

The **Greenlight** movement

The power of the green light



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Possibly the biggest question facing organisations working to alleviate poverty is

“How do we know if we are moving the needle of transformation?”

Research shows that few programmes have a methodology or metric for impact assessment that can categorically prove that they are meeting their mandates. The majority of outcomes and impacts for poverty-related programmes are measured using income generation or household costs as the main indicators and there has been little effort to use M&E tools beyond the traditional money-metric method.

For example, South African reports tend to define poverty using the “food poverty line” and “lower-and upper-bound poverty lines” which are calculated in currency ZAR (Statistics SA, 2017). And although poverty lines are important tools that allow for statistical reporting of poverty levels and patterns, as well as planning for poverty reduction in any population, they do not take into consideration all the dimensions of poverty.

South Africa has thousands of programmes aimed at reducing and alleviating poverty, carried out by government and the private and public sectors. However, we don't seem to be making much of a difference. **Our viewpoint is that we are failing because:**

- We do not see people as the main actors in eliminating poverty from their lives.
- We plan around individuals instead of families and we measure our programme's impact against individuals, not realising that it is the family unit that is in poverty; additionally, poverty does not affect families uniformly, therefore solutions out of poverty will differ for each family.
- We don't engage with individuals and households in self-diagnosis and, as a result, we implement programmes based on what we think people need (issues of exclusion).
- Once programmes are running, we measure only certain aspects of poverty that supports our pre-determined criteria for success, forgetting that poverty has many dimensions that are interconnected and may block our programmes from achieving greater impacts in the long-term.

There is a growing movement of organisations who recognise that in order to move the needle of transformation, a joint effort is required by those seeking to escape poverty and the organisations that support them in their efforts.



South Africa

The Greenlight approach?

Greenlight is an approach used to measure aspects of multi-dimensional poverty in the families of the beneficiaries that we serve and the people (employees) with whom we work.

It is a **multi-dimensional, self-evaluation, visual survey tool** that allows households struggling with socio-economic issues to self-diagnose their situation, as a first step in developing a personalised strategy to reach for a better quality of life.

It is a methodology and a metric that allows us to contrast poverty with non-poverty and then take action to assist people to help themselves to address the difference.

The Greenlight assesses six dimensions



Income & Employment



Health & Environment



Housing & Infrastructure



Education & Culture



Organisation & Participation



Self Awareness & Motivation

The survey contains 50 indicators set within the six dimensions, with three conditions for each indicator:



NOT POOR

“I'm doing ok” (I can do this, I am building confidence in my abilities and experience)



POOR

“I'm trying but struggling” (I could use assistance)



EXTREMELY POOR

“I'm stuck” (help me to help myself)

The tool uses spotlight colours, images, tables, electronic devices, and simple software developed for Android devices to create innovative maps that enable individuals and households to see and understand the ways in which they are challenged on quality of life.

How does it work?

This tool can be used by businesses with their employees or by non-profits engaging with their clients / beneficiaries.

- 1 An organisation arranges for a household or employee, in the presence of a trained facilitator, to do a self-assessment (often at the beginning of a programme) to record a baseline. The household/employee completes the survey, on paper or using the survey app on a tablet, by selecting the definition for each indicator that most reflects the household's/employee's current circumstances. The result is a Greenlight scorecard that is easy to understand and use in follow-up processes.
- 2 This allows each household/employee to reflect, prioritise, and plan how to resolve the socio-economic problems that affects their family, with the assistance of organisations that have competencies relating to each indicator, via a referral pathway.
- 3 The household/employee discusses the results and sets targets and practical action plans for selected indicators.
- 4 The household /employee discusses who can help them achieve their goal and starts to engage friends, family, community, role models, non-profits, etc.
- 5 Progress against the plan is measured regularly (coaching, mentoring, rewards) and integrated into programmes. The results are formally measured every 12 months by doing another assessment survey.
- 6 The organisation is able to report on "real" impact results.

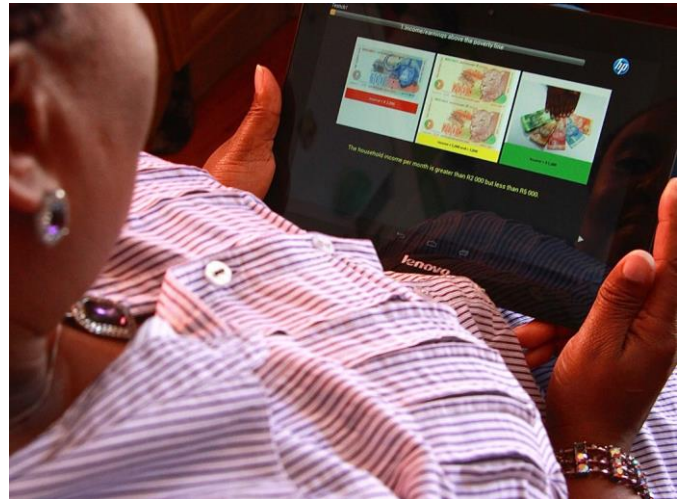
The Greenlight tool assists to create a clear line of sight into specific aspects of the challenges each household / employee faces, as well as enables organisations to encourage people to make changes in those areas of their lives that they are in control of.

As households systematically work on moving their quality of life issues from red to yellow to green, regular application of this survey allows for more comprehensive measurement and mapping of social and cultural wealth, which until now has been a challenge for the development sector.

Additionally, data can be aggregated and mapped using online geo-referencing, offering a better perspective of the real issues at hand in specific areas of the country, and scaling for a national snapshot in time. These maps can enhance decision-making for government services such as electricity and sanitation and can influence priorities for engagement. Similarly, the corporate social investment sector could use these maps to identify the issues of greatest need within their geographical footprint.

Benefits

Organisations delivering social impacts through poverty-related programmes, enterprise development initiatives, and upliftment and empowerment community-based projects will benefit greatly from the Greenlight approach.

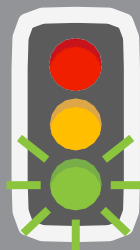


Beneficiaries

- Provides snapshot of socio-economic status
- Contrasts 'poor' with 'not poor' - enables people to understand the ways in which they are struggling
- Provides line of sight to better quality of life – aspirational
- Promotes ownership and responsibility for journey out of poverty
- Encourages self-reflection in journey from dependence to dignity

Organisations

- Assists in identifying clients (employees / households in need)
- Helps better understand employee's / client's needs
- Categorises indicators of poverty
- Defines level of poverty in target communities
- Assists in generating poverty elimination plans for employees/clients
- Helps develop partnerships
- Measures the organisation's impact - organisation is able to report on "real" impact results (baseline, 12 months, etc.)



The power of the green light! You don't know what you need until you know what you've got!



What does it look like?



1 Defining Poverty

An example of the indicator for “Access to Drinking Water” in the Health & Environment dimension.

INDICATOR: Access to drinking water **AREA:** Health & Environment

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
The home has constant access to drinking water within the house or in the yard. The home has a tap with running water that is clean and drinkable.	The home has access to drinking water, but: it is not reliable for part of the day, or it is not always clean, or the source of water is within 100 meters of the home and has to be shared.	The water the family drinks is not safe, clean water or they have to walk more than 100 meters from their home to fetch it.

Note: Definitions of poverty - who decides what it means to “progress out of poverty” – were decided via democratic participation with low-income families describing their experience/situation.

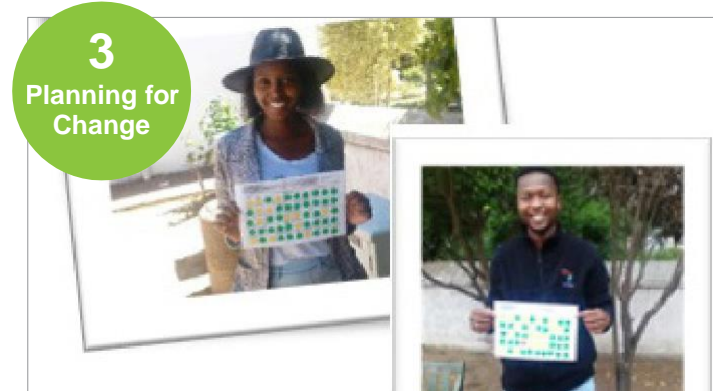


2 Self-Diagnosis

Facilitators trained in the Greenlight approach conduct household visits or sessions with individual employees. The Facilitators create a safe space for the family/employee to share sensitive information. Surveys can be completed using a manual paper format or by using a device such as a tablet. Data is uploaded to a cloud-based system and is available immediately for reporting purposes, via a web-based platform.



An example of the results of a Greenlight survey where a household/employee has self-diagnosed their current situation as 21 reds (stuck), 16 yellows (struggling) and 13 greens (doing ok).



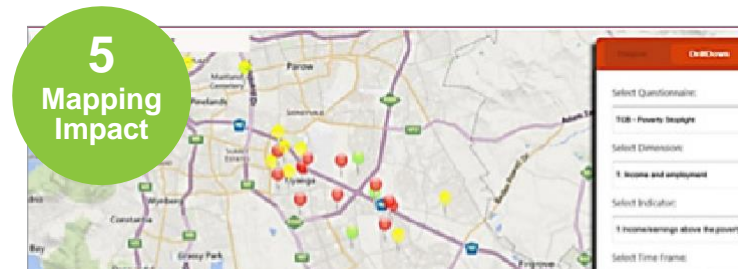
3 Planning for Change

Based on the survey results, organisations are encouraged to assist households/employees to do an action plan that reaches for a better quality of life.



4 Experiencing Transformation

Reports can be downloaded and used to document ongoing change as well as assess social impact.



5 Mapping Impact

Greenlight surveys can be mapped spatially to offer a better perspective of the real issues at hand in specific areas of the country. These maps can enhance decision-making for government services such as electricity and sanitation and can influence priorities for engagement.

Key Philosophies

Key philosophies that organisations need to ascribe to if they use the Greenlight approach:

Being poor is not who you are; it's a set of circumstances that you find yourself in.

People are not **"empty vessels to be filled up"** but rather **their wealth energy "tapped and released"**.

Poverty has many dimensions and reducing or alleviating poverty is not good enough; **it must be permanently eradicated.**

Poverty does not affect households uniformly; therefore solutions out of poverty will **differ for each household.**

The main protagonists in eliminating poverty must be the **individual** themselves. Additionally, an individual must adopt certain behaviours and attitudes in order to overcome poverty in all its dimensions and to maintain a standard of living that is 'not poor'.

There is a **need to engage with households in poverty** in order to understand how they perceive their reality and make sense of the challenges and obstacles imposed by the external world in relation to the effort of their actions. Social reality has a specific meaning for households in need and they act based on their understanding of this reality.

By allowing households **to self-assess their levels of poverty** through images, they can identify with the image but also picture an improved situation by looking at the different levels of quality of life.



September 2017, New York: United Nations selects Poverty Stoplight (Greenlight) at their Solutions Summit as one of 11 projects advancing the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals! This initiative lifts up and advances the work of exceptional teams already developing innovative solutions

The Greenlight approach is a relational tool that creates expectations. Membership and usage of the tool is only endorsed for those organisations who are actually running quality of life programmes and who intend to use the information resulting from the surveys to do something about it. Using the tool for research purposes only or where data generation is the main outcome is not supported.

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Contact Details

For more information and to sign up as a Member of **The Greenlight Movement**, contact:

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