TechScape Module Report

Synthesis findings from the Oxfam Novib Module, 2012-2013

Assessing the use of technological tools and strategies by Oxfam Novib partners in Angola, Burundi, Egypt, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, and Uganda.

https://www.theengineroom.org/projects/techscape

the engine room

Background 2
Coverage 3
Most Important Tools 4
Partners' Capacities and Challenges 7
Network Opportunities 9
General Heuristics 9
1. General Tool Awareness and Capacity for Independent Learning 10
2. Ad Hoc Strategic Support 11
3. National and Regional Convenings 12
4. Experience Sharing 12
5. Security 12
Lessons from the pilot module 14

Introduction

This report presents findings and insights from the Oxfam Novib pilot module of TechScape, which assessed how Oxfam Novib partners in seven countries related to the use of technology in their work. This report does not aim to draw conclusions about the nature of technology use by Oxfam Novib partners per se, or even the partners included in this assessment. The dramatic difference in organizational activities, contexts and objectives are too great for that. Detailed analysis of how partners are relating to technology in their work, and specific recommendations for greater efficiency and impact are presented in the TechScape Country Briefs.

This report aims instead:

- to describe the context in which the assessments took place,
- to propose insights gained from the cumulative process about measurement, learning and capacity development, and
- to identify opportunities for Oxfam Novib to pursue capacity development and knowledge sharing between countries and across the network, through mechanisms that minimize resource demands and directly target documented needs.

Background

TechScape is a global research project, leveraging partnerships to gather empirical data on how civil society uses, anticipates and adopts technology. Information on the TechScape project, methodologies and outputs are available at *https://www.theengineroom.org/projects/techscape/*.

TechScape modules are designed to provide global and regional networks of civil society organizations with information on how their partners are using technology, in order to support more strategic capacity development and technology adoption by partners and network members.

The engine room partnered with Oxfam Novib to initiate TechScape's pilot module in 2012, initially targeting 56 partner organizations in eight countries. Research methodologies and instruments were developed in the third quarter of 2012, and organizational assessments were conducted by local Field Researchers through the first half of 2013. Six Country Briefs were produced, exploring the relationship between contextual factors and partner organization's use and potential to use technological tools and strategies. These Briefs include sensitive information on partner organization's strategic operations, security practices and procedures, and so are not released publicly. A sample Brief, from which identifying information has been removed, may be viewed at *https://theengineroom.org/projects/techscape/*.

The first several months of the Oxfam Novib module were devoted to preparatory work. Conversations were held with network focal points to determine appropriate partners and criteria for participation in each country, and to identify the types of data that would be most useful to inform capacity development and other support activities. Simultaneously, consultations with advocates and researchers were conducted to inform the design of the research methodology and instruments. Collaborative indicator development sessions were followed by a three month methods sprint, during which a methodological consultant from the European Social Survey was engaged to finalize the assessment instrument. The final instrument was validated with national partners, research partners and the TechScape Field Research leader, and was translated into 4 languages.

The project employed local Field Researchers to carry out organizational assessments. The Field Research leader conducted two virtual trainings (via Skype or Google Hangout) with each Field Researcher (in French and English as appropriate). Field Researchers were then provided with contact information for participating organizations and organized assessment interviews independently. When Field Researchers had completed all desk research and assessment interviews, data was reviewed and revised through several interactions with the Project Manager.

As data was received and validated for each country, the Project Manager conducted additional contextual research and analysis for Country Briefs. It was agreed at this point that Country Briefs would also include briefs on individual organizations that were assessed in each country. Country Briefs were submitted to the Oxfam Novib Knowledge Programme Advisor, who was responsible for coordinating feedback and follow up with country focal points. At the time of this final Module Report, two countries have initiated program work that builds on the assessments.

Coverage

The Oxfam Novib TechScape module spanned 7 countries and 32 organizations in its final analysis. Prior to this, several organizations were dropped from the project for a variety of reasons. One Country Brief was not completed due to an inability to complete data validation. One country was dropped entirely, as the project was not able to secure a Field Researcher.

The countries included in TechScape assessments were Angola, Burundi, Egypt, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, and Uganda. Each of these shared a number of traits. Though mobile telephony was an increasingly important media in all countries assessed, none were significantly developed in terms of ICT use or infrastructure. Egypt was an outlier in this regard, with significant mobile penetration and internet use. Of this module's sample, only Egypt ranked above the bottom 9% of countries on the ITU's ICT Development Index (83 out of 154)[1], and had more than 5% of it's population on Facebook (14.5%)[2]. Only Egypt and Pakistan had a greater than 50% rate of mobile penetration (number of mobile phone subscriptions per capita, 101% and 67% respectively).[3]

Countries in this assessment also demonstrated similar restrictions to freedoms of expression and assembly. Intimidation and legislative restrictions affecting civil society and journalists were present in each country assessed, though intensity and distinct characteristics varied. Restrictions on organizational registration was a common theme, as were criminal defamation legislation and violence against political demonstrations. Several governments included in this module also have notable practice in censuring digital and mobile media communication, or using such platforms to surveil and target political opponents. The degree to which organizations felt this inhibited their activities varied significantly in nearly all countries assessed.

The organizations assessed in this module varied dramatically in terms of size, activities, mandates and strategic objectives. Human rights was the most prominent issue area, though transparency, free media and information, and gender issues were also common. Most organizations were working in these areas to impact policy, to improve service delivery or to provide citizens with a greater voice in public affairs. Reaching more stakeholders nationally, accessing better information, and saving time were consistently cited as primary objectives for using ICTs across countries.

Approximately one half of the surveyed organizations provided some kind of services (primarily legal or education services) directly to beneficiaries. The beneficiaries of all but four of these organizations were reported to lack access to basic services or infrastructure, such as potable water or accessible health services.

[1] http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/mis2012/MIS2012_without_Annex_4.pdf
[2] http://www.internetworldstats.com/
[3] http://data.worldbank.org/

Most Important Tools

Assessments asked respondents to identify the three hardware and software tools that were most important to their organizations' ongoing activities. Respondents were then asked to estimate how important those tools were to the organization and the efficiency with which the organization used that tool (expressed as whether a tool was used to it's full capacity). Responses highlighted the perceived importance of "mainstream" and popular tools, and a strong correlation between perceived importance and perceived efficiency.

Table 1 summarizes responses to these questions. The first column ranks the tools according to their weighted frequency (tools were allotted 3 points each time they were named as the most important, 2 points when named as the second most important, and 1 point when named as the third most important). The second column indicates the number of times tools were named at all. The third and fourth columns indicate average estimates of tools' importance and efficient use, each on a scale of 0-10, where 10 means that the tool was seen to be as important as it could be, or used by the organization to its full capacity. The fifth column captures the average difference between perceived importance and efficient use (a positive number indicates that the tool received a higher importance ranking than efficiency ranking, a zero indicates that the scores were even, and a negative number indicates that the tool received a higher score for efficiency than importance).

Table 1: Most important hardware and software

Most Important Hardware					
	Importance (weighted)	Frequency (absolute)	Importance (average)	Efficiency (average)	Variance between Importance and Efficiency
Laptop computers	55	20	8	8	0
Mobile phones	41	24	8	8	0
Desktop computers	39	15	9	8	0
Wireless routers	18	10	9	9	0
Cameras	17	12	8	9	1
Servers	8	4	8	6	0
Video equipment	6	5	8	8	0
Audio recorders	6	4	8	7	1
USB dongles	1	1	10	7	4
Most Important Software					
	Importance (weighted)	Frequency (absolute)	Importance (average)	Efficiency (average)	Variance between Importance and Efficiency
Social media	35	15	9	8	1
Budgeting software	30	11	9	9	0
Tools for creating and managing pictures or videos	25	13	8	8	0
Tools for building or managing websites	23	13	7	7	0
Tools for managing databases	20	9	9	7	2
Anti-virus software	19	13	6	7	-1
Software to manage sms or mobile communications for groups	11	5	8	7	0
Project management software	10	6	7	7	0
Blogging platforms	6	4	8	7	1
Graphic design or visualization software	6	4	9	8	1

Table 2 takes a closer look at the relationship between perceived importance and whether respondents felt that tools were used to their full capacity. The top row lists the differences surfaced in assessments, recorded as the degree to which importance was ranked higher than efficiency. Though it would have

been possible for a tool to have an importance score of 10 (incredibly important) and an efficiency score of 0 (no one in the organization uses it or knows how to use it), the greatest difference between these two rankings was 6 points, occurring only once. This table also shows a strong clustering of these two rankings, with differences tending to be small, and with a significant tendency towards ranking of importance over efficiency in terms of both frequency and total points. This might suggest that that while organizations tend to value those tools they know how to use well, or invest resources in learning how to best use those tools which are most important. Without speculating on the relationship between those two factors, these number indicate a limited perception that organizations' most important tools are not being used to to their full potential.

Table 2: Differences in estimates of tool importance and efficiency

Degrees by which importance was rated higher than capacity	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Frequency	3	2	1	13	16	89	39	20	6	5	3	1
Total points	-15	-8	-3	-26	-16	0	39	40	18	20	15	6
	number of negative scores 35						number of positive scores 74					
	total negative points -68						total positive points 138					

Table 2: *This table illustrates the differences in how respondents estimated the relevant importance and efficiency of their self-identified "most important tools". The first row illustrates all recorded differences between the two scores. The second row records how many times that difference was recorded, and the third presents the total number of points represented by each value difference.*

TechScape assessments also generated indicators on the relative utility of various technology tools and strategies for organizations, beyond perception ratings, and including tools and strategies that might not already be in use. The chart below displays utility indicators for all 32 organizations, indicating high and low scores (bar) as well as the mean value for the entire set (diamond).

Chart 1: Utility Indicators

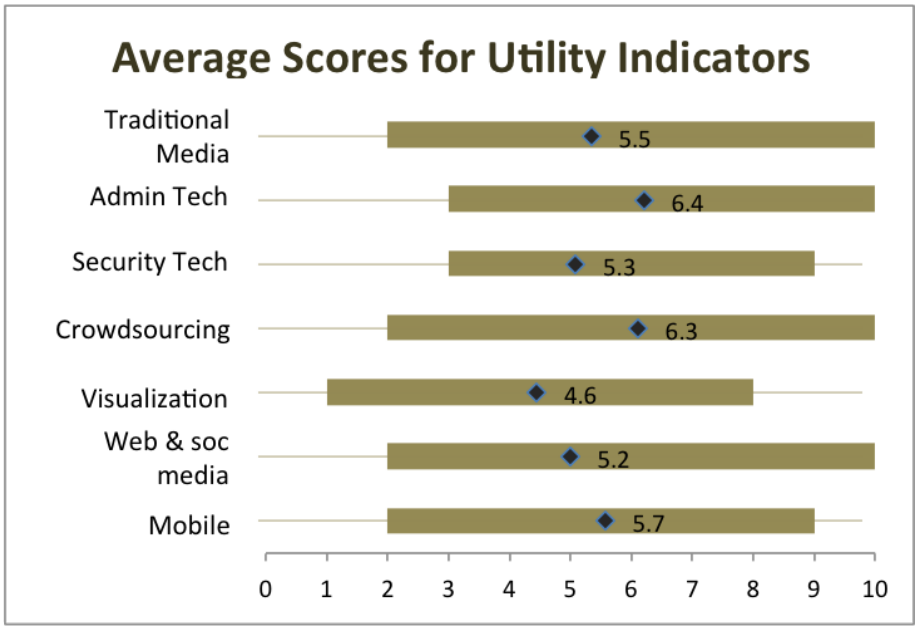

***Chart 1**: Average scores for TechScape Utility Indicators across organizations. Background bars illustrate the high and low scores of the entire sample. TechScape Indicators draw from contextual and self-assessment responses, and are adjusted by during analysis to reflect broader trends and insights across the sample.*

The utility of different technology tools and strategies varied dramatically across organizations, as shown in the chart above, reflecting significant differences in activities, issue areas and types of organizations. This prohibits drawing any conclusions at the network level, though opportunities and recommendations for specific tools and strategies are provided in the TechScape Country Briefs.

Partners' Capacities and Challenges

TechScape assessments also generated indicators on organizational capacities and the challenges they face when in implementing technology. The charts below displays capacity and challenge indicators for all 32 organizations, indicating high and low scores (bar) as well as the mean value for the entire set (diamond).

Chart 2: Capacity Indicators

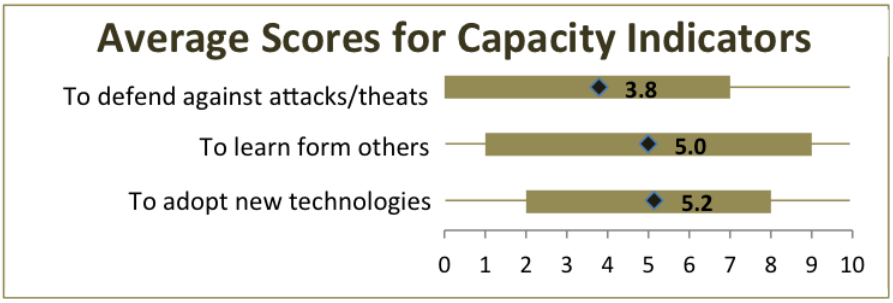

***Chart 2**: Average scores for TechScape Utility Indicators across organizations. Background bars illustrate the high and low scores of the entire sample. TechScape Indicators draw from contextual and self-assessment responses, and are adjusted by during analysis to reflect broader trends and insights across the sample.*

As with utility indicators, capacity indicators for this module vary too broadly to allow conclusions to be drawn at the network level. It is worth noting, however, that assessments surfaced organizational capacities to defend that were surprisingly low, as shown by the brown bar above. In many cases this coincided with organizations who reported very specific concerns regarding digital and physical security, but had no capacity to protect themselves, or resources with which to develop those skills.

Generally, capacity indicators also clustered together, as shown in the table below. Capacity to defend against attacks tended to vary, and to drop, consistently below the other capacity indicators.

Table 3: Pont variance between capacity indicators

Point variance between capcacity indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Frequency	7	9	4	6	2	1	1	0	0	0

Challenge indicators also varied dramatically across countries and organizations, as shown below. Notable in this category was the tendency of indicators to vary independent of contextual factors. Limited infrastructure did not necessarily translate into high scores for the infrastructure challenge, and the existence of widespread intimidation and harassment of civil society organizations did not necessarily accompany high scores for threats or oppression challenges. Instead, individual Country Briefs highlighted the importance of understanding obstacles to technology use within the very specific prism of organizations' strategic objectives and theories of change

Chart 3: Challenge Indicators

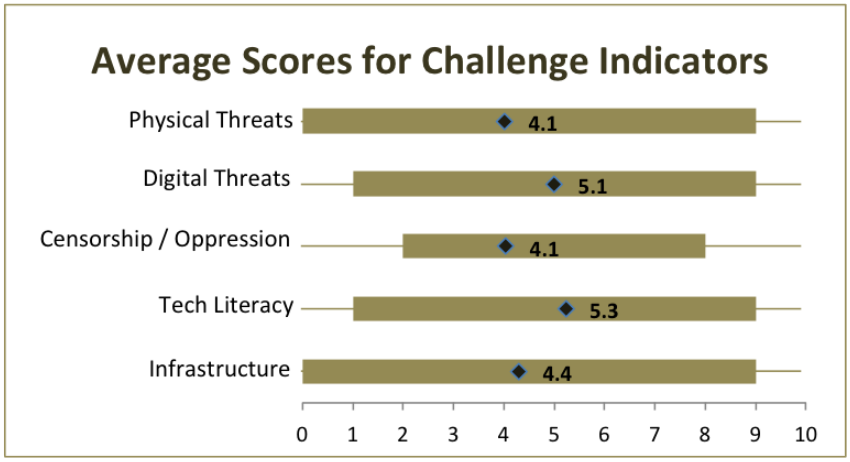

***Chart 3**: Average scores for TechScape Utility Indicators across organizations. Background bars illustrate the high and low scores of the entire sample. TechScape Indicators draw from contextual and self-assessment responses, and are adjusted by during analysis to reflect broader trends and insights across the sample.*

Respondent bias was also an important consideration in reading challenge metrics. This was especially evident when considering the challenge indicator for tech literacy, which aims to reflect how lack of technological familiarity among staff or stakeholders obstructs the use of technology. Many organizations cited staff's lack of technical capacity as a key obstacle to effective technology use, often couched in a larger narrative of capacity development and a lack of financial resources. These narratives tended towards abstract assertions, however, and were often at odds with the capacity development resources that were available through networks, peers and the internet. This dissonance highlights the subtle relationship between organizational knowledge and capacity regarding technologies, and the importance of organizational strategies and resource allocation to develop and prioritize those capacities. In some assessments, communications focal points highlighted that lack of management buy-in was itself the greatest obstacle to efficient technology use.

Similarly, threat and oppression challenges were common, but diverged significantly from respondents' self-assessments of threats. Some respondents described recent peer experiences of threats and attacks, and highlighted vulnerabilities in systems and procedures, but did not consider themselves significantly at risk, or consider such risks to obstruct their use of technology. It is tempting to attribute this to the determination and disregard for personal safety that is sometimes exhibited by activists in their devotion to higher level objectives. Often, however, these respondents also demonstrated a significant lack of knowledge and awareness about potential threats (as demonstrated in capacity indicators), suggesting that general awareness is at least as important.

In other cases, assessments indicated that threatening national contexts and lack of security awareness posed fewer challenges than might be expected, again reinforcing the importance of considering TechScape metrics within the context of organizational operations and objectives. Generally, indicator scores for threat and oppression challenges followed the utility indicator for security tech more closely than the indicator for capacity to defend.

Network Opportunities

As discussed above, support to partners' use of technology must be carefully considered within organizational contexts. The dramatic differences in organizations and contexts assessed here, coupled with the complex dynamics at work behind the way in which organizations conceptualize their own needs and opportunities, suggest that Oxfam Novib project officers and country focal points should have an intimate role in determining how to build on these assessments. These assessments have, nevertheless, surfaced a number of strategic issues across countries and organizations, which may present opportunities for Oxfam Novib to support the capacity development of a wide number of actors.

General Heuristics

When considering or pursuing activities to support the efficient and safe use of technology by partners in-country, we recommending the following heuristics:

- **Investigate the interest of multiple parties**, focusing on specific needs and use cases, before pursuing support in particular issue areas, tools or technology strategies. Doing so may identify hidden resources, and surface important contextual and organizational differences that were obscured by abstract buzz words, but which could obstruct scaled learning or collaboration.

- **Situate technology planning and implementation within broader strategies**. Faced with the broad enthusiasm surrounding digital and mobile tools, the esoteric nature of technical know-how, and the eagerness of teams to increase efficiency, reach and impact, it is easy for organizations both small and large to apply technology in a superficial way that frustrates intentions and outcomes. To avoid this, it is important to situate the planning and implementation of technology-driven programming within broader strategic analysis. Tools such as situational analyses, stakeholder mapping, SWOT analysis, political economy analysis and theories of change can all be efficient mechanisms for identifying the assumptions, intentions and causal relationships behind programming. Allocating the time and resources necessary to conduct these analyses effectively is a critical step towards securing efficient and impactful use of technology.

- **Pilot**. The adoption of new tools and technologies will almost always require learning during implementation, and iterative processes will help to mitigate waste and maximize organizational understanding of the processes at play. Projects implementing new technologies should be encouraged to pilot that implementation, beginning with limited geographies, scope and/or target numbers. An effort should be made to create a "safe" environment in which sharing of pilot failures is encouraged and incentivized (with program officers, with peers, and even outside the network when feasible).

- **Identify and engage local experts** whenever possible, if external expertise is required for capacity support. All else being equal, local experts, with intimate knowledge of media habits and the political economies in which organizations operate, will be better able to contextualize technological strategies and make them accessible to partners. When local expertise is not

available (as will often be the case), situating technology in strategic assessments is especially important, and should be allocated sufficient time and budget.

- **Prioritize open software and licensed software**. Software licenses can be cost prohibitive for many organizations, and the tendency to rely on pirated software creates a number of inefficiencies and risks to data security. This is an important area of focus in its own right, and Oxfam Novib should provide all partners with an introduction to free and open source software (FOSS) solutions for basic organizational management (documents, email, etc). When introducing new tools and strategies to programming, Oxfam Novib should make a point of providing organizations first with access and training in FOSS. This will allow organizations to pilot new tools and strategies before paying for licenses, and often FOSS functionality will meet all the needs of programs. When that is not the case, sufficient budget should be allocated to support licensed software over time.

Below is a short list of network opportunities as surfaced by the TechScape assessments. Each is presented based on a careful consideration of the relationship between

- efficient use of network resources (financial, administrative and human),
- demonstrated relevance to a significant number of partners in multiple countries, and
- the likelihood that smart investment in these activities could lead to meaningful increases in efficiency and outcome realization for partners.

1. General Tool Awareness and Capacity for Independent Learning

Basic knowledge regarding technology's affordances and limitations for advocacy and development work was notably limited in approximately half of the organization's assessed, and in every country. This was most apparent in respondents' inability to formulate specific ambitions, goals or obstacles to using technology in their work. Moreover, very few of the organizations surveyed appeared to be fully capitalizing on opportunities for developing their own capacities, through networks, international events or online learning. This lack of strategic familiarity with tools and resources, coupled with the significant social premium attached to technology, can easily support technology implementations that result in greater inefficiencies, wasted resources, or negative outcomes.

Raising awareness and capacities for self-directed learning need not demand intensive or bilateral investment, however, given the proliferation of resources for self- and peer- learning currently available. Oxfam Novib should consider developing an open, digital resource to assist Oxfam Novib partners in accessing and using appropriate and existing resources to develop their knowledge and capacities in a specific set of strategic areas.

Some areas highlighted in assessments, and worth considering for inclusion are:

- Online campaigning and awareness raising
- Online fundraising
- Crowdsourcing documentation and evidence
- Video and audio-visual for campaigning and educational activities

- Administrative software (budgeting & bookkeeping, project management, CRM [customer relationship management])
- Free and Open Source Software for documents, email and other core activities
- Website development and web content management
- Text message campaigns
- Digital and physical security in campaigning

Such a resource would need to be developed for use in multiple formats and contexts (for example, through USB boot as well as online). It would also need to be tiered by levels of strategy and tool specificity, in order to guide users to relevant content (for example, beginning with an overview of available peer- and self-learning resources online, followed by methods for aligning tool selection with strategic objectives, followed by more in-depth considerations of specific tools and strategies).

If widely disseminated and well constructed, such a resource would have the added advantage of self-selecting the most motivated organizations. Oxfam Novib might also wish to consider attaching incentives to effective use of the resource (for example allocating funding to projects that are developed through the use of the resource).

Such a resource would likely be of interest to Oxfam Novib partners not surveyed in this module, as well as other civil society organizations. This broad appeal could likely secure partners for developing such a resource.

2. Ad Hoc Strategic Support

Choosing appropriate technology can be challenging even for organizations with significant technological literacy and awareness. Wisely choosing and strategically applying technology to programming demands substantive, political and contextual knowledge, as well as familiarity with the fast-changing world of technology development, and a wide overview of how tools are being used in comparable contexts. It is often difficult for even large international networks to secure this kind of capacity in-house, and without a dedicated mission or significant program allotment to technology-supported programming, in-house expertise likely won't make financial sense. Having this kind of specialized and expertise during program design can, however, make all the difference for whether technology projects save or waste resources, stimulate mobilization and networks or alienate stakeholders, lead to meaningful outcomes or distract program staff from the political relationships in which technology and programming operate. An external perspective can also be useful for identifying internal structures and cultures that might inhibit the effective deployment of technology.

Oxfam Novib may wish to establish a relationship with an independent consultant for providing dedicated strategic support to partners on a retainer basis. This model has a long history of successful implementation in the donor community[4] and may fit well with Oxfam Novib program support. Such

[4] The engine room's forthcoming research on Donor Relationships to the Responsible Data Practices of Grantees

support should target program design, key phases in implementation, and/or respond to challenges and unforeseen crises in projects. Familiarity with Oxfam Novib's strategic objectives and working relationships with partners will be essential in selecting such a consultant.

Complementary to this, and in order to strengthen local networks and mobilize local knowledge, Oxfam Novib country program officers should also collect contact information for national and regional experts capable of providing such support. Having a roster for regional expertise would be useful not only for ad hoc support, but also as a resource for project implementation

3. National and Regional Convenings

Many of the countries included in this model surfaced common interests among organizations, and in which organizational capacities varied dramatically. Assuming that this trend would extend beyond the surveyed organizations, to the larger group of Oxfam Novib partners in countries, Oxfam Novib should consider the opportunity to use national or regional convenings to strengthen network connections and facilitate skill sharing between partners. Adding single day or half day workshops onto existing events that are likely to gather national partners may be an efficient way to reduce the costs.

4. Experience Sharing

These assessments occasionally encountered organization's with demonstrated expertise in mobilizing technology in programming. When Oxfam Novib partners successfully deploy technology in a programmatic or issue area that is of broad interest to the network (mobile outreach and evidence collection, use of video/audio-video, administrative software, etc.), Oxfam Novib should take explicit steps to document these experiences and share them with the wider network of partners. This could be executed via email, and could incorporate additional benefits for shared successes, in order to increase incentives. This could be a very cost efficient mechanism for strengthening network bonds, encouraging thoughtful deployment of technology, and sharing concrete and relevant knowledge within the network.

5. Security

Security needs and contexts varied dramatically across countries and organizations surveyed in this model, and it is clear that there is no "cookie cutter" or light touch approach to supporting all partners' security. It should be noted however, that the majority of organization's assessed demonstrated a need for introductory or review training on basic digital and physical security practices. Targeting every partner for customized review and training in security practices is likely cost prohibitive (priorities are noted in Country Briefs). Oxfam Novib should instead explore the following two options to support the safety and efficiency of partners:

1. Prepare a basic introductory resource to help partners review basic security issues and access resources to enhance their security. This is referenced above as one of the potential focus areas for a more general resource, but should be prioritized, with special attention to the distinction between end-user digital security, and organizational and operational security processes. The resource developed for this could be as simple as a single web page, or even an email with text and links to accessible resources.

2. Identify and develop relationships with local and regional security experts. Having expertise ready at hand when there is an acute digital or physical need is critical. Identifying such individuals ahead of time and establishing a national/network roster as proposed above can avoid damaging delays. Local expertise will likely better account for contextual details, including media use habits and the capacities of specific adversaries. Developing relationships with experts may also allow for informal assessments, or preliminary information that will allow partners and country program officers to make informed decisions about when and how to invest in security.

Lessons from the pilot module

1. **THE DEMANDS OF COLLABORATIVE METHODOLOGY DEVELOPMENT**

   TechScape aspired to produce data that would serve multiple stakeholders, including: (a) networks seeking to improve their support to national members and partners, (b) organizations who wanted to use the research outputs in program design and strategy, (c) donors who could review anonymized data sets to identify trends and priority areas, and (d) formal researchers. In an effort to produce such data, the project consulted widely, to secure input from each of these groups on what type of indicators and data outputs would be most useful. This made for a challenging process, as these groups have very different ideas about how civil society technology use should be conceptualized, and about what kinds of information are most useful. This significantly slowed the development of the TechScape instruments and methodology. It also contributed to the production of a larger instrument and lengthier interviews, which proved challenging for participating organizations. The size and scope of the assessment instrument also produced a large and rich data set, which proved difficult to manage and frustrated the kind of running analysis the project team had hoped to run as the number of data points grew.

2. **USING LOCAL RESEARCHERS**

   TechScape used local Field Researchers rather than core staff to conduct national research and organizational assessments. This was motivated by a desire to extend and strengthen international research networks, to build local research capacity, and to ensure that assessments accounted for local knowledge and the subtleties of local relationships and contexts. Field Researchers were solicited through Oxfam Novib's national networks and an open international call, and were reviewed and interviewed by the project team. In selecting Field Researchers, a premium was placed on (in order of priority):

   - experience conducting interviews and managing mixed methods processes and data,
   - familiarity with local civil society actors and operational context,
   - ability to communicate efficiently and effectively with the project team,
   - relevant references indicating an ability to deliver as agreed, and
   - familiarity with qualitative research methods.

   Field Researcher performance varied dramatically in training, execution of interviews, and delivery of data. For some countries, the Project Manager had to re-enter all interview data, and re-conduct all contextual research. In hindsight, it would have been wise to invest more significantly in using known and trusted networks to identify local Field Researchers. In situations where local Field Researchers with a known history could not be identified, it may have been wise for core project staff to conduct assessments, with ancillary measures to accommodate contextual knowledge. It may also have been expedient to allocate contextual research to core staff rather than Field Research, to facilitate consistency in data structures and methods.

3. **INCENTIVES AND DEMANDS IN INTERVIEWS**

It became clear in the course of conducting interviews that several participating organizations were hoping that their participation would lead to additional funding or other benefits. This raises important questions about how participants were engaged in preparation for interviews, but also also posed concrete challenges during the interviews, where several respondents expressed frustration about the relevance of interview questions and the time interviews required (two 90-minute interviews, frustration was especially acute when, due to organization size, interviews with executive staff and communications staff were conducted with the same individual). In some instances, this raised questions regarding data quality, and some responses were excluded from the data set. Efforts should be made to determine the relevance and utility of research outputs for participating organizations. This also indicates the importance of streamlining the interview instrument for future modules.

4. **THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA MANAGEMENT AND DATA QUALITY**

A very significant amount of time and resources were spent by the core project team to validate data, re-enter data, re-conduct contextual research and confirm data with local counterparts. Much of this was due to limited familiarity with data tools and standards among Field Researchers, and complicated by limited accessibility of Field Researchers, due poor internet connectivity and competing schedules after interviews were completed. Having stronger data templates and data management procedures in place prior to training would likely have helped to mitigate these challenges. In several instances, where the capacity of Field Researchers was strong, it would also have been helpful to include analysis and report drafting in their contracts and responsibilities.

5. **LIAISING WITH LOCAL PARTNERS REQUIRES STRONG INCENTIVES**

Delays in data aggregation, analysis and report writing were consistently frustrated by an inability to engage with local partners. Many Field Researchers had limited availability when the contracts for interviews and research were complete and paid, due to other engagements. This frustrated efforts to validate data. Requiring a full data validation (including comments or other contributions to Country Briefs) prior to payment may have mitigated this challenge in several countries. In some countries, contact with network focal points was also very challenging, which frustrated efforts to gain contextual knowledge or to contact Field Researchers. Stronger engagement with network staff prior to the assessment process might have helped in this regard, especially to the extent that such engagement identified clear ways in which the assessment process and outputs would provide specific value to staff's ongoing activities.