

BoP Design project guidelines

By experiencing a design project in a BoP market I found useful tips and guidelines for approaching such a project. The goal of Upstream is to become a BoP design consultancy agency, therefore this sheet can be used to get insights into how one can approach different design projects in different countries.

Preparation



Formulate a project brief together with your client, consisting of:

- Stakeholders; who are the stakeholders, what do they value and how do they operate now?
- Opportunities and limitations
- Problem definition
- Design assignment formulation
- Planning and required resources

Visiting the location of the design project is crucial to the project. Plan the trip **4-6 weeks** after starting the project, depending on the complexity. This gives you time to prepare for the trip. Depending on the level of technology needed, multiple visits have to be made. If it is low-tech, stay at the location for the total duration of the project. If higher level technology is required, plan to visit the location two times; once for research, and once for validation.



Prior to the visit, educate yourself on the subject and the context. Use desk and literature research to find information on:

- Facts about the topic
- Existing research about the local context
- The design space and design-specific possibilities in the local context
- Existing projects that are similar and lessons learned
- Stakeholders and how to contact/visit them
- Available technology in the local context

Make a research report and summarize the findings into a list of insights, divided by subject.

An important framework to use during BoP design project is the "triple bottom line" framework. This framework is used to take into consideration the connection between financial success, environmental health and social well-being. When making decisions in the design project, always analyze the impact on the three elements of each decision to find the right choices.

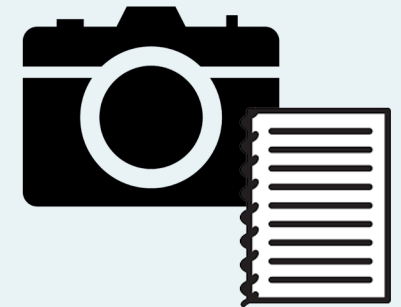


At the project location



Upon arrival take the first **3 days** off to get familiar with the environment and settle in first. Then: be curious. You have to realize you are potentially designing for someone from a different social-economic background, culture and with different beliefs. Have an open mindset and talk to as many and diverse people possible. Try to discuss your subject in a casual and subtle way to prevent the other person from feeling questioned or interviewed. This technique gives more honest answers. When you have a moment alone, make sure to write down the insights.

Documentation is going to be your best friend. When at the project location you can get a bit overwhelmed by all the impressions, which is okay. You will experience and learn new and interesting insights each day. Therefore, it is crucial to document every step of the process. Take photos of test results but also the environment, people working and playing, topic-specific details etc. Secondly, bring a notebook everywhere you go. Write down epiphanies, experiences, feelings, observations etc. Better too much than too little.



When you are on location it can get a little overwhelming or you can get too enthusiastic, causing you to lose focus. It is important to take moments of reflection to maintain a structural and organized approach of the project. Set goals for each week at the beginning of the visit. After a specific week; what do you want to have experienced, found an answer to, accomplished and learned. Then during the visit, reflect back on those goals at the end of each week. Are you still on track or do you need to readjust focus? Be flexible: you can not plan everything beforehand. Plan to create guidance, not to trap your creativity or blind you from other possibilities.

Listen to the local people, they are the ones that you are designing for so their opinions and ideas are very valuable. Use co-creation for everything; brainstorm sessions, practical experiments, and implementation planning. Find ways to communicate your ideas and knowledge without being pedantic. You are there to listen to them and find a solution that works good for the locals, which might be different from what you wanted or expected! Facilitate discussions and ask questions like: How would you solve this, how would you envision that, or how would you like something to be?

