TechnoServe

Building an M&E Tools Suite

dimagi   TechnoServe
         Business Solutions to Poverty

OVERVIEW

TechnoServe is an international nonprofit that works with enterprising people in the developing world to build competitive farms, businesses, and industries. For the past 50 years, TechnoServe has worked to create an impact in over 30 countries to-date.

In the last five years, the organization has reached nearly half a million beneficiaries across Latin America, Africa, and India in multiple sectors, requiring an impressive combination of expertise and flexibility. To support its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) needs across projects globally, TechnoServe compiled a suite of products that allow them to capture, manage, and analyze data from an ever-changing set of indicators. As a result, its process of researching, selecting, and implementing a set of M&E and service-delivery tools, whose implementation could take six months or more, is now achievable in half that time.

SUMMARY

LOCATION
Various (particular focus in Africa and Latin America)

SECTOR
Agricultural Extension & Logistics, Small Business

PARTNERS
TechnoServe

FEATURES
Case Management, Display Conditions, Validations Conditions

NUMBER OF USERS
~1000 active field agents

PROBLEM

TechnoServe's M&E team is always looking at how and where they can implement, monitor, and optimize new projects around the world. Unfortunately, its process of researching, selecting, and implementing a set of M&E and service-delivery tools was time-consuming, taking six months or more to complete. This lag was due to the wide variety of mobile data collection options being offered in the market and no top-down guidance on how to explore the various options based on lessons learned from previous experience with these platforms.

At first, the team thought the best approach would be to standardize data inputs from various project teams. However, they soon found that the variability among projects was too much for a uniform data infrastructure. This approach also did not resolve the fact that each time a new M&E system was being implemented, the associated project was piloting it without a body of minimum standards and best practices to adhere to. Meanwhile, the distinctness and complexity of each individual project's reporting and monitoring needs, in turn, meant scaling this kind of standardization was impractical. For an organization looking to support programs in upwards of 30 countries, this approach would not work.

SOLUTION

Once they realized a "one-size fits all" data system could not support the variety of inputs they expected from different projects, TechnoServe's M&E and IT teams collaborated to compile a suite of tools that a majority of the organization's high-impact projects could choose from. To cover its needs for data collection, data management, and analysis, TechnoServe selected CommCare, Google Sheets, and Power BI. The tools integrate seamlessly and allow TechnoServe to pursue evidence-based results to aid in the optimization of both individual projects and the organization's overall portfolio.
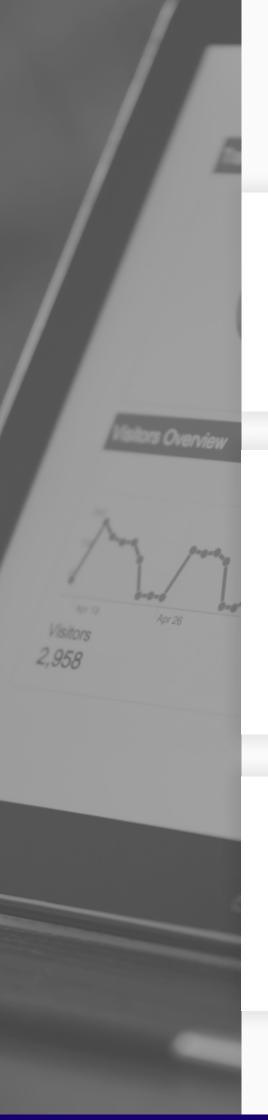
IMPLEMENTATION

Each individual project is responsible for selecting the tools they will need, andthey consult with TechnoServe's global M&E and technology teams to evaluate their options. A team member in each regional office helps to manage the technology and monitoring and evaluation activities for projects in that area, with a global expert responsible for spotting trends and best practices across regions.

IMPACT

By leveraging its M&E tech suite (CommCare, Google Sheets, and Power BI), TechnoServe has successfully used project-level data to measure its global impact across a number of sectors, including the organization's core work in entrepreneurship and coffee.

TechnoServe also learned that its diverse project portfolio required an equally diverse set of solutions to data management. By combining CommCare with other data analysis and visualization tools, the organization found a balance between flexibility and deep institutional knowledge of the toolkit to create a robust data management approach.

In 2018, TechnoServe helped drive financial gains for more than 10,000 businesses in the developing world – 78% of which were women-led – helping to generate an additional $32.8 million in revenue. Projects supported by TechnoServe have trained more than 344,000 farmers in sustainable agronomic practices, helping more than 500,000 farmers improve product quality and raise incomes. These projects have also helped create jobs for more than 800 youth employed as farmer trainers and 780 businesses and 90 wet mills adopt sustainability standards and increase transparency.

WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY

"High-quality data collection and data management are fundamental components of M&E, without which we can't provide real-time, relevant analytics to support project decision-making. Organizing our approach around a suite of tools has provided important efficiency gains which allow us to concentrate more on analytics than data processing."

Kate Scaife Diaz, Director of Impact, TechnoServe

"As an organization that puts heavy emphasis on results, strong data collection and data management tools are important for our diverse portfolio of projects across the globe. CommCare has many features that we consider integral to the integrity of our impact data. We have implemented CommCare in numerous projects around the world resulting in the ability to collect critical monitoring and evaluation data in a timely and efficient manner. CommCare data has become foundational to our quest to maximize our effectiveness and impact."

Jim McKinney, Senior Director of Global IT, TechnoServe

"CommCare and its case management properties have made project progress tracking easier for the project teams I support and myself. Moreover, CommCare tech support is responsive to my projects' custom needs and I have always been able to form a solution with the Dimagi team no matter how daunting the task."

Jumai Muhammad, Regional MIS Coordinator (West Africa), TechnoServe

dimagi