

# TOOL

# IMPACT GRID

## WHY

The **impact grid** is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. It gathers participants to tell about significant changes that have happened to the participants in a project.

Stories provide 'thick, rich' description of changes based on peoples experience of changes in their own lives through stories - who did what, when, why and why was the event important? It is especially useful for making sense of complex information and capturing unexpected as well as expected changes.

The impact grid helps to organize the stories so that you identify the importance of changes and to what extent the project has contributed to creating the change.

## WHEN

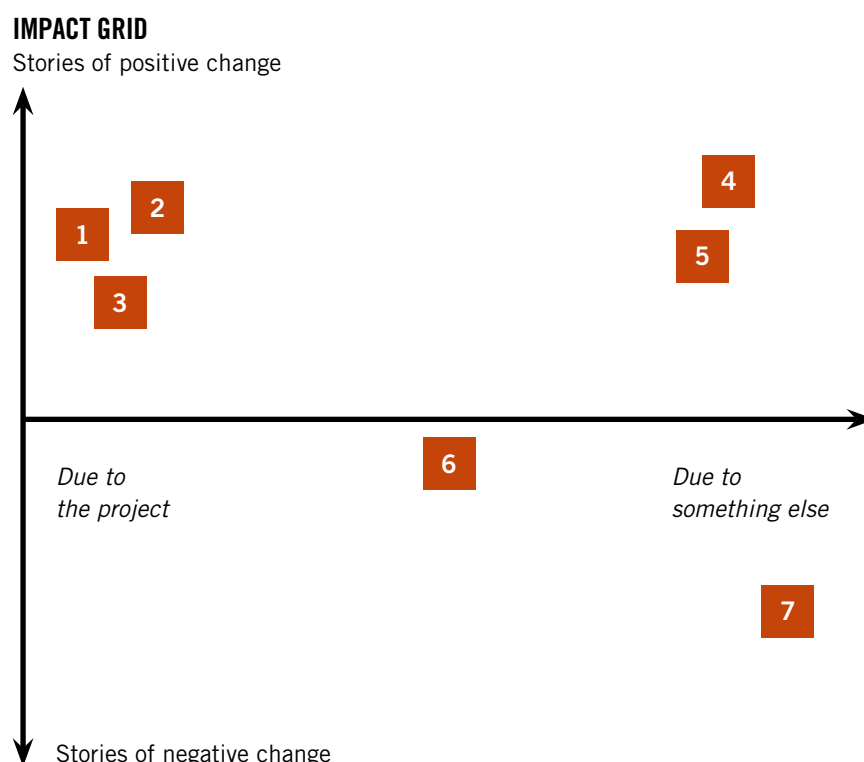
Stories can provide information about changes throughout the project and contribute to learning along the way. You

can use it over the life of the project with the same participants and track how and when changes happen.

It is most often used at the end of a project or at time when the project has been running for long enough for changes to take place. For instance, if you use the impact grid to evaluate a course, the method can be used three to six months after the course, but not immediately at the end of the course.

## HOW

The impact grid consists of a vertical axis divided by a horizontal axis – so that there is a positive area for stories of a positive effect and a negative area for stories with an adverse effect. The horizontal axis shows the respondents assessment to what extent the change described in the story is due to the project – in other words, if they believe the change would have happened without the project or if they believe the change is due to the project.



To do an impact grid exercise, you must first bring people together in a workshop. The best number of people in a group to get the process to work well is from 6-12. If there are more people, it is better to divide into smaller groups.

A facilitator, runs the process. It can both be a person involved in the project or an outsider with no vested interests in the outcomes. The facilitator outlines the recent history of the project to remind people what has happened. It is important to do this in a way that you avoid biasing the participants to remember specific activities and results.

Participants are then asked to think about how the project has affected them. You can use the following question or craft your own: *“What have been **the most significant changes** that you have experienced during the project?”*

Each person writes down examples on post it notes. There is no limit how many examples each person can compile – in practice most people identify 2 to 4. Each person then share their stories with a partner – this helps them clarify the experience and they may get new ideas about an outcome they didn't think about at first.

The group then comes back together and each person briefly gives their example and sticks it onto the grid, where they think it fits. They can be challenged by others to reconsider the location and move the story if they agree.

Once the exercise is over the facilitator numbers each story and draws an A4 copy of the grid showing the position of the numbered stories. If the tool is being used as part of an evaluation, the grid with the stories can be reproduced as an appendix, while the conclusions can be presented in the report.

You can use the exercise as a starting point for dialogue on the patterns of change and the ways change happen – either with participants or in the project team.

- What is the proportion of positive and negative stories?
- What are the characteristics of the negative stories and of the positive stories?
- What characterize the stories of changes that were said to be due to the project?



»» Instead of making a grid, you can also draw a big tree on a flip chart and put your post its with stories of achievements on the tree as leaves. If you want to, you can use the metaphor of the tree to talk about the soil in which the changes have grown, the root causes of the changes, the fruits that have been harvested and the seeds of change that are spreading.