



Tech4Good Project & Community Engagement Principles

Community-centered technology is critical: Be sure your project incorporates these considerations!

Partner with the right community

Pre-existing relationships between volunteers and communities enhance project success and sustainability by fostering trust and open communication. In Tech4Good projects, these connections—such as family ties, friendships, or personal experience in the community—serve as valuable entry points, but broader community engagement should follow initial research. When these ties are absent, phased projects—dividing initiatives into manageable stages—help build long-term relationships. Sustainable impact depends on the community's ability to adopt and maintain technologies, making readiness assessments, formal maintenance agreements, piloting simpler versions, and building on prior initiatives essential for success.

Boost community ownership

Fostering community ownership involves actively involving community members in tangible processes, such as design, construction, and logistics, to build a sense of connection and responsibility toward a project. Participation, whether through designing devices, assisting with logistics, or contributing labor, enhances shared responsibility but must remain voluntary to avoid pressure. Establishing small, community-agreed fees for services like water or electricity can support financial sustainability and accountability, enabling communities to manage maintenance and build resilience. By integrating community preferences, seeking local knowledge, and addressing past negative experiences, projects can foster trust, adaptability, and long-term engagement.

Design for long-term sustainability

Designing for long-term sustainability involves assigning maintenance responsibilities within the community and ensuring effective monitoring and communication. Leveraging existing committees, training local teachers as trusted contacts, and offering STEM workshops can build local expertise and maintenance capacity. Data collection for monitoring usage supports structured evaluation and provides baselines for future projects, while simple communication channels foster engagement and enable continuous feedback and improvement. These strategies ensure that solutions remain functional and adaptable over time.

Create a multi-perspective team

Creating a diverse team with shared responsibilities enhances project success by integrating varied expertise and improving community engagement. Non-engineering members, such as social scientists or local leaders, may communicate more effectively with communities, resolve conflicts, and ensure continuity if a team lead steps away. Key expertise includes contextual and cultural knowledge to navigate socio-cultural expectations, local technical and infrastructural understanding for practical implementation, and process management skills to handle conflicts and maintain a community-centered approach.

Actively involve the community at every step

- Problem identification:** Is this a community initiated problem and solution?
- Design choices:** Has the community been involved in the specific technical decisions, including solution features, form, usability, and location?
- Implementation:** Are materials and labor being locally procured? Has the community been involved in logistical support?
- Operation and maintenance:** What communication channels will exist after the project is implemented? Who will manage service, maintenance, and other financial accounting?