Practical conduct of a case study

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Each Miriades project case study is led by a researcher, who is the scientific rapporteur and responsible for the study, and an advisor. This pair was then accompanied by one or two researchers from the methodological group.

The performance of a study is based on documentary research (articles, reports, regulatory texts, etc.) and the conduct of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders on the impact pathway, within and outside of the organization leading the study (research partners, intermediaries, research users, impact recipients). In the case studies from the pilot phase of the Miriades project, the lead organization for the study is IRD.

The case studies in the Miriades project take place over four stages:
- Stage 1: delimitation of case study scope and collection of data available within the organization;
- Stage 2: collection of data from outside the organization;
- Stage 3: report preparation;
- Stage 4: approval of report by persons interviewed during the study.

This chapter describes the practical development of these four stages as well as the deliverables expected at the end of each of them.
Stage 1: delimitation of case study scope and collection of internal data

The delimitation of the scope of the case as defined in the previous chapter marks the starting point of the study (Table 9).

The scientific rapporteur formulates a hypothesis on the contribution of the organization’s work in relation to an observed impact. This will serve as a common thread to delimit and refine the scope of the case and guide the collection of data.

Once the scope has been defined, this first stage is organized in two stages: documenting the study based on the data available on the entire impact path; and conducting interviews with the actors internal to the organization.

*Table 9*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1.1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Data collection within the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification of research units, laboratories and scientists involved within the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification of direct partners, contextual elements and actors</td>
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<td>Identification of major academic publications on the case, those that have contributed to the generation of impacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listing available information and data sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>First draft of impact pathway diagram and timeline</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1.2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviewing contributors from the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establishment of the list of persons to be interviewed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of an interview guide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conducting semi-structured interviews with contributors: scientists from the units involved and, where applicable, representatives of the other structures involved</td>
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<tr>
<td>The questions may relate to all the stages and actors of the impact pathway as well as impact recipients</td>
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</table>

At the end of this first stage, the following are identified:

- the scope of the case and its feasibility;
- the organization’s contribution to the research process (structures and teams concerned; the primary research that contributed to the impact hypothesis as formulated, and the start date of the first work done on the subject by the organization; the material and immaterial resources involved; skills and disciplines implemented; infrastructure mobilized; position of the institution’s teams on the theme relative to the state of the art, etc.); the scientific
rapporteur identifies the start date of the research work selected within the scope of the case;
- the role of the organization and its teams, on an institutional or individual basis, in the circulation, adaptation or transformation of research results in order to facilitate their appropriation by actors in society;
- the organization’s primary partners in the research process, those without whom the research could not have been carried out, as well as the actors in the knowledge circulation stage of the impact pathway;
- the pool of knowledge being leveraged;
- contextual elements;
- research products that contributed to impacts;
- where applicable, an initial identification of the impact recipients;
- a first draft of the impact pathway diagram and impact hypotheses;
- a first draft of the timeline.

The timeline limits the time frame of the case. It must be concise in order to ensure that it remains readable. It shows: 1) major contextual events; 2) events in which the organization is involved. Key points in the impact pathway should be included, including the date when research began at the organization, the date of the first product of the research, and the date of the first impact. Depending on the case, this timeline may begin at the time research began, or may begin with previous contextual elements that shed light on the issues it addresses. These chronological reference points must also appear in the text of the report.

**Figure 2**
*Example of timeline for the case study on volcanic processes and hazards in Ecuador.*
As the construction of the impact pathway is an iterative process, the impact pathway diagram and timeline will be supplemented and adjusted as the study unfolds, based on interviews conducted and information gathered.

**Stage 2: collection of external data**

This second stage is devoted to interviews with: 1) the main actors who contributed to the research process; 2) the intermediary actors involved in the circulation and adaptation of research products stage; 3) the impact recipients. It has three phases. The first is devoted to the preparation of interviews, the second to their realization with the research partners and intermediary actors, and the third to the conduct of the interviews with recipients. It is advisable to follow this sequence in order, because actors from the research phase and intermediaries may make it possible to identify recipients not identified in the first stage (Table 10).

In addition to collecting data, these interviews make it possible to compare the hypotheses of the impact pathway initially formulated with the analysis of the other actors. The objective is to build a shared vision with regard to the roles and contributions of the different actors, the nature and methods of their interactions, and the key elements and moments of this impact pathway.

These interviews also make it possible to confirm the impacts described by recipients. They may also bring to light unexpected impacts.

Cross-referencing of these interviews among the different categories of actors and cross-checking the information help validate the data collected by means of triangulation.

It is advisable that interviews be carried out in pairs to the extent possible, so as to limit bias in the formulation of questions, the collection of answers and their understanding or interpretation.

The number of interviews to be conducted depends on the complexity of the case. Each actor met is at the heart of his story, which may lead him to extend the interview to fields other than those of the study, whose impacts the actor feels are equally significant. The study leads are responsible for ensuring its coherence and consistency with the central theme.
Table 10
Stage 2

| Stage 2.1 Preparation of interviews | Establishment of the list of persons to be interviewed  
| | Identification of the data to be collected  
| | Development of an interview guide to be adjusted to suit the categories of actors and recipients  
| | Questions may address all stages of the impact pathway  
| Stage 2.2 Interviews with research partners and intermediaries | Confirmation or additional insight into their roles (as research partners or intermediaries) or even, where applicable, into persons affected by the research  
| | Contribution, positioning in the impact pathway, interactions with other stakeholders in the impact pathway  
| | Identification of impact recipients  
| Stage 2.3 Interviews with recipients | Collection of impact descriptors as formulated by the recipients: nature of the change observed, populations concerned, intensity, scale (local, regional, etc.), difficulties encountered, possible discrepancies in the perception and assessment of these impacts  
| | Collection of evidence of impact (bibliography or any other element corroborating the impact)  

At the end of this second stage, the following will be identified and described:

– the primary actors who contributed to the research phase, their type (higher education and research, economic sector, representatives of civil society, public authorities, etc.), and their role in and contribution to the research process (discipline/know-how/expertise, financial or human resources, infrastructure, etc.);

– the primary intermediaries, their type (academic, institutional, economic sector, representatives of civil society, etc.), their role in and contribution to the circulation and transformation of the knowledge obtained;

– the dimensions of impact (social, health, economic, etc.) and the recipients (society, public institutions, economic sector, higher education and research, etc.) concerned;

– impacts and descriptors collected from recipients.
Stage 3: report preparation

The study takes the form of a report, prepared according to a standard format consistent with the structure of the impact pathway:

1. Summary
2. Background
3. Actors' contributions
4. Products of research
5. Timeline
6. Circulation of knowledge and intermediaries
7. Initial impacts
8. Widespread impacts
9. Impact pathway diagram
10. Appendices
   - Interviews conducted
   - Documents cited (documents cited in the report, evidence of impacts substantiating the impact reported)

The impact pathway diagram and the timeline form an integral part of the report. The report must reflect all the contributions of research partners and intermediaries. The contributions of the establishment leading the study should be subject to an analysis more detailed than that to which the other stakeholders are subject, in order to clearly describe its contributions. Furthermore, some specific information, defined upstream of the study, must be systematically collected, in order to facilitate a subsequent cross-sectional analysis of cases.

Stage 4: approval of report by persons interviewed

The report tells the story of a collective experience. The actors who contributed to its writing and provided proof of the existence of the impacts must recognize themselves in this story. The report will therefore be sent to the persons interviewed during the study to collect any factual corrections and comments they may wish to make regarding the text.

The study is then finalized based on this feedback.