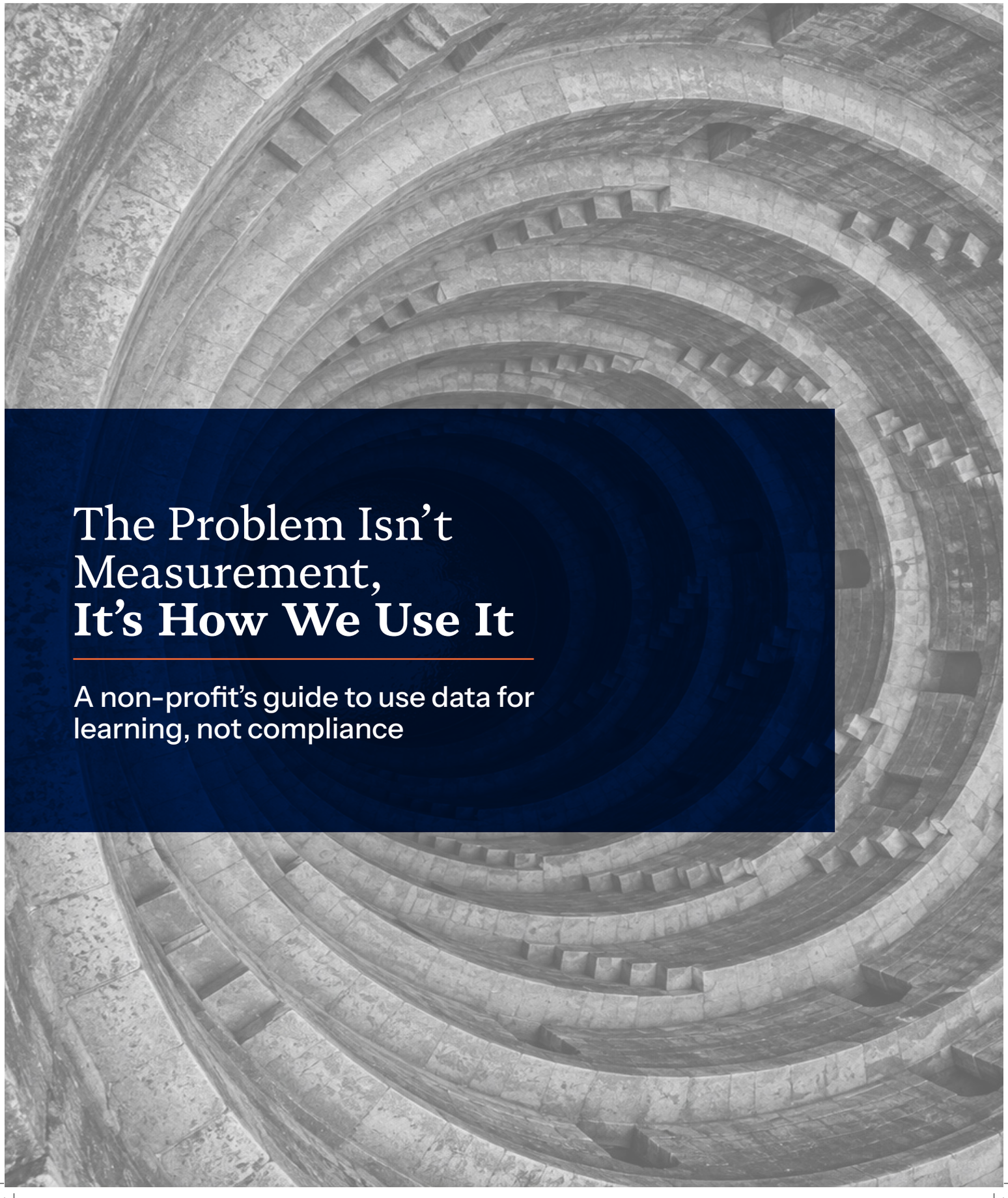
ISDM

INDIAN SCHOOL OF
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

May '26



The Problem Isn't Measurement, **It's How We Use It**

A non-profit's guide to use data for learning, not compliance

The crisis of compliance

In many organisations, measurement fo lows reporting requirements. Teams co lect information that is easy to share - numbers, reach, outputs, and donor KPIs, while deeper questions about change remain unanswered.

Data can be used in two ways



For reporting
Numbers and reach
Program outputs
Donor KPIs



For decisions
Learning
Reflection
Course correctioan

But in practice, many organisations already have everyday information that they can use to guide their work.

Teams can rely on simple early signals such as:

- Engagement and participation
- Behavioural observations
- Knowledge or attitude
- Feedbacks and testimonials

These non-data signals help teams understand what is happening on the ground and learn from them.

Here is how organisations have used non-data signals as learning tool

Engagement and Participation (Signal 1)

What Participation Patterns Can Reveal

A community learning centre for girls noticed that attendance in weekly sessions varied.

What the team began to notice



Some girls attended only after school exams were over



Families were hesitant to send girls during evening hours



Caregivers mentioned safety concerns in conversations

What this revealed

The issue was not a lack of interest. It was timing, safety concerns, and household responsibilities.

What changed

The organisation responded by:

01 Shifting session timings

02 Involving mothers in orientation meetings

03 Adding a weekend group

Listening to participants helped the organisation redesign the program in ways that improved participation.

Behavioural observations (Signal 2)

What Behavioural Patterns Can Reveal

A youth employability program was running regular life skills and interview preparation workshops. Attendance remained steady, but facilitators observed that participants did not engage fully during sessions.

What the team began to notice



Participants spoke more comfortably only during small-group activities



Many avoided mock interviews in front of the larger group



Feedback conversations revealed that some youth were nervous about public speaking

What this revealed

The chalenge was a lack of confidence and fear of embarrassment, rather than low motivation.

What changed

The organisation responded by:

01 Introducing peer practice groups

02 Conducting shorter, focused activities

03 Simulating one-on-one mock interviews before group interactions

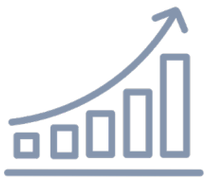
These changes helped participants build confidence gradually before speaking in larger groups.

Understanding attitudinal gaps (Signal 3)

What Attitudinal Attributes Can Reveal

A livelihood program trained women in tailoring and expected participants to start earning soon after completing their training.

What the team began to notice



Many women continued stitching at home but were hesitant to start a business



Some preferred taking informal stitching jobs from known people instead of taking paid orders



Follow-up visits showed greater confidence in managing household finances

What this revealed

Change was happening, but differently from how they had imagined. Participants showed improvements in confidence, mobility, and decision-making rather than an increase in immediate earnings.

What changed

The organisation revised its indicators to track earlier signs of progress, including:

01 Confidence

02 Mobility

03 Decision making

This helped the organisation evolve its definition of change.

Feedback and testimonials (signal 4)

What feedback can unlock

Farmers using FarmerChat (an AI enabled agri support chatbot) needed timely, accessible information not just on crops and pests, but also on prices, loans, subsidies, government schemes, and weather.

What the team began to notice



Many farmers were unable to type queries



Farmers repeatedly sought weather updates and daily-use information



Information need was far beyond agriculture advice alone



Low-literacy and poor connectivity were major access barriers

What this revealed

Farmers needed simple, conversational, and voice-enabled support that reflected their everyday realities and broader livelihood needs, not just agricultural support information.

What changed

FarmerChat evolved through:

01 Redesigning the platform for low-literacy and low-connectivity contexts, supporting voice, text, and photo-based queries

02 Adding weather widgets and proactive nudges so farmers did not have to seek information

03 Introducing text-to-speech and voice-based interactions

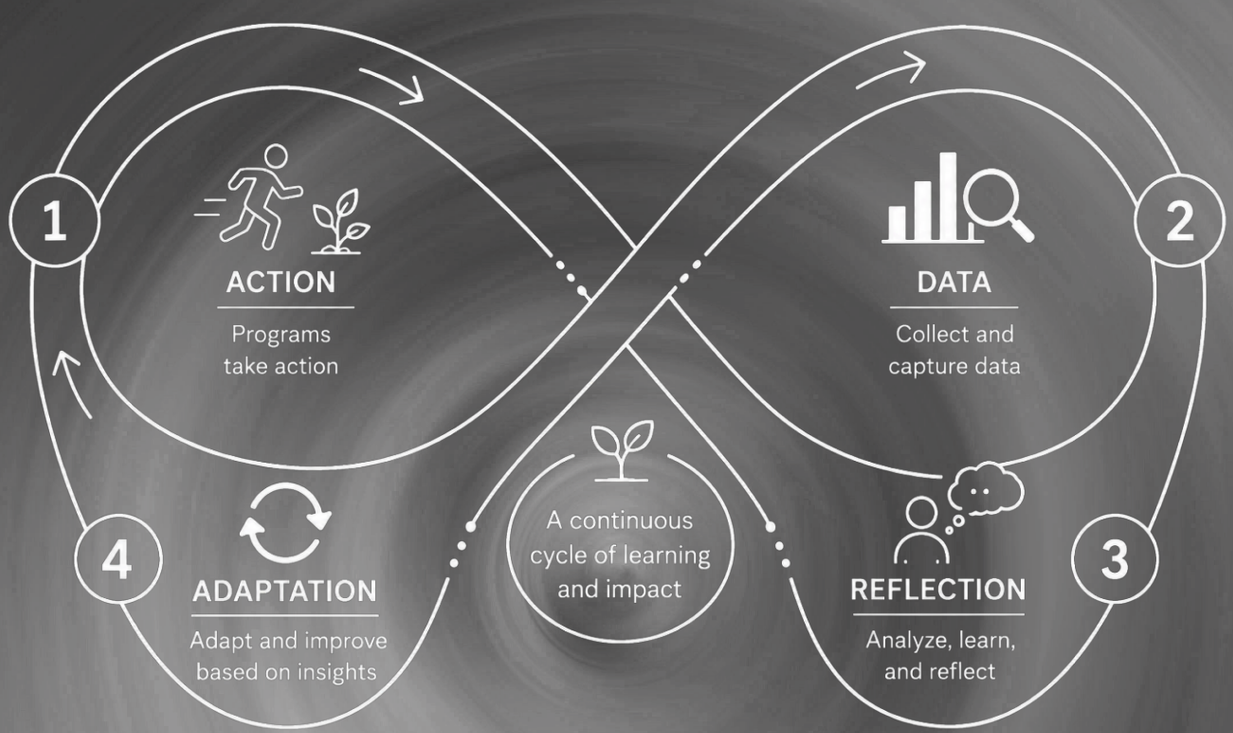
Listening to user feedback helped FarmerChat reach more than 25,000 farmers across India, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria.

Insight lives inside the work

Impact measurement does not begin with surveys or end with reports.
It happens in the small moments when teams:

- Notice patterns
- Listen to participants
- Reflect on what they are seeing
- Change what they do next

When information moves through a cycle of Action → Data → Reflection →Adaptation, programs begin to evolve.



To learn more about how organisations changed course based on non-data signals, read ISDM’s Reports

Impact or Illusion

Data, In Deed