WEBINAR | 29 OCTOBER 2026

Measuring Impact in a Locally Led Network

Lessons from building a shared system



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Who we are and what we do

Flying Labs



- A global network of independent, locally led knowledge hubs spanning 40+ countries.
- Strengthen local expertise and capacity in drones, data, and AI.
- Drive social impact and collaboration by developing sustainable solutions, knowledge, and local technology ecosystems.

WE ROBOTICS



- Support networks of local experts leading technology solutions for social good.
- Glocalization model: Build local-global-local ecosystems through equitable partnerships and collaboration.
- Advance locally owned innovation through emerging technologies and knowledge sharing.

10 years in numbers

40+	290	434	4,647	14,800	1,150	599
Countries	Local experts	Locally led projects	Professionals trained	Youth engaged in STEM	Resources published	Ecosystem building activities

The context and the journey

A Theory of Change that had done its job

Guided WeRobotics and the Network for 7 years

A review concluded that most of it had been achieved

A Network that grew and matured

From 3 to 40 Flying Labs in a few years

More complex projects and more stakeholders involved

A need for a redesign

It was time to pause and reflect

And so we did, one layer at a time

Jun 2025
Assessment and exploration
1

Jul – Sep 2025
M&E approach redesign
2

Sep – Dec 2025
Database design (co-creation)
3

Jan – Mar 2026
Testing and refinement
4

Mar – Apr 2026
Training and rollout
5

Apr 2026 onwards
Adoption and dashboards
6

2 Redesigning our impact approach

1 What change are we trying to enable?

Theory of Change

2 What evidence would show it?

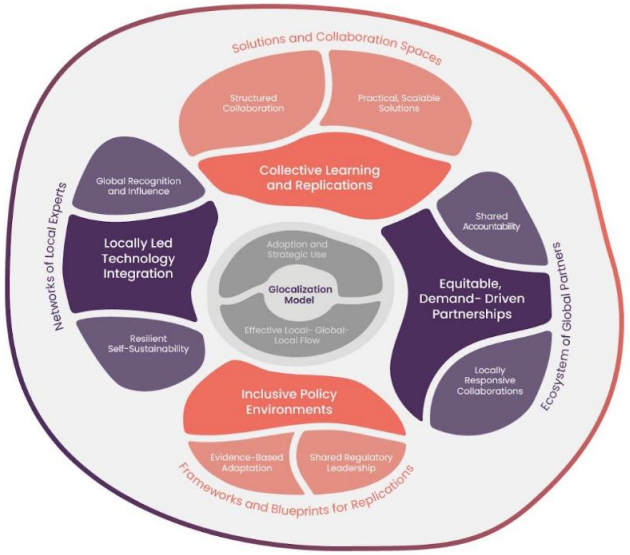
Indicators Framework

3 What is worth collecting?

Minimum viable info

4 Only then: where and how?

The Flying Labs Log



WE ASKED OURSELVES

How do we build a shared understanding of impact across a diverse, locally led network?

WHAT WE LEARNED

Start from the change you want to see, not from the data you already have.

3 Building the system

3.1 THE SYSTEM AND THE DATA LANDSCAPE

The earlier setup



It was built for a smaller network and served it well as it grew. As the Network expanded:

- The outcomes we wanted to measure changed
- Bringing information together across formats became harder
- The same information was requested more than once
- It became harder to see the Network as a whole and analyze change over time

WE ASKED OURSELVES

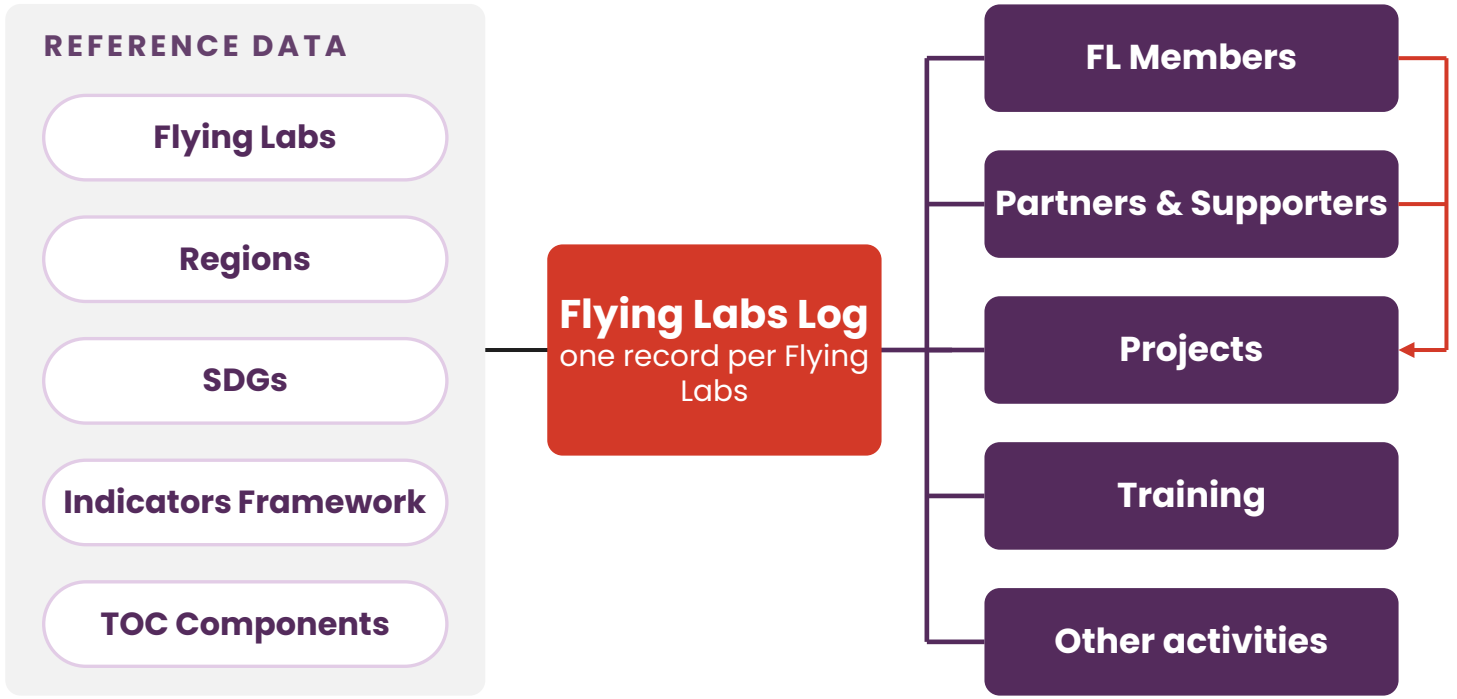
How do we build a system that serves the needs of a diverse network without forcing everyone into the same mold?

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Tools that serve a growing network need to evolve with it.
- Don’t digitize the old spreadsheet. Redesign the logic first.
- When teams are asked repeatedly and see little coming back, measurement becomes extractive.

3 Building the system

3.2 DATABASE ARCHITECTURE



Parent and child forms

Everything a Flying Labs logs sits under its own record.

Reference fields

Members and partners are entered once, then selected in projects.

Relevance rules

Forms show only the fields that apply.

Monthly routine

Logged online by the focal point or backup.

WE ASKED OURSELVES

How do we capture a network, not just a list of activities?

WHAT WE LEARNED

- A network is not a spreadsheet. The connections between records are part of the evidence.
- Shared reference data keeps the Network consistent and still leaves room for local context.
- Keep the structure as simple as it can be. A flexible platform makes it easy to overbuild.

3 Building the system

3.3 CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOOL

Options we explored

Build our own database

SQL. Full control, but development and maintenance depend on specialist skills.

Simple form-based designs

Quick to set up, but records stay disconnected from each other.

Existing platforms

Several private platforms reviewed against what the system had to do.

WHY WE PICKED ACTIVITYINFO

- Relational: connected forms and shared reference data.
- No infrastructure to build, host or maintain.
- Permissions: each Flying Labs sees only its own records.
- Usable across very different technical and M&E capacities.
- Prior experience with them: a responsive team, clear documentation and a platform that keeps improving

WHAT WE LEARNED

- The maintenance burden is low. The design burden is not: someone needs to think like a database designer.
- Write down your requirements and red lines before you compare tools.
- Don’t solve one dependency by creating another

3 Building the system

Quick Tour

3.4 CO-DESIGNING WITH THE FLYING LABS

7 Flying Labs: Kenya, Mozambique, Togo, Bangladesh, Brazil, Costa Rica, Jamaica

4 Co-creation sessions

2 Test rounds

WHAT WE TESTED TOGETHER

- Forms and workflows
- Reference tables
- Language and clarity
- Feasibility
- Burden of logging

WE ASKED OURSELVES

- The question changed from:

Can this information be useful? → Is it useful enough to ask every Flying Labs for it, and can they collect it reliably?

WHAT CHANGED AFTER CO-CREATION

- Clearer field labels and definitions
- Overall simplification of the database and workflows
- Fewer “required” fields

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Ask for less than you’d like to collect. More data isn't better data if you can't trust its quality.
- A system seems intuitive when the designer is in the room. The real test is someone using it alone.
- Let users change the design, not just test it.
- While no coding skills are required, database architecture and logic are very useful.

4 5 Testing, training and rollout

Training

8 Training sessions

~70 people trained

2 Focal points per Flying Labs

Multiple time slots

Offer enough time slots for a busy, global Network

Sandbox mode

Practice environment before entering real information

Roll out

1 April
production launch

Clear documentation

Step-by-step and screenshot-based user manual

In-form guidance

Labels, helper text, examples at the moment of entry

Continuous support

Questions and troubleshooting after launch

WE ASKED OURSELVES

How do we prepare ~70 people, across time zones and capacities, to log on their own?

WHAT WE LEARNED

- New questions appear at scale that the working group never raised.
- Short, visual guides work better than long manuals.
- Guidance is part of the system. Help must be available at the point of entry, not only during training.

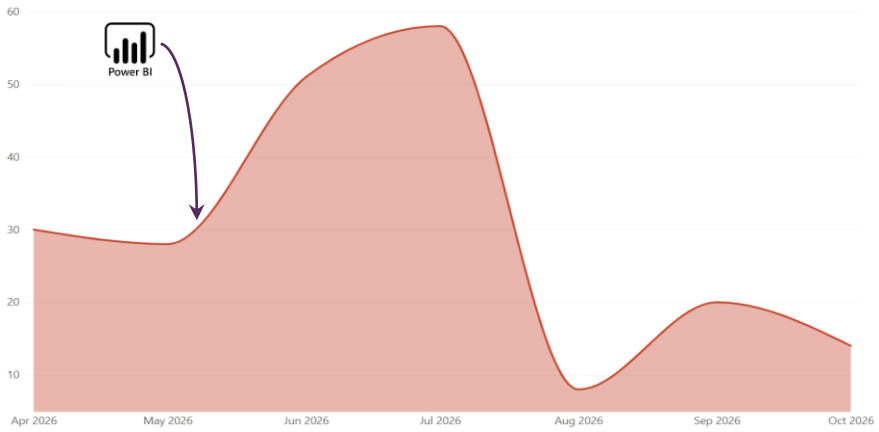
6 Adoption

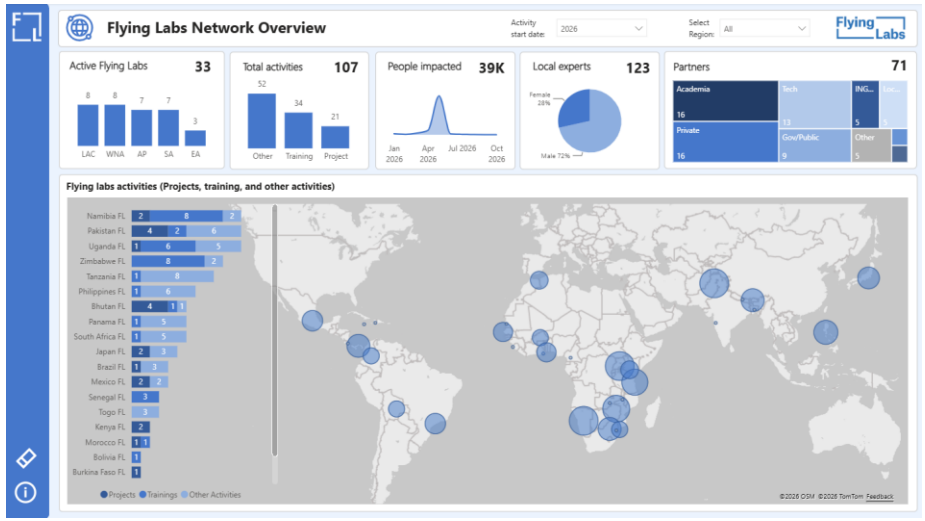
3.4 DEPLOYMENT IS NOT ADOPTION

While the system was initially well received, many Flying Labs did not log consistently.

THE SHIFT

"Please log" → **"Let's make our work visible"**





WE ASKED OURSELVES

How can we build the habit of logging regularly?
What would encourage us to log consistently?

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Training explains the system but does not create the habit.
- Logging becomes a habit when people see value coming back: ownership and easy access to their own data are key.
- A visible blank on a dashboard does more than a reminder email.

Toward an M&E ecosystem, not just a database

The Log shows what the Network does. Understanding what changed needs more than one source of evidence

LIVE SINCE APRIL 2026

Flying Labs Log

Activity monitoring

Projects, trainings, other activities, members and partners

BEING IMPLEMENTED

Flying Labs Global Model

Governance and progress

Self-evaluation and governance across eight objectives, drawing on data already logged

IN TESTING

Stakeholder survey

3rd party perceived change

Third-party insight for outcomes that are hard to measure only from Flying Labs' own inputs

WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

- Do not ask one form to be the whole impact system. Connect sources of evidence that complement each other.
- One connected database: information is entered once and reused across tools.

The goal is not a perfect database. It is a Network that can increasingly see, use and learn from its own evidence.

People lead. Technology follows.

Questions?

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