

# Choosing a digital Case Management tool for Child Protection: Findings from the Terre des hommes study.

Terre des hommes launched this study during the summer 2016 to define a strategy in terms of **developing, introducing and supporting a digital Case Management tool\*** for Child Protection.

## Why this study?

I need to set up a digital tool for case management!

We need a pragmatic, systematic approach to case management through all Tdh!



## How?

### 1 Needs analysis

Assesment of Tdh's (as well as the humanitarian and development sectors') needs in terms of digital Case Management tools.



### 2 Benchmarking

Collaboratively establishing criteria of features needed in a tool with Tdh HQ and field staff, and assessing and comparing a number of the sector's tools based on these criteria.



### 3 Recommendations for the future

Designing different scenarios and general recommendations to attain the goal of a widely deployed functional digital Case Management tool in the organisation.



## \* Digital Case Management tool

A digital Case Management tool is a tool that supports the case management process, whether as an information management tool (mainly for reporting or analysing data) or as a day to day software to help social workers managing cases - for example by being able to have reminders of work that needs to be done at specific times (such as home visits).

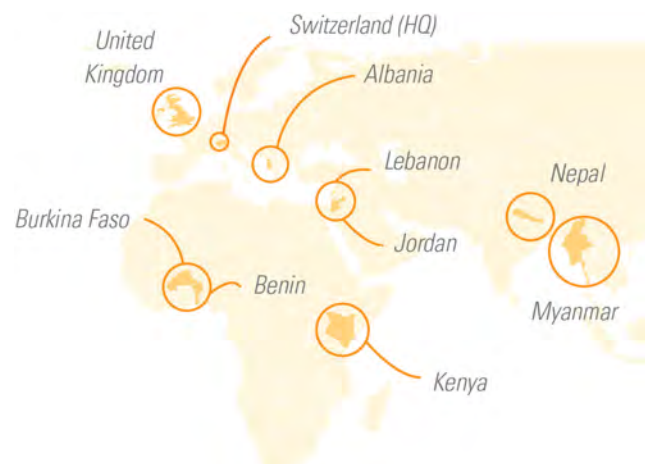
## Who was involved?

**14** NGO/UN agencies representatives

**9** Tdh user representatives from over the world

**Mixed project team**

Child Protection specialists + Information and Communication Technology specialists  
Tdh + Consultants



# AGILE Methodology.

The analysis of needs of potential field users was carried out with different delegations using or wishing to use digital Case Management tools. Their requirements were transformed into "user stories\*", which each Tdh representative then rated according to his/her priorities through a remote workshop. These "user stories\*" were then confronted to features of existing tool.

## Concept.

This helped highlight - what perhaps was intuitively known before, but in a more concrete way - the different **needs** and **perceptions** of priority in terms of function between different user groups and different settings.

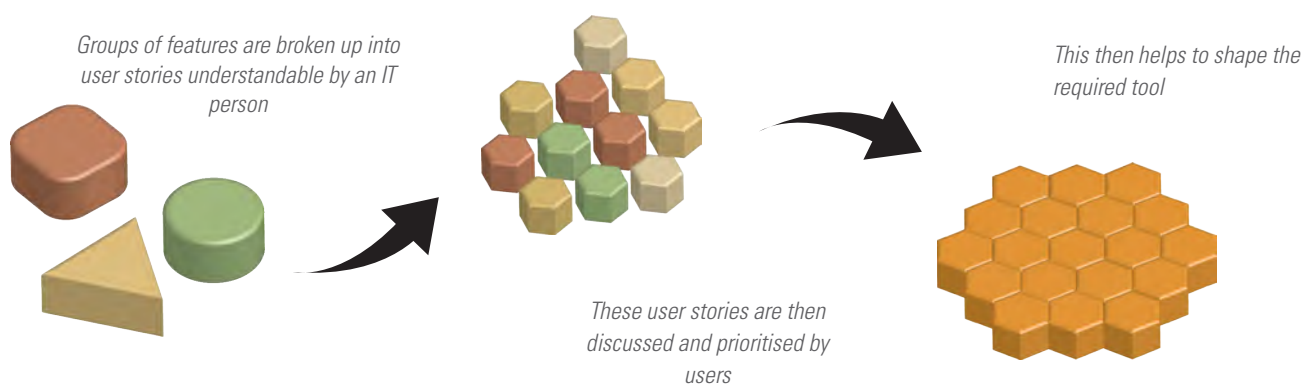
These **user stories\*** were also the basis for the benchmarking of tools.

## \* User stories

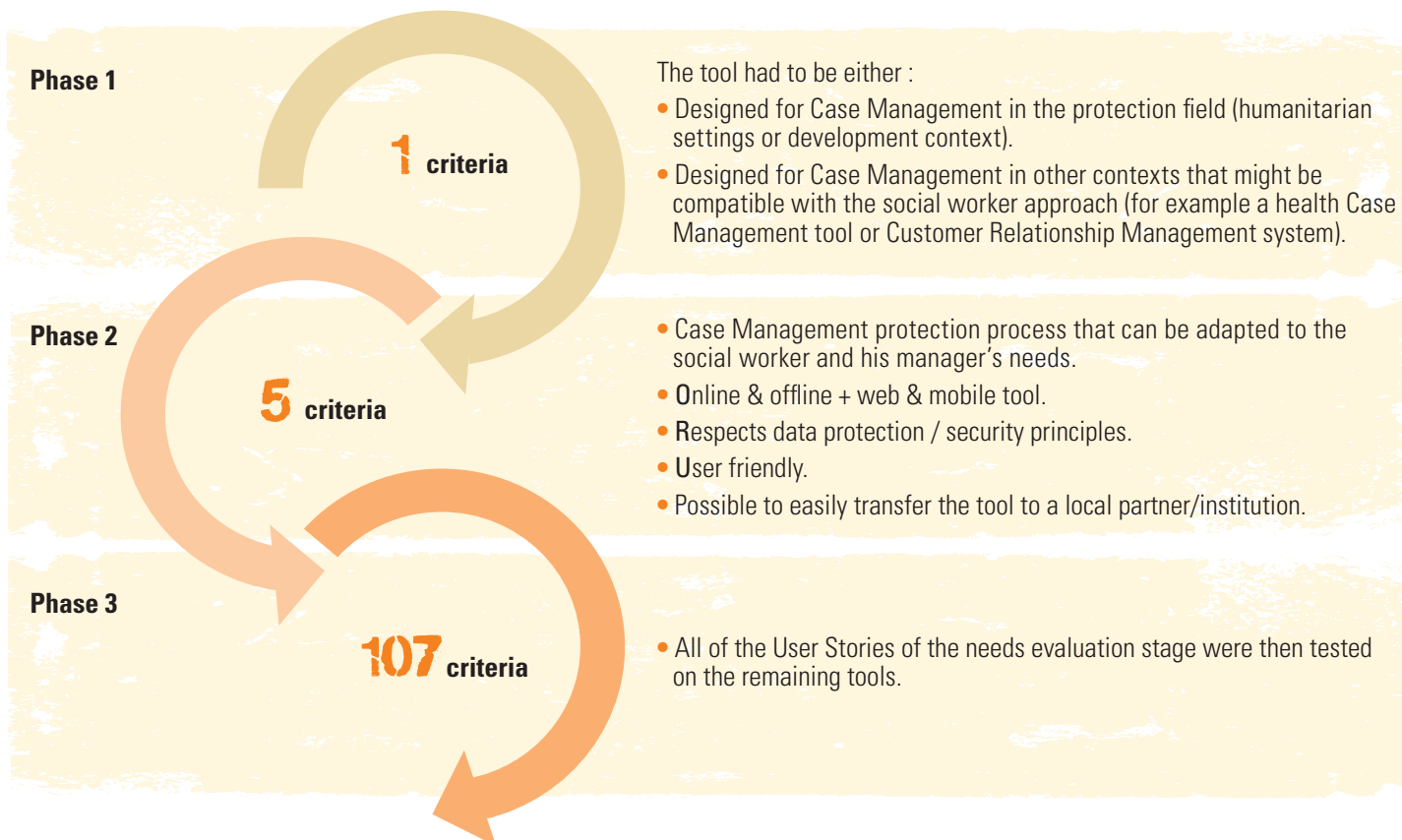
In this methodology, the user is expected to describe his / her need through user stories by using the following template :

"As a <type of user>, I want <some goal> so that <some reason>".

E.g, **As a social worker, I want to be able to flag a case for follow up so that I can follow up as a priority this specific case and check that action is being taken.**



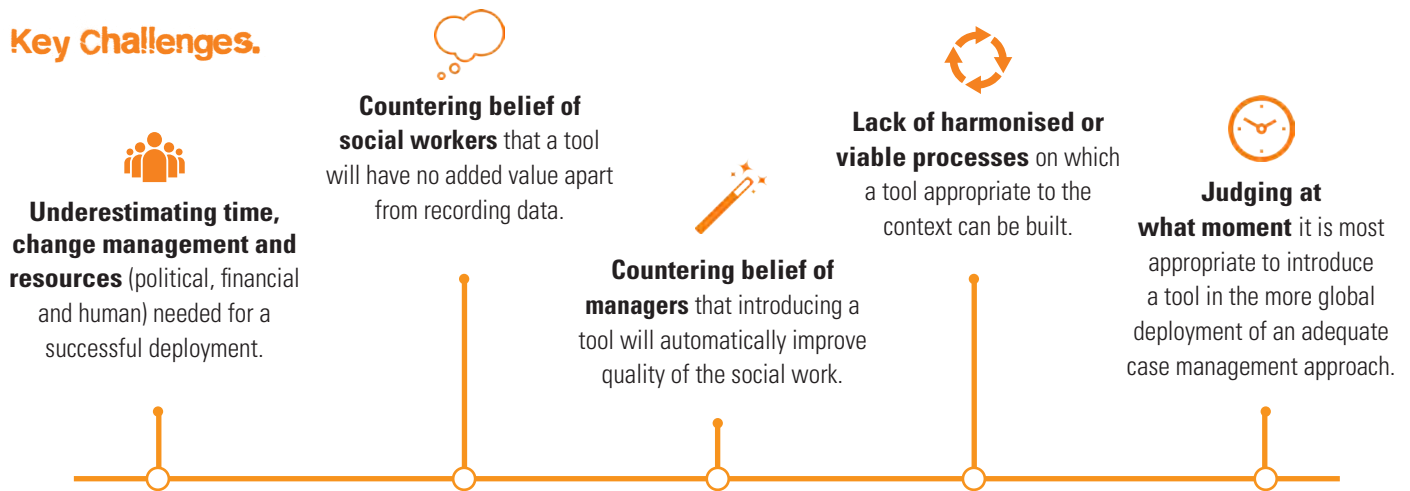
## Criteria for the choice of tools to benchmark.



# Evaluation of user needs.

Most sector NGOs and Tdh were in agreement on the following key **challenges and tensions** around the subject of digital Case Management tools.

## Key Challenges.



“ Often the partners invest considerable time and energy in a tool when it would be more efficient to spend time on their practices. ”

## Tensions.



### \* Mobile VS desktop capture.

Naturally there is a huge desire to make working practices more efficient and for social workers to be able to quickly update case records and archive information on their smartphones wherever they are.

It is especially useful to have a mobile app when workers are far from/rarely in the office, particularly when a lot of referrals and services are being provided.

In complex situations taking time to reflect (which a mobile capture does not encourage) can help workers think through difficult situations to facilitate their processing.

By helping social workers to be more independent and mobile, might one danger be an increasing isolation of workers that ultimately results in a poorer quality response for children?

Would other structures need to be put in place, such as peer support and more effective supervision to ensure practice continues to develop?

Needs in emergency / humanitarian context.	Needs in development settings.
Need to be 'up and running quickly' - with little time for planning.	Longer time for planning and to reach consensus about the needs of the tool.
Greater number of diverse stakeholders involved.	More important number of institutional partners involved.
Greater concerns about security / safe storage of data in an unsecure environment.	Data coordination with other systems needed (such as social protection, health and education).
Larger numbers of beneficiaries / higher volume of cases managed with focus on specific steps- ie identification of specific needs, referral to identified services, tracing and reunification.	Less cases managed / volume lower, but more comprehensive support provided, with more time to develop capacities of workforce.
Greater requirements for real time data (for advocacy, fundraising...).	Information needed for long term planning / budgeting.

# Findings & Recommendations.

## Findings.

- There is **no magic tool** answering **ALL** the field needs.
- Developing **your own tool from scratch is not a rational decision** for an NGO like Tdh.
- Even in more “developed” contexts the **best way to capture data and the use of online tools is still evolving.**
- **User friendliness** for social workers (who are used to using paper files) **is crucial.**
- **The child protection area is very specific in terms of data capture.** This makes design and deployment more complex and requires leaving space for debate and ethical discussions.

“ *What was surprising is that when it [the Database] works well, it really makes a difference.* ”

## Recommendations.

- Remember that **choosing a “digital tool” is only a small part** of a larger project aiming at improving Case Management practices (including capacity building, developing legal and policy frameworks etc.).
- Do not sacrifice the practice** of case management **for the sake of introducing and using a tool.**
- Address **data protection and ethical issues** before introducing a tool.
- Agree on the **main objectives** of the digital Case Management tool.
- Make sure **social workers keep ownership** over the tool (rather than their manager or the ICT specialist).
- Ensure **business concepts and processes are harmonised.**
- Think about **tool sustainability** from the outset.
- There needs to be **a strong buy-in from the organization as a whole** to ensure that adequate resources (in particular political and human) are made available.

## Conclusion.

Based on this study, Tdh decided to select a tool which was already available. The chosen tool, which is the **closest to the generic Tdh requirements**, is an inter-agency tool **Primero / CPIMS+** . However, as this tool does not fit every field need, Tdh will continue to support some country based initiatives at national level (in development settings).

The roll out of any digital Case Management tool will always be based on a **step by step methodology** for each context - the first step being the evaluation the **readiness\*** for a given context to introduce Case Management.

### \* Readiness.

*Tdh has developed a simple tool to help delegations evaluate the readiness and appropriateness in investing the necessary resources for the introduction of a digital Case Management tool.*

#### Domains of readiness.

NATURE OF INTERVENTION

OPERATING CONTEXT

WORKERS' CAPACITIES  
& ATTITUDES

ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT  
/ RESOURCES

#### Examples of dimensions assessed (16 in all).

Actual need for case management tool to support case management : relevance and volume of CM activities

Do no harm : Operating in fragile contexts  
Confidentiality and safety

ICT competency / Literacy of staff

Availability of thematic supervision