Confianza e Impacto

NOTE FOR FOUNDATIONS

Systemic trust and integrated impact

A note for foundations and funders

CONFIANZA E IMPACTO · NOVEMBER 2026

§ 01

A new way to see the organisations you fund

Confianza e Impacto has developed a method that shows a foundation what its usual reports cannot: whether the organisations it supports have the conditions to sustain the change they promise. The method reads trust as a system of eight observable conditions and links that reading to the integrated impact each organisation produces and could produce. Every organisation is read with the same structure, so the method works across a whole portfolio.

We are applying it to projects in Indonesia, Chile and Mexico. In those projects it has proved highly effective at bringing to light what standard indicators miss and at locating the point where a focused intervention can move the whole organisation.

In a maternal health programme, 97% of women stated that they followed the recommendations, while real adherence, counted by pill bottles, was 44%. The donor received the coverage figure, 95%. No indicator registered the gap, because nothing in the programme allowed a woman to say that the supplement made her ill. The cartography located the gap in two conditions, communication and embodiment, and proposed where to intervene.

§ 02

Reading systemic trust

Trust is what holds an organisation together under uncertainty. It cannot be observed directly, so we assess it through the conditions that make it possible. Each condition answers a structural question:

Purpose: what is this system for?

Power: how is the asymmetry of decision distributed?

Justice: how are those in the most fragile position actually treated?

Recognition: is each person seen as a subject?

Communication: does information circulate, and is it understood?

Adaptive capacity: can the system correct itself?

Embodiment: how does the team enact the practice?

Transparency: are the grounds of decisions accessible?

Each condition is read as a mix of three registers:

Lucid trust: decisions are argued, criticism is sought and errors become shared learning.

Blind trust: loyalty replaces judgement and warning signs are silenced.

Distrust: every signal reads as a threat and coordination turns into control.

The result is a cartography that shows where the organisation stands on each condition. We build it from documents, interviews, mapping and observation. Where the evidence does not allow a condition to be classified, the cartography says so rather than filling the gap.

A model then simulates how the system would move if one condition were held lucid, and weighs that effect against how feasible the change is. The condition that would lift the whole system most is the leverage point. The model proposes it and the evaluator decides.

§ 03

Reading integrated impact

Impact is the change an organisation produces, and what remains of it when the organisation stops sustaining it. We read it in five dimensions:

Change generated: what changed, against what would have happened anyway.

Magnitude: the depth of the good touched, composed with the reach achieved.

Sustainability of the change: what would still exist if the organisation closed tomorrow.

Sustainability of the organisation: its capacity to keep producing that change.

Potential impact: how far the organisation could go if its systemic trust were sound.

Change generated and its sustainability can be negative: an organisation can extract value or leave harm behind. Depending on the context we work with theory of change, baselines, SROI, IRIS+ and the OECD-DAC criteria.

Systemic trust does not produce impact; it is the condition that makes impact possible. Management indicators register symptoms, and the cartography reads the conditions underneath them.

§ 04

What it gives a foundation

Before funding: a reading of trust and impact alongside the usual review of documents and policies.

Deciding where to strengthen: a portfolio map of systemic trust against integrated impact. It shows which organisations are holding back impact they could produce, and where the same money would move the most.

Early warning: blind trust is the register in which crises grow without anyone naming them, including abuse within institutions. This links the method directly with safeguarding.

Follow-up and reporting: a baseline and a second reading, comparable across grantees, and a report to donors on change and its sustainability rather than on activity alone.

Training: for programme teams, in the method and in impact measurement.

§ 05

How we work

Reading: the cartography and an impact baseline, built from the available information. This has value of its own: for follow-up, for showing the impact already produced and for raising funds.

Intervention proposal: a strategy by condition, starting from the leverage point, agreed with the organisation.

Intervention: carried out by our team or by local partners, with follow-up.

Second reading: after an agreed period, set against the baseline.

A first engagement can be a pilot with three to five organisations chosen by the foundation. It ends with a portfolio map and a proposal for next steps.

§ 06

Who we are

The method was built by a team trained in philosophy, with twenty years of experience founding and leading social organisations, and evaluating and funding organisations in Chile, Europe, Mexico, Ecuador and Indonesia.

José Andrés Murillo holds a PhD in political philosophy (Paris VII) and an MBA (Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez), and is the author of *Confianza lúcida* (2012), the book from which the method derives. He founded and chairs the Fundación Para la Confianza in Chile, which works to prevent the sexual abuse of children and adolescents and supports those who have been victims of abuse. He served on Chile's presidential advisory council against corruption (Comisión Engel).

Francia Mazzo Iturriaga is an architect (Universidad de Chile) with a Master of Business from the University of Queensland. She brings thirteen years as a senior consultant in participatory and sustainability processes, with the IDB, UNDP, FAO and The Nature Conservancy, among others.

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