Milestone #2: Preliminary Needs and Context Assessment

Milestone #2 (Oct. 8)

- **Preliminary Needs and Context Assessment**

- **What does your partner think about your proposed solution?**
  - present your plan (e.g., Milestone #1 report and other materials) to your project partner (on Sept. 24, regardless of whether your are called)
  - Get their feedback

- **Does this affect your proposal?**

- **On-the-ground needs assessment**
  - What questions do you want to ask your target users?
  - (You don't need to have answers right now, but show your questions.)

Social Context

- ## See Rachel Hall-Clifford's talk
  - Contact her for feedback on needs assessments surveys

- ## Who generated your idea and why?
  - Technologically interesting? Perceived need?
- ## Does your target population NEED your
  - product or intervention? Who determines this?
- ## Does your target population WANT your product?
- ## How open are you to changing your idea or product to correspond with local input?

Technology

- **Cell-phone signal in your target locations?**
- **Do the target users have cellphones?**
  - How many have their own cellphones?
  - How many have access to one (e.g., village phone)?
  - Do people who have stores/shops/businesses, government offices, hospitals/medical facilities, schools, etc. have cellphones?
- **How about PCs?**
  - Do individuals have PCs? Laptops?
  - Internet? Dialup or High-Speed?
  - How about public offices (gov't, hospitals, etc.)?
  - How about internet cafes?

Economics of Technology

- ## How much?
    - Cheap phones (contract vs. no-contract)
    - Cheap cameraphones
    - SMS and MMS sending
    - voice
    - Internet / Web access (GPRS & 3G)
    - value-added services
    - **Do you pay to receive?**

- ## What percentage of a family's income is spent on cellphone costs?
    - What is the average income of a family?

User Behavior

- **How literate are your target users?**
- **How often do people use their cellphones and what for?**
  - (Text, chatting with relatives, conducting business, finding out if roads are blocked etc.)
- **What type of people are generally using cellphones?**
  - (Women, children, rich, middle-income, poor?)
- **What special/advanced uses people give their cellphones?**
  - paying for goods? Person-to-Person payments? Websurfing? Gaining local information?
  - Note: there's a difference between what services are available and what services people actually use!
- **Where do they go to top cellphones up?**
- **How often have people had cellphones stolen?**
  - Are people afraid of having their cellphones stolen?
- **Do people pay for goods and services with their phones?**
  - (If so, what? and where? Why do they not use real cash?)
- **Do people find them difficult/easy to use?**

More Questions

- **Think of the largest piece of information you might want to send (image, video, form).**
  - How long does it take to send it?
  - How much does it cost?
- **Details on other modes of use.**
  - What they do currently?
- **What social factors might prevent them from using the phone?**
- **In what situations is it rude to use a phone?**
- **How do people feel about you taking their picture with a cellphone?**
- **Does carrying a cellphone make you feel more successful?**
- **Do you share a phone or ever lend you phone to anyone - if so, for how long?**
  - (This is important if the phone is used as an identifier, or carries private info).

General Tips

- **"High-Tech" / not-so-cheap solutions may be OK if solution/application is such that such solutions only need to be used by a few, and not by the random public**

  – "Target users" are NOT always the same as "beneficiaries"

  – e.g., apps to be used by health workers for data collection / surveying, in a context where funding is available to provide workers with higher-end smartphones

- **If solution is meant to be used by end-users themselves, then need to support lowest common denominator**

- **More challenging, but also more potential for scalability and impact**

Again ...

- **What is the problem we're trying to solve?**

- **How do we know that's a real problem?**

- **Does this problem really need a technological solution?**

- **Could this problem be solved <u>without</u> any digital technology?**

Don't Forget

- Be aware of all these things and try to gather as much information as you can from the partner before and while you are designing your system

- You will almost certainly make mistakes

- The important thing is to be alert and be able to adapt and learn ("Fail early and Fail often")