact, NGOs should always try to put their data into perspective by using randomized controlled trials, test groups, comparison with other programs or national data.

2. Asking biased questions: when developing their survey, NGOs should make sure that they are asking the questions in a neutral way.

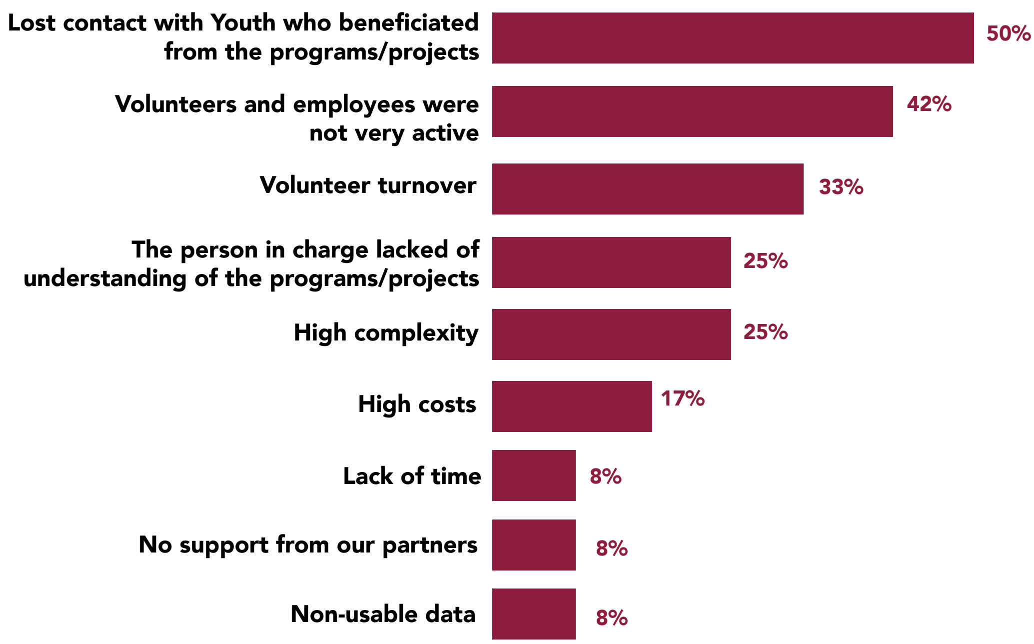
3. Having a non-representative panel: no NGO is able to collect data on all of its beneficiaries, because it would require a lot of means. And it might not even represent beneficiaires accurately! Therefore, when gathering data, it is crucial to have a representative panel of beneficiaries.

* *Proposed Approaches to Social Impact Measurement,* GECES Sub-group on Impact Measurement, adopted by the GECES in June 2014

B. SEVERAL COMMON DIFFICULTIES ARE ALSO FACED BY Y4CN MEMBERS

▸ In our survey, we asked respondents to tell us about the difficulties they faced during their SIA:

Percentage of NGOs that have faced the following difficulties



Source : *Y4CN 2018 survey on Social Impact measurement*

Lost contact with Youth who beneficiated from the programs/projects (50%)

The most common issue that NGOs from Y4CN face, and which can make it difficult for them to collect data, is losing contact with the Youth who have completed their program. There can be many reasons to explain this, for instance the Youth moving to another city or changing their sim card.

To avoid this, Laure de Solère recommends creating **clubs of alumni to follow formers beneficiaries**. Life Project 4 Youth, a French NGO member of Y4CN, has for example created a "Stars Club", in which its former learners can keep in touch with each other and with the organization.

Even without a proper alumni network, it is possible to organize activities and events to keep in touch. For instance, IkamvaYouth hasn't created a club yet, but has an Alumni Coordinator who is in charge of organizing meetings among alumni.

Volunteers and employees were not very active (42%) + **Lack of support from partners** (8%)

In an NGO with dedicated employees and volunteers, it can be difficult to motivate people to take part in a SIA. People might consider that they should focus on their work in favor of beneficiaries, and that is completely understandable.

However, it is very important to have your team understand that SIA is crucial for an NGO. You will need everyone's motivation to accomplish an efficient job. Moreover, as we saw earlier, the involvement of all kinds of stakeholders – and therefore of employees – will be consistent with a holistic approach within your SIA.

Laure de Solère – from (IM)PROVE – explains that even if she creates a steering committee to drive the SIA, she will always begin **with a first meeting involving as many people as possible** to explain what SIA is, why it is a strategic issue for the NGO and to motivate people to take part in it. Of course, taking part in the SIA process should not be at the expense of everyday work in favour of beneficiaries.

As far as partners are concerned, the same strategy can be applied. They should be contacted in advance to prepare their participation to the SIA.

Volunteer turnover (33%)

For your SIA, as well as for the everyday activities of your NGO, it is very important to **create a continuity between the volunteers who leave and those who arrive.**

To avoid information being lost and to ensure a proper follow-up, departing volunteers should provide all the data and contacts that they have gathered during their mission to their successor.

It can also be useful to organize meetings – in presence of the previous volunteer – with the key stakeholders of the project: staff from your NGO, key partners, people of the community, Youths, other beneficiaries, and alumni networks, to build a link with them. You can even hold an event where you invite all of them at the same time!

6. WHAT ARE THE KEYS TO MANAGE THE PERFECT SIA?

A. A GOOD MEASURE SHOULD HAVE A FEW BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

The European Commission* identifies 8 characteristics of an effective SIA:

▸ **Relevant:** related to, and arising from the outcomes that it is measuring.
▸ **Helpful:** in meeting the needs of stakeholders. That's the reason why it is important to define both the objective and the target of the SIA.
▸ **Simple:** both in how the measure is conducted, and how it is presented.
▸ **Natural:** arising from the normal flow of activity to outcome (see Impact value chain p.3).
▸ **Certain:** both in how the measure is derived, and how it is presented.
▸ **Understood and accepted:** by all relevant stakeholders.
▸ **Transparent and well-explained:** so that the method used to measure, and how it is related to the services and outcomes concerned, are clear.
▸ **Founded on evidence:** so that it can be tested, validated, and form the ground for continuous improvement.

For all those reasons, a huge attention should be paid to your deliverable. This is the document that you will use to present your SIA to your partners and other stakeholders. It will also be the basis of future work to improve your actions. Therefore, you should try to make it as exhaustive and clear as possible.

B. FUNDING THE SIA MUST BE THOUGHT OF FAR IN ADVANCE

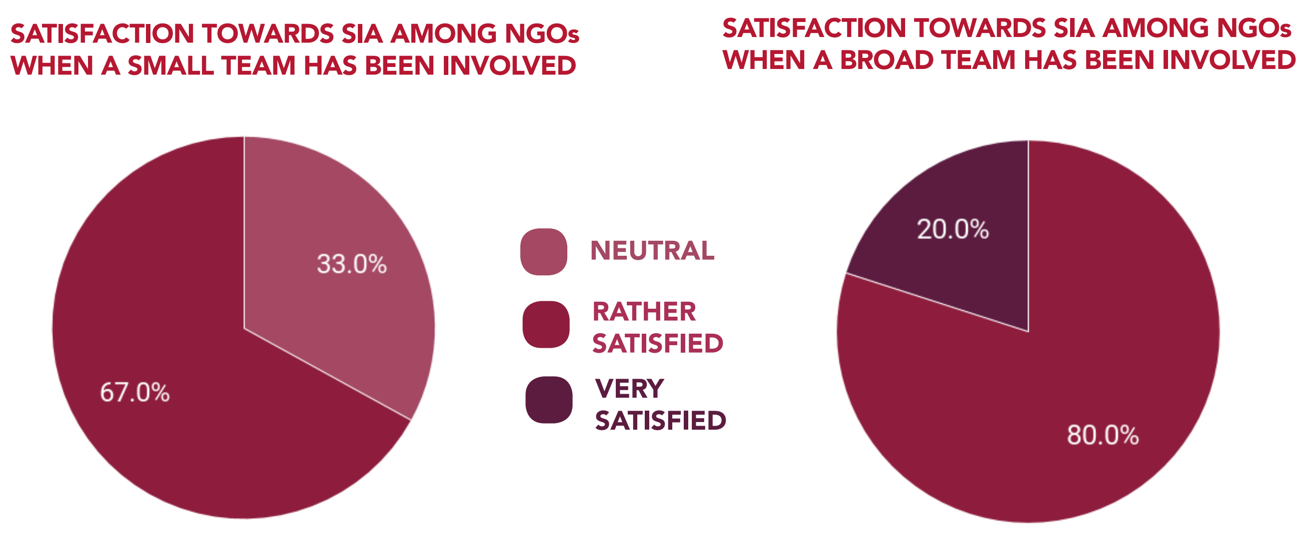
A very common issue for NGOs – and for social entrepreneurs as well – willing to assess their impact is to find funding.

Ramesh Swamy, who works for Unnati – an Indian NGO member of Y4CN – explains it clearly: *"Many companies' CSR departments are interested in SIA and ask for one. But when I ask them to fund it, they are suddenly far less enthusiastic. It's difficult to convince them."*

Hassan Hajam also underlines this issue: "*Even among investors, a lot of people have little knowledge about social impact and its assessment*". Indeed, it is very hard to convince funders to fund a SIA and not a project, even though **assessing the impact of a project is key in its ongoing management**. For example, a CSR funder will be more willing to fund a project that it will be able to use for communication purpose and that will give a good image of its company.

Therefore, it is important to plan ahead the funding of your SIA. IkamvaYouth found ways to avoid spending too much funds on SIA. The first time they assessed their impact was on the initiative of one of their funders, who therefore funded the project. Afterwards, they decided to request the help of other kinds of structures. For example, they reached out to the University of Stellenbosch, whose professors and students offered to work on the SIA pro bono.

* *Proposed Approaches to Social Impact Measurement,* GECES Sub-group on Impact Measurement, adopted by the GECES in June 2014



Source : *Y4CN 2018 survey on Social Impact measurement*

C. INVOLVING ALL ACTORS OF THE IMPACT VALUE CHAIN OF THE ORGANIZATION IS CRUCIAL

To assess your social impact, it is crucial to involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders. When appointing the team that will design and lead your SIA, you should indeed involve all the people who play a role in the impact value chain of your organization. Our survey shows it: NGOs where a broader team was involved are more likely to be satisfied with their SIA.

The European Commission* suggests a methodology to adequately involve stakeholders, in particular funders. It includes:

- **Identifying** stakeholders.
- **Understanding the nature of their interest and confirming it with them**, either prior to investment, or at another suitable date. This is a major issue as it will have an impact on the objectives that will be defined for the SIA.
- **Agreeing on the indicators** suited to those needs and informing them of how the measure will be implemented.
- **Ensuring a way for stakeholders to raise queries or comments**
- **Summarizing at least annually:**
  - Who the key stakeholders or key categories of stakeholders are;
  - The assessment realized for them;
  - How it has been communicated to them;
  - Feedback received from them;
  - Any planned changes to the SIA in the future.

Once the SIA has been completed, in addition to sharing the results with partners and funders, it is important to discuss it with **internal stakeholders**. This will sensitize your staff, show them the work that they have been able to accomplish collectively and allow you to see how you can orient your organization's future activities.

D. AN EXTERNAL PARTNER CAN BE OF GREAT HELP

64% of respondents to our survey have requested the help of an external partner for their SIA. An external partner can help define a precise methodology, bring its experience, and more importantly, **it will bring the fresh eye of an independent party**.

For this reason, a lot of consulting firms have developed insights about SIA, as it is for them a business, a source of knowledge and a way to develop their CSR at the same time.

In some cases, for instance if consulting costs are too high, a partnership with a university can be developed. For example, Life Project 4 Youth has agreed on a yearly partnership with a business school, HEC Paris. Through this partnership, a group of students enrolled in a specific program on Social Business are in charge, every year, of a defined mission of impact assessment for the NGO.

* *Proposed Approaches to Social Impact Measurement,* GECES Sub-group on Impact Measurement, adopted by the GECES in June 2014

E. A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS IS CRUCIAL TO LEARN FROM THE PROCESS

Finally, it is crucial to spend time reflecting upon your SIA analysis in retrospect. Indeed, looking back at the work that you have accomplished will enable you to **understand its limits**, to think about how to **improve your programs** in the future and to **assess your social impact more accurately in the future.**

CONCLUSION

After years of stumbling around, and probably a lot of money spent on useless actions, social economy is trying to reach a new maturity by assessing its impact. As Esther Duflo refered to it, it took millenniums for medicine to leave quack-doctors and wizards behind, and to start being driven by science and experimentation. No doubt that it will take less in social economy, but it is still a long process.

Our survey showed that a lot of NGOs have grown a sense for impact measurement, and it is also something that we have felt during our researches and interviews. From top research institutions like the Abdul Lateef Jamaal Poverty Action Lab, to consulting firms, business schools, administrations, funds, social entrepreneurs and NGOs, **social impact is a rising subject of concern.**

As a young domain for research and business, social impact assessment remains almost completely unregulated, unlike audit. For this reason, it is important to make people understand that a proper methodology, combined with reflexion and honesty, can help make a better use of resources, and lead to great achievements in our 21st century fights: poverty, ecology, equality, etc. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that **social impact is a broad notion that quantitative indicators alone cannot entirely represent.**

Finally, even an NGO assessing its impact perfectly will be wasting its time if it doesn't plan to use those results as a basis for further action. After the time for assessment must come the time for strategy and action! **SIA is the perfect tool to decide which are the next steps to come** and whether you should continue in the same direction or operate a change, be it slight or drastic.

Above all, whether your goal is to look for funding, improve your actions or scale up, remember that SIA must be conducted regularly, as it is **an iterative process**!

Now it's your turn...!

We are looking forward to hearing your feedback! And because we are always trying to improve, don't hesitate to write to us on Facebook (Youth 4 Change Network) or at contact@y4cn.org!

MEMBERS & PARTNERS

Thank you to the members who responded to our survey, and to the experts who answered our questions.

This publication is the result of a collaboration between Aymeric Lejeune, Salomé Gueidon, Camille Leberre, Jeanne Allard and Quitterie Campagne.