CLEAR Global

The Basics - Informed consent

Understand the people affected by the crisis

Informed consent is only meaningful when it reflects how people understand and experience technology in their own context.

This requires recognising different levels of digital awareness, knowledge, and perceptions of risk and benefit, as defined by the people themselves. It also involves using familiar concepts, appropriate languages, and accessible formats to support conversations about technology, while being attentive to how factors such as age, gender, literacy, or shared device use shape people's interactions with digital tools.

Invites teams to move beyond assumptions, identify who may face additional barriers, and ensure that consent processes are grounded in the lived realities of diverse individuals and groups within a community.

1. How to use this template

Use this template before and during the design or implementation of a technology. The goal is to understand people's realities, power relations, and forms of communication, so that consent is informed, voluntary, and contextualized.

Everyday relationship with technology

Explore real experiences

* How do they currently use technology in their daily lives?

* What level of knowledge do they have about technology, risks, and benefits (according to their own definition)?

* What past experiences influence how they perceive technology today?

Barriers, inequalities, and differentiated risks

Identify exclusion

* Who faces the most difficulties in accessing or using technology?

* Are there erroneous assumptions about who "knows" or "doesn't know" how to use technology?

* Are certain groups at greater risk due to gender, age, disability, or social role?

Skills and knowledge within the community

Recognize existing knowledge

* Who has previous experience with similar technologies?

* Are adolescents and young people included?

* Who does the community trust to explain or interpret technical information?

Communication for consent

Define how to talk

* In what languages should the conversation take place?

* What words, examples, or concepts are most understandable?

* What formats facilitate understanding (oral, visual, audio, demonstrations)?

Social and power dynamics

Analyze relational context

* How are devices shared within households?

* Does this affect anyone's privacy or security?

* Do people feel they can say "no"?

* Is there implicit pressure to participate in order to receive help?

Concerns and expectations

Listen beyond the technical

* What fears or doubts exist regarding the technology?

* What do they hope the technology can improve in their situation?

2. Practical checklist for facilitators

Before moving forward:

- ☐ I understand differences within the community
- ☐ I do not assume capabilities or limitations
- ☐ I have identified social and relational risks
- ☐ I know how to adapt consent to the context
- ☐ I are willing to adjust the technology if necessary
- ☐ I do not assume levels of digital literacy.
- ☐ I know the appropriate languages and formats.
- ☐ I have identified possible inequalities and power relations.
- ☐ I am clear that the goal is to listen, not to convince.

During the conversation

- ☐ I listen to how people use technology in their daily lives.
- ☐ I pay attention to who speaks and who does not.
- ☐ I identify invisible barriers (fear, pressure, stigma).
- ☐ I use examples and understandable language.
- ☐ I validate that saying "no" is a legitimate option.
- ☐ I observe nonverbal signs of discomfort or doubt.

After the conversation

- ☐ I record patterns, concerns, and lessons learned (not personal data).
- ☐ I differentiate between what people said and my interpretations.
- ☐ I share risks and necessary adjustments with the team.
- ☐ I check whether the technology or process needs to be adapted.
- ☐ I plan how to close the loop with feedback.

3. Clear and actionable tips for facilitators

These tips are organized into the three key and cross-cutting moments of the process: how to communicate, how to validate, and how to record Understand the people affected by the crisis within informed consent.

How to communicate
(speak from people's realities)

If people don't speak, the problem is not their interest, but the format.

Start by listening, not explaining

* Open the conversation by asking about everyday experiences, not abstract opinions.

* Avoid introducing technology too early; understand the context first.

Use situated language

* Speak in the language that people use among themselves, not institutional language.

* Avoid technical or "project" words; use local examples and familiar comparisons.

Adapt the format

* Use formats that are accessible to the group: oral conversation, drawings, physical examples, stories.

* Adjust the pace and duration; not all conversations require the same amount of time.

Take care of the space

* Choose places where people feel safe to talk.

* Combine group spaces and private conversations when necessary.

How to validate
(confirm understanding and willingness)

Understanding does not mean accepting. Both responses are valid.

Don't seek approval

* Avoid closed questions such as "Is that okay?" or "Do you think that's right?"

* Validation is not about getting a "yes," but confirming understanding.

Validate from experience

✳ Ask people to explain how they think technology could affect their lives.

✳ Listen for fears, resistance, or conditions.

Look beyond the words

✳ Silence, evasiveness, or changing the subject may indicate pressure or discomfort.

✳ Adjust the conversation if you notice signs of doubt or fear.

Confirm the real possibility of saying no

✳ Repeat clearly that not participating will not have negative consequences.

✳ Give time to think and return to the conversation.

How to record
(document carefully and responsibly)

Recording is an act of power: do it with respect and purpose.

Record learnings, not identities

✳ Do not take names or unnecessary personal information.

✳ Document patterns, common concerns, and recurring questions.

Differentiate voices

✳ Clearly separate what people said from what the team interprets.

✳ Use anonymous quotes only when they help to better understand a concern.

Include what is uncomfortable

✳ Record resistance, rejection, and doubts.

✳ What doesn't work is as important as what does.

Close the loop

✳ Explain how the information recorded will be used.

✳ When possible, come back with answers, changes, or updates.

4. Risks, benefits, and essentials

Risks to consider

* Exclusion of certain groups

* Consent under pressure

* Misunderstandings due to language or format

* Exposure of women or young people on shared devices

Benefits that must be explained carefully

* More genuine consent

* Greater trust

* Better adoption and safe use

* Design more tailored to the context

Ethical essentials

* Comprehensible language

* Time to decide

* Real possibility to say no

* Recognition of inequalities

* Respect for local knowledge