NGO-IDEAs

Impact on Development, Empowerment and Action

The aim of NGO-IDEAs is to enable non-governmental organisations to strengthen their target groups, to analyse their own needs and potentials, and to plan and monitor poverty reduction processes and the protection of their rights in an impact-oriented manner.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the global South often find themselves in a dilemma when it comes to involving their target groups in planning, monitoring and evaluation, and at the same time, having to submit factual and conceptually complex project applications and reports to their donors. The result is often that coherent planning is agreed with donors, with details of activities and indicators, but without the involvement of the target groups. Expected impacts are often both described in abstract terms and very difficult to measure. Therefore, measuring the success of planned activities and services is often a key element of reporting. Although the effectiveness of a project is perceived, it often cannot be properly described and corroborated with reliable data.

NGOs want to work in a participatory manner and are interested in how people in projects see impacts for themselves. What changes for them? And above all, which changes do they want to see? Using the instruments of NGO-IDEAs, they set their own objectives within the framework of an intensive group work. They regularly discuss how far they have come to achieving their objectives. Through joint reflection they can become aware of their own effectiveness. This contributes to their empowerment.

Impact toolbox:

The NGO-IDEAs concept offers NGOs and their target groups a set of four instruments ("Impact Toolbox") with which they can observe and reflect on impacts on their own. From this they can draw conclusions for their further work. The following instruments are included in the Impact Toolbox:

1. **Differentiated Analysis of Well-being (DAW)**: ... serves to identify the targets for poverty and discrimination reduction.

2. **Collective Change (CC):** ... serves for the self-evaluation of the achievement of the collective objectives of the group.

3. **Individual change (IC):** ... serves for the self-evaluation of the reach of the group's collective objectives.

4. **Analysis and Reflection about Changes (ARC):** ... serves for the in-depth analysis of effects and impacts of the NGO's work.

In terms of impacts, special attention is given to changes in the target group's skills, attitudes and behaviour, such as empowerment and social commitment, as well as changes in social, economic and political aspects. The observed changes are recorded and aggregated both qualitatively and quantitatively. They are recorded individually, in families or in groups, using the indicators chosen by the target group and/or NGOs. The indicators in the planning matrix (e.g. "Logical Framework"), which refer to changes in the skills, attitudes and behaviour of the target group, can generally be well combined with the NGO-IDEAs concept and instruments.

There are two procedures offered for gender-differentiated impact assessment. By using a simple filter, the effects can be disaggregated according to other social criteria, in particular with regard to well-being. This makes it possible to differentiate the way in which each individual indicator is developed for the poorer part of the target group; a very specific determination of the contribution to poverty reduction becomes possible. A dialogue-based procedure for analysing the interrelations of impacts provides NGOs and target groups with suggestions for strengthening their own contributions to the impacts.

An evaluation has shown that the NGO-IDEAs tools have contributed to:

- Partner organisations were empowered to make their project planning and management more participatory and results-oriented.
- The realities and needs of the target groups were better perceived and understood.
- The participatory development of objectives by the target group and the joint monitoring of the achievement of objectives strengthen the impact of the project.
- The continuous application of participatory monitoring instruments has led to an improvement in the self-esteem and self-reflection of the target groups. The target groups act more responsibly and objective-oriented by consciously observing and shaping changes in their lives.

The history of the NGO-IDEAs:

Between 2004 and 2007, 14 German NGOs worked with 32 Indian partner organisations to develop the concept and instruments for strengthening impact orientation. A sectoral and regional expansion took place from 2008 to 2011, implemented with 14 German NGOs and 40 partners from the South in East Africa, South Asia and the Philippines. Methods and tools were expanded. From 2015 to 2019, the NGO-IDEAs approach was extended to more complex framework conditions. The focus became more centred on integrating the approach into project management. On the one hand, the approach and tools were implemented with new target groups (children and young people), and on the other hand, implementation took place in challenging project contexts (e.g. with regard to the human rights situation, lobbying and advocacy work). Seven German NGOs and 38 partner organisations in Latin America participated in the development of the concept. The three phases were financed by the BMZ and accompanied by VENRO, in particular the working group on impact orientation.

Publications:

Together with the partner organisations, the NGO-IDEAs project has published documents which are available in English in VENRO's media library:

- NGO-IDEAs: Toolbox for Participatory Monitoring of Outcomes and Impacts

    The Toolbox is the complete and detailed compilation of the 4 NGO-IDEA tools for situation analysis, identification of collective and individual objectives, monitoring of effects and impacts, and finally the systematic analysis of changes. It is primarily aimed at NGO staff responsible for project management.

- NGO-IDEAs: Changes that impact - a methodological toolkit for empowerment and monitoring

This publication is a short version of the Toolbox, adressing to CBO leaders or NGO technicians. It has a stronger emphasis on empowerment, focuses the DAW, CC, and IC tools and does not explain the differentiated possibilities of analysis of the ARC tool.

- NGO-IDEAs: Connection between the logical framework and NGO-IDEAs

The objective of this document is to support the partner organisations that seek a connection between the tools of NGO-IDEAs and the logical framework or for those who want to include the target group's perspectives from the beginning before the planning of the project starts.

- Tiny Tools

Communities know a lot about the impact of development projects. They know much about how they made use of the projects, what changed and why it changed. Sometimes they find it difficult to express it. Sometimes they are tempted to tell outsiders what they think the outsider wants to hear. So we need to start a process in which community members find it interesting and beneficial to reflect on the change themselves in a systematic way, and be open and self-critical about it. When community members do this, they generate relevant and valid information. At the same time they become empowered to take more control of their realities.

The NGO-IDEAs Tiny Tools are a relatively simple and quick ("tiny") way to achieve this. All the tools are structured and systematic, and they are widely tested: Experience shows that these tools lead to new insights, mobilise enthusiasm and increase the capacity of communities to bring about further change. The Tiny Tools therefore are in line with the Participatory Rural Appraisal approach. NGO-IDEAs provides an overview over a number of Tiny Tools and a few practical step-by-step guides.

- NGO-IDEAs: Guide to Activity List
  (Analyses influences that may have contributed to changes.)

- NGO-IDEAs: Guide to Trend Analysis
  (Analyses the main changes.)

- NGO-IDEAs: Guide to Influence Matrix
  (Helps in the cross analysis between these changes and the influences.)

Videos:

To illustrate how the four tools in the toolbox are applied, there are also videos in Spanish with English subtitles:

- Video tutorial DAW - Differentiated Analysis of Well-being
  (Knowing characteristics and differences of the population + identifying changes in their welfare situation)

- Video Tutorial CC – Collective Change
  (Identify collective objectives.)

- Video Tutorial CI – Individual Change
  (Identify personal change objectives.)

- Video tutorial ARC – Analysis and Reflection about Changes
  (In-depth analysis of the effects and impacts of the project's work and the population's efforts.)