

Choosing the Right AI Tool for Your NGO

A practical way to decide, without the hype

Start with the task, not the tool

The right tool depends on what you actually need it for. Drafting reports, analyzing survey data, and translating field notes have different requirements. Name the two or three tasks that matter most before you compare any products. A tool that is perfect for one and useless for another is common.

The questions that actually matter

For each candidate tool, ask:

- **Where does the data go?** Is it stored, logged, or used for training? This is the first question, not the last.
- **What does it really cost?** Per user, per month, at your team's size, including the features you actually need.
- **Does it work in your languages?** Many tools are strong in English and weak in the languages your programmes run in.
- **Does it need a stable connection?** If your teams work offline or on weak links, a cloud-only tool may not fit.

Free vs. paid vs. self-hosted

- **Free public tools** are fine for non-sensitive drafting and learning, but you usually give up control of your data.
- **Paid or enterprise tools** often add data-protection guarantees and admin controls worth paying for once real work depends on them.
- **Self-hosted or on-premise** keeps data fully in your control, at the cost of setup and maintenance. Worth it when the data is sensitive.

Data protection is a dealbreaker, not a feature

For humanitarian work, how a tool handles data is not one factor among many, it is a gate. A tool that is cheaper and faster but cannot protect the people in your data is not the cheaper option. It is the one you cannot use.

Run a small pilot before you commit

Pick one team and one real task. Run it for two weeks. Notice where it saves time, where it frustrates, and whether people actually keep using it once the novelty fades. A short pilot tells you more than any feature list.

Remember

The best tool is the one your team will use well and safely, not the one with the longest feature list. Decide from your tasks and your duty of care, pilot small, and stay ready to switch as the tools keep changing.

Need help choosing or piloting a tool? Connect with Impact Node.

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