

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

GUIDE FOR PROJECT MANAGERS



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GUIDE FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

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I. Introduction

This guide is not designed to be read cover-to-cover. It is intended to be used as a reference book by the UNECE project managers by providing them with hands-on advice on all aspects of project cycle management. In short, the purpose of this publication is to assist the UNECE staff in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of technical cooperation projects, particularly:

- Capacity-building workshops, seminars, study tours and training courses aimed at assisting beneficiary countries to accede to/ implement UNECE legal instruments, regulations, norms and standards;
- Field projects, including those with multisectoral and/or subregional focus, in the areas where the UNECE has a mandate and a comparative advantage over other organizations.

II. Project cycle

There exist a great number of definitions of a project. In this guide, the project is defined as a set of interrelated activities which has a clearly defined beginning and ending as well as a budget to achieve an intended outcome and a goal.

Various UN system and international organizations apply various project cycles. For the purposes of this guide, the project cycle includes three major stages: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The project cycle management is a methodology for managing the entire cycle of project from planning through implementation to monitoring evaluation.

The project cycle management helps to ensure that:

- Projects are supportive of the overarching policy/programme objectives of the implementing and partner organisations;
- Projects are relevant to an agreed strategy and real problems of target groups/beneficiaries;
- Projects are feasible and desirable objectives can be achieved within the given time framework and resources;
- Benefits generated by projects are likely to be sustainable;
- Lessons learned are systematically used for continuous improvement.

The most essential principles of project cycle management introduced in the handbook are as follows:

- Use of the *Logical Framework approach* to analyse the problems, and work out suitable solutions;
- Produce *good-quality key document(s)*, to ensure structured and well-informed decision-making by donors and partners;
- Consult and involve *key stakeholders* as much as possible at all stages;
- Clearly formulate and focus on project outcomes in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, to ensure *sustainable benefits for the target group(s)*;
- Incorporate *key quality issues* into the design of the project from its early stage.

A. Planning phase

There are four main benefits that make planning worthwhile:

- *Planning enables us to know what should be done and when.* Without proper planning, projects or programmes may be implemented at the wrong time or in the wrong manner and/or result in poor achievements.
- *Planning helps mitigate and manage crises and ensure smooth implementation of the project.* There will always be unexpected situations in programmes and projects. However, a proper planning exercise helps to reduce the likelihood of these and prepares the team for dealing with them effectively when they occur. The planning process should also involve assessing risks and assumptions and thinking through possible consequences of the activities being planned. The results of these exercises can be very helpful in anticipating and dealing with problems.
- *Planning improves focus on priorities and leads to more efficient use of time, money and other resources.* Having a clear plan or a roadmap helps to focus limited resources on priority activities, that is, the ones most likely to bring about the desired change. Without a plan, people often get distracted by many competing demands. Similarly, will often go off track and become ineffective and inefficient.
- *Planning helps determine what success will look like.* A proper plan helps individuals and units to know whether the achievements are those that were intended and to assess any discrepancies. Of course, this requires effective monitoring and evaluation of what was planned. For this reason, good planning includes a clear strategy for monitoring and evaluation and use of the information from these processes

1. How to prepare a concept paper?

Project design and planning. Project idea

When designing the project, you must make sure that it:

- is demand driven: undertaken upon requests from governments, either individually or in groupings;
- covers a wide range of beneficiaries (experts, government officials), preferably from several countries, to multiply the effect and expand impact on the sub-regional/regional level;
- is linked to the UNECE's normative work and aims to improve national capacity of member states to implement the UNECE legal instruments, norms, standards and regulations;
- promotes regional cooperation and integration, as well as beneficial integration of countries of the region in the world economy;
- promotes coherence and synergies in the work of the UNECE and its cooperation with regional and international organizations operating in the region/subregion;
- focuses on transboundary issues and proposes common solutions;
- benefits countries with economies in transition, particularly low income and landlocked developing countries with special needs and specific constraints in their development;
- has a positive impact on their national capacity building and contributes to their efforts to achieve international development goals, sustained growth and sustainable development;
- is the area where UNECE has a clear comparative advantage over other international organizations and in-house technical expertise in this specific area.

Please also keep in mind that all technical cooperation projects must support the implementation of the relevant subprogrammes. They must be linked to the Strategic Framework, as well as to the international development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Major steps for preparing the concept paper

The concept paper/project brief is a summarized desk study that focuses on the development of the logical framework. The concept paper is the basis for the decision whether or not the idea will be further elaborated into a full project document. In particular, it should provide:

- 1) information and analysis on the problems and users;
- 2) links between the logical framework and the proposed time frame and budget;
- 3) inputs identified in consultations with the beneficiaries.

Step 1: Prepare the logical framework

The logical framework is the single most important part the concept paper. It contains a summary of the following information:

Why the project is carried out?

What the project is expected to achieve?

How the project is going to achieve it?

Which external factors are crucial for its success?

Where to find information for assessing the success of the projects (means and sources of verification)?

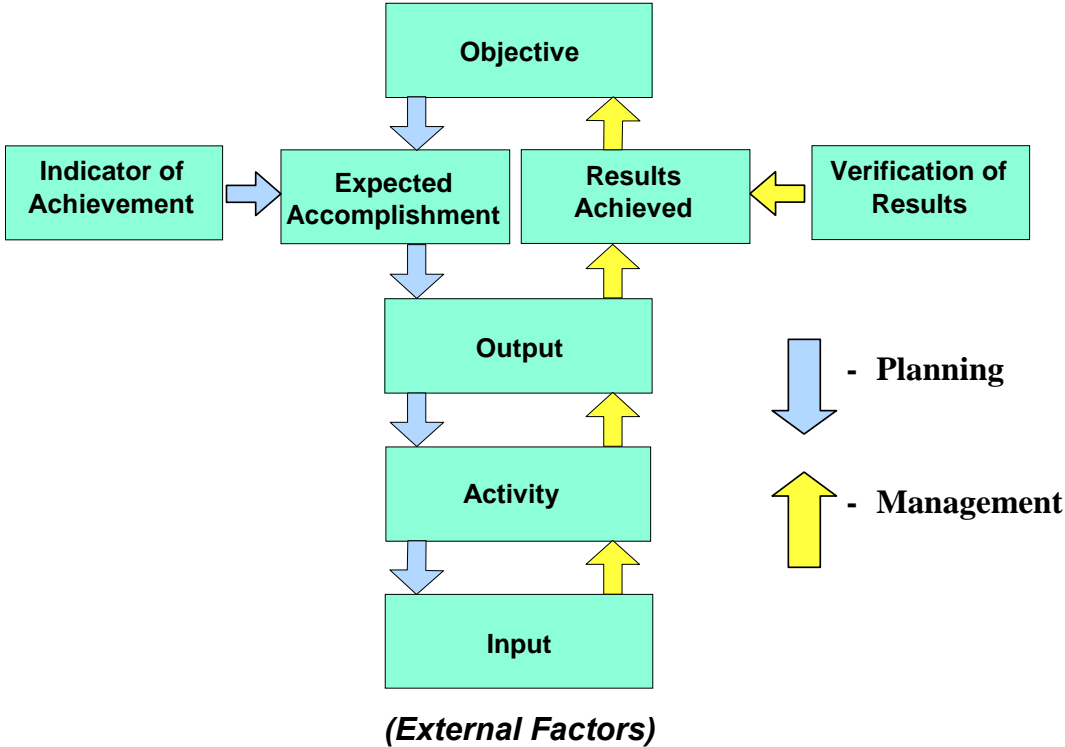
What means are required?

What the project will cost?

A logical framework is a tool for conceptualizing programmes.

- It describes the strategy which can lead to intended results.
- It specifies the components that go into achieving the proposed results for a project.
- It identifies the indicators that would measure the actual performance of a project.
- It communicates complex projects clearly and understandably on a single page and /or a table.

The following figure illustrates the causal relationship between the elements of the logical framework that should be reflected in any project proposal:



The Logical Framework or Logframe provides, in the form of a one-page summary, an overview of the strategy: the objectives (broad and immediate), the project results (outcomes and outputs), activities, inputs, as well as risks and assumptions. Through it is prepared at the planning stage of the project; it is also a useful management tool for implementation, as well as for monitoring and evaluation. The Logframe is a living document. It could be reviewed and revised at different stages, to take into account changes that occurred in the environment and draw on the lessons learned during the implementation.

The typical structure of a logical framework matrix is shown here:

Hierarchy of objectives and activities	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Overall objectives – achievements of, or benefits for the final beneficiaries	How the project goals are measured, including quantity, quality and time	How will the information be collected? → Monitoring and evaluation system	
Outcome – the benefit for the target group. Target group makes good use of services or products provided for or established by the project. Outcome contributes to the achievement of the project goals.	How the outcome is measured, including quantity, quality and time.	How will the information be collected → Monitoring and evaluation system	If the outcome is achieved, what assumptions must hold true to achieve the overall objectives?
Outputs – products and/or services produced by the project (human, technical) and delivered to the target group.	How the outputs are measured, including quantity, quality and time.	How will the information be collected → Monitoring and evaluation system	If outputs are achieved, what assumptions must hold true to achieve the overall objectives?
Activities – specific measures to be carried out under the project which are necessary in order to achieve the outputs. Activities aim at producing a specific output and require specific inputs.	Inputs: inputs are related to activities and specify the necessary resources to carry out a specific project activity (physical, financial, human, etc.). Inputs are detailed in the Logframe, as are means and costs:		If activities are achieved, what assumptions must hold true to achieve the outputs?
	Means	Costs	
			Pre-conditions

It represents a 16-box matrix, with four columns and four rows, which summarises the following:

- The project's hierarchy of the objectives
- How the project achievements will be monitored and evaluated
- The key external factors critical to the project's success

The 1st column describes the means-ends relationship between means (activities, outputs) and desirable and achievable objective/s.

The 2nd column lists the measurable indicators to be used as “benchmarks” for project monitoring and evaluation.

The 3rd column includes information about the means of verification of indicators. The following questions must be asked at this stage:

- Are the means of verifications available from regular sources?
- How reliable are the sources?
- Is special data gathering required, at what costs?

If a means of verification cannot be established, the indicator must be changed.

The 4th column includes project assumptions, various external factors which are critical for the success of the project. The assessment against assumption enables the project managers to foresee and avoid negative impact on the project. Based on the assumptions, the project could be either considered or dropped.

It is strongly recommended to develop first the logical framework and only then prepare the narrative parts of the document.

Step 2: Define the scope of the project

Decide what will be covered by the project and – even more important – what will NOT be covered (in scope/out of scope) and directly addressed by the project.

This decision must be based upon a clear set of comparative advantages, which the UNECE has over other organizations, in particular:

- Ability to establish a direct link between international legal instruments, norms, standards and regulations and their implementation through technical cooperation;
- Ability to establish, maintain and develop regional and subregional networks of policymakers and experts, essential for ensuring the long-term impact and sustainability of technical cooperation activities;
- Ability to provide a platform for policy dialogue among countries of the region, being a depository of international instruments, with convening powers.

Step 3: Identify major stakeholders of the project

Any given project is likely to have a number of important stakeholders. Therefore, effective project planning must be undertaken with the participation of these stakeholders, in the form of consultation, information sharing, or participation in planning meetings. The project manager or the planning team should use their judgement to determine what form is most appropriate, bearing in mind that the main objective is to identify those stakeholders who may have a strong interest in or ability to influence the project.

Classify the major stakeholders into:

- *Ultimate beneficiaries* of the project – those who benefit from the project in the long term (e.g. policymakers, private sector, civil society, including academia, media, etc.);
- *Immediate beneficiaries* of the project or a target group – those who benefit from the project directly and short-term (e.g. a national statistics office, which will have an improved capacity);
- *Project partners* – who will, together with the UNECE, produce the necessary deliverables or outputs of the project (e.g. UN system, international and regional organizations, research institutes, etc.).

Step 4: Define the strategy of the project

The rough stakeholder analysis which you have carried out will help you to be more precise and clear in defining the “intervention logic” of the project, which is reflected in the first column of the logframe and includes:

The *objective*, which will not be achieved by the project alone but will require the contributions of other actors as well. Its timeframe is longer than the project duration. Thus, the objective reflects the benefit for the ultimate beneficiaries. It also establishes the relationship of the project to the Strategic Framework as well as to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The *expected accomplishments* of the project reflect the benefit for the target groups or immediate beneficiaries or the target group. They describe the desirable behavioural or institutional changes of the target group that can be reasonably attributed to or associated with the project. They indicate in what way the capacity benefits will be used, for example through application of knowledge, practices and/or utilization of technology. Expected accomplishments are achievable within the project timeframe and budget, and specific enough to be measured by the relevant indicators of achievement.

The *indicators of achievement* are measures used to determine to what extent the expected accomplishments can be achieved. Indicators refer to the information necessary to determine progress towards achieving project objectives. An indicator needs to provide with clearly defined units of measurement and targets in terms of quantity, quality and timing of expected results. Expected accomplishments may have more than one indicator.

There are no absolute criteria about what makes a good indicator of achievement; however the SMART characteristics listed below are useful:

- *Specific* – indicators need to be specific and relate to the conditions the project seeks to change;
- *Measurable* – quantifiable (quality and quantity) indicators are preferred, to the extent that they are appropriate and available, because they are precise and can be aggregated;
- *Achievable and attainable* – the indicator must be attainable within the timeframe of the project and at reasonable cost;
- *Realistic and relevant* – indicators should be relevant to the management information needs of stakeholders who will use the data;
- *Time bound* – indicators that provide information about the timeframe, within which accomplishments need to be achieved.

The *main activities* are the actions and means that will be undertaken to achieve the expected accomplishments. Examples of main activities include workshops, expert meetings, publications, training events, advisory services or seminars.

Step 5: Prepare the budget

On the basis of a detailed list of activities you can calculate the time for the implementation of all planned activities, determine the duration of the project and identify the costs (human resources and financial resources) associated with its implementation.

Step 6: Prepare the narrative

Once the logical framework is developed, it should be much easier to write the narrative part of the concept paper because the logframe not only describes the main elements of the project but also shows their sequence and interdependency. The various templates for concept papers refer to the particular “boxes” of the logframe. Thus, the template of a Development Account concept paper includes the following elements.

- Title
- Background
- Objective
- Expected accomplishments
- Indicators of achievements
- Main activities
- Budget
- Relationship to the Strategic Framework, the internationally agreed development goals, the Millennium Development Goals and major UN conferences and summits

2. How to prepare a project document?

Once the concept paper is approved for funding you will be asked to prepare a detailed project proposal. A project document has multiple functions: it is a tool for **planning and programming**; it demonstrates alignment with the overall objective of the organization and development cooperation policies of donors and constitutes the basis for project implementation and fund allocation. If the proposal is approved and selected, it will also serve as a management tool for the implementing entities, the Programme Manager and the Budget Division and as well as a tool for monitoring and evaluation. Last but not least, it is also a communication tool with stakeholders who either directly take part in activities or have an interest in them.

How to develop the logical framework for the project proposal?

The logical framework of the project document closely approximates the logical framework of the concept paper.

Step 1: Stakeholder analysis

The stakeholder analysis is about defining the stakeholders, i.e. development partners whose capacities need to be developed (individuals, organizations, society). The analysis needs to cover existing capacities of development partners (capacity assets) and address their capacity needs and priorities (capacity gaps), which will be addressed the capacity development project.

Follow these six steps to undertake a stakeholder analysis:

- List all stakeholders who will be involved in the project, with a particular emphasis on those whose capacities will be strengthened in the process;
- Categorize the groups in accordance to specific characteristics, functions, relationships to each other, and their role in national or regional development;
- Characterize and analyze their capacity assets and needs;
- Indicate what capacities will be affected as a result of the project and describe the future desired situation (as much as possible following principles of results-based budgeting / results-based management);
- Indicate whether the beneficial outcomes of the project, such as improved assets, skills, services, are expected to persist for an extended period beyond project implementation (i.e. sustainability);
- Indicate what incentives the stakeholders have to participate in the project (e.g. access to new sources of funding, compliance with external requirements; meeting IADGs, including MDGs);
- Identify conclusions for the project design or planning process.

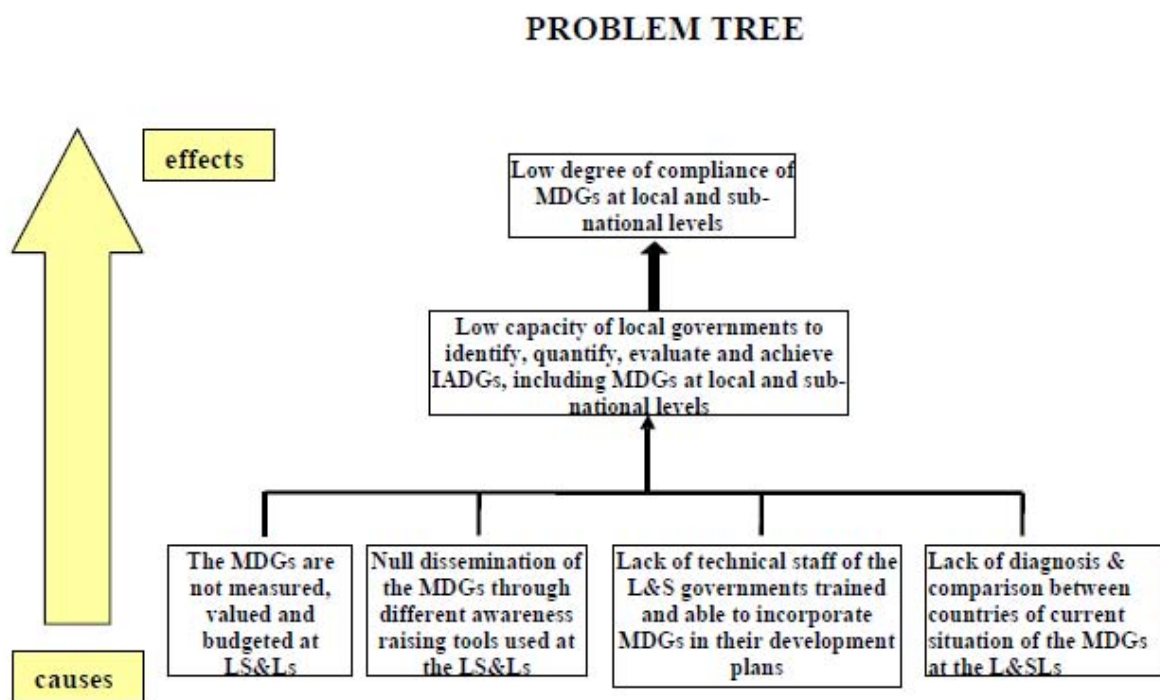
Step 2: Problem analysis

The problem analysis shows cause-effect relationships between problem conditions.

For the problem analysis the following procedure is suggested:

- Define precisely the initial situation (sector, subsector, area, etc.) to be analysed;
- Define major problem conditions related to the selected conditions;
- Present the problem conditions in a cause-effect relationship; and
- Add further relevant problems if necessary, and describe causes and effects.

It is suggested to create a simple diagram containing the most relevant information to the project. An example of a problem tree can be found below:



Step 3: Objectives' analysis

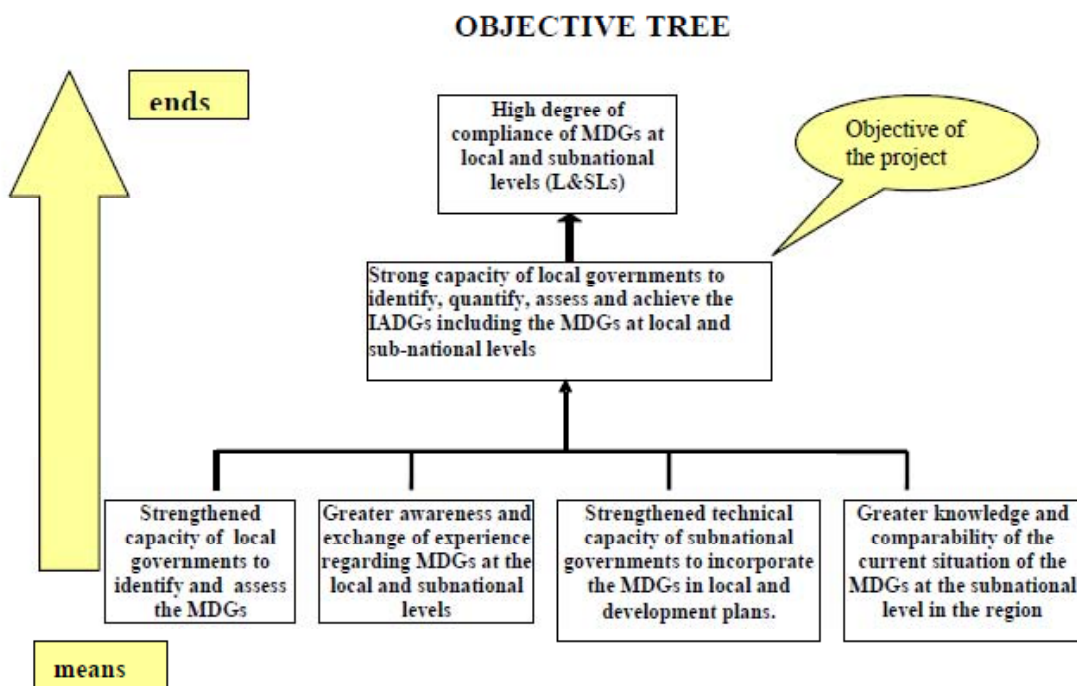
The analysis of objectives illustrates expected accomplishments, which can be derived from the problem conditions. The analysis is carried out by transforming the problems into expected accomplishments describing future conditions that are desirable and realistically achievable.

The following six steps are suggested for the analysis of objectives:

- Reformulate the problems as objectives;
- Check the logic and plausibility of the means-end relationship;
- Adjust the structure wherever necessary, revise statements;
- Delete objectives which are not desirable;
- Check whether rewording will lead to meaningless or ethically questionable statements;
- Add new objectives if relevant & necessary.

The objective tree illustrates potential objectives, which can be derived from the problem conditions discussed above. The tree is created by transforming the problems into objectives describing future conditions that are desirable and realistically achievable.

An example of an objective tree can be found below:



Step 4: Identifying the project strategy

The *objective* should be close to the one of the one already presented in the concept paper. You have, however, the flexibility to reformulate *expected accomplishments* and indicators of achievement in a manner which – after a deeper and more substantial analysis – best represent and best measure the desirable change at the end of the project.

Keep in mind that: The *objective* will not be achieved by the project alone.

The *expected accomplishments* describe the desirable future conditions of the individual stakeholders or institutional changes of partner organizations or the society as a whole that can be reasonably attributed to or associated with the project. They indicate in what way the capacity benefits will be used, for example through application of knowledge, adoption of practices, and/or utilization of technology. Expected accomplishments should be achievable within the project timeframe and budget, and specific enough to be measured by the associated indicators of achievement. A clear distinction should be made between the expected accomplishments (results) and the activities undertaken for achieving each of them. UNDP and some other organizations use the term *outcomes* instead of expected accomplishments.

The *indicators of achievement* at this stage need to provide clearly defined units of measurement and targets detailing the quantity, quality and timing of expected results (SMART). Expected accomplishments may have more than one indicator.

For each indicator you need to provide the source for verification, since this might have implications for additional data collection: if the indicator cannot be verified through existing data (national statistics, monitoring reports, etc.) additional activities (e.g. a survey, questionnaire, etc.) have to be integrated into the proposal for assuring that the data for monitoring the indicators are available.

The process of formulating indicators could begin with the following questions:

How can we measure that the expected accomplishments are being achieved?

What type of information can demonstrate a positive change?

What can be feasibly monitored with given resource and capacity constraints?

Will timely information be available for the different monitoring exercises?

What will the system of data collection be and who will be responsible?

Can national systems be used or augmented?

Can government indicators be used?

Indicators help as well for becoming more precise in terms of the overall scope of the project, and they help to define the necessary activities.

The *main activities* should be developed now in more detail.

These four elements (objective, expected accomplishments, main activities and indicators) together need to be clearly linked and build on each other. In order to ascertain the validity of the logical framework, a *top down and bottom up review* should be conducted.

Top down questions

1. How can the objective be met? ...by achieving the expected accomplishments.
2. How can the expected accomplishments be achieved? ...by delivering the outputs.

Bottom up questions

1. If the project delivers the outputs, will they contribute to achieving the expected accomplishments?
2. If the project achieves the expected accomplishments, will this help meeting the objective?

Step 5: Check against assumptions. Prepare for risk mitigation

Assumptions and hypothesis should detail the external factors beyond the control of project management that can positively and negatively impact the results of the project. Positive factors are closely related to incentives that are conducive to the achievement of accomplishments (e.g. access to new sources of funding, compliance with external requirements; meeting IADGs, including MDGs etc.). This section should as well clearly indicate how risks are mitigated.

Example for assumptions:

- (1) *Willingness of countries to take part in the survey.*
- (2) *The right people are nominated to participate in workshops and training courses.*
- (3) *Willingness of countries to follow up on recommendations.*

After having identified and listed the most influential assumptions, they can be further analysed regarding their probability of holding true. Those assumptions with a high impact (influence on achievements) and a high probability of NOT holding true, become *risks* – for the delivery of outputs, for achievement of expected accomplishments and for significantly contributing to achieving the objective. For the most critical risks, a risk mitigation strategy should be prepared in advance and presented with the project proposal, e.g. “*The right people are nominated to participate in workshops and training courses.*” If this cannot be assured and/or the probability that inadequate participants will be sent to the training is high, additional activities should be planned to mitigate the risk, that the training will not produce the capacity as planned and promised. A more detailed selection procedure, a list of replacement candidates, etc. should be proposed, which might require for integration of additional activities and funds.

For the risk assessment you can use the risk assessment matrix as a tool for classifying risks:

Impact Probability	High	Medium	Low	Almost insignificant
High				
Moderate				
Low				
Almost zero				

For those risks with a high impact and a high probability of occurring a risk mitigation strategy should be prepared:

Framework risk rating

Select: *Low/Medium/High*

Risk analysis

Analyze and describe the key risks

Proposed risk management strategy : *Briefly outline your planned risk management strategy – what needs to be built into your project from this analysis*

Step 6: List and further detail activities

After having developed the project framework, activities have to be detailed down to operational level. This is necessary, in order to develop the project budget and the implementation schedule:

- Work on activities/inputs – what do you need to do for producing the outputs?
- Which means (working days, travel, etc.) are needed for carrying out the activities?
- Estimate the costs and the duration for the different activities.
- Work on an output oriented activity schedule.
- Finally add 2 percent for evaluation.

A “readable” and easily understandable logframe matrix should not be longer than two A4 pages (ideally it is a one page table). The detailed list of activities related to each output would make the logframe too long. This is why it is recommended to work on an additional **activity table**.

Step 7: Write the narrative document

After having carefully gone through the analytical steps and having put together the elements of the projects as mentioned above, you can now write the full project document:

B. Implementation phase

After approval of the project proposal and the provision of the budget for its implementation, the signing of the necessary agreements (MoUs with partners, contracts, etc.) the project goes into the implementation phase:

At the kick-off of the project it is often necessary to re-assure commitment of all relevant stakeholders and to agree on the agenda for implementation. The detailed work plan should be communicated to and agreed upon by all relevant stakeholders. The activity (gantt) chart prepared and presented in the proposal should be reassessed, its feasibility – especially related to duration of activities, dependency of activities from each other, and related to responsibilities and involvement should be further detailed (if necessary) – and confirmed by the relevant stakeholders.

In order to follow-up and monitor deadlines, it is useful to define the “*milestones*” which are key events in the implementation of activities. They provide a measure of progress and a target for the project team to aim at. The simplest possible milestones are deadlines. Whenever individual activities deviate from the schedule, the consequences on other activities and resources must be considered. Causes of these deviations need to be analysed and timing may have to be adjusted.

Checklist for preparing an activity schedule

From the logframe you can copy activities into an activity-scheduling format. The format can be adapted to fit with the expected duration of the project. The first activities may be specified in more detail (showing the start and finish of activities to within a week of their expected timing) while subsequent activities scheduling could remain more indicative (to within a month) – especially for longer projects. These preliminary estimates can subsequently be revised by project management in the light of actual implementation performance. They nevertheless provide an important initial benchmark. A step-by-step approach can be followed:

Step 1: List main activities

The main activities in the logframe are a summary of what the project must do in order to achieve project objectives. These can now be used as the basis for preparation of the activity schedule that will specify activities in operational detail.

Step 2: Break activities down into manageable tasks

The purpose of breaking activities down into subactivities or tasks, is to make them sufficiently simple to be organized and managed easily. The technique is to break an activity down into its component subactivities, and then to take each subactivity and break it down into its component tasks. Each task can then be assigned to an individual, and becomes their short-term goal.

The main skill is in getting the level of detail right. The most common mistake is to break the activities down into too much detail. The breakdown should stop as soon as the planner has sufficient detail to estimate the time and resources required, and the person responsible for actually doing the work has sufficient instructions on what has to be done. This is where individual planning of tasks of project team members starts.

Step 3: Clarify sequence and dependencies

Once the activities have been broken down into sufficient detail, they must be related to each other to determine their:

- *sequence* – in what order should related activities be undertaken?
- *dependencies* – is the activity dependent on the start-up or completion of any other Activity?

This can best be described with an example. Building a house consists of a number of separate, but inter-related activities: digging and laying the foundations; building the walls; installing the doors and windows; plastering the walls; constructing the roof; installing the plumbing. The sequence dictates that digging the foundations comes before building the walls; while dependencies include the fact that you cannot start installing doors and windows until the walls have reached a certain height; or you cannot finish plastering until the plumbing has been fully installed. Dependencies may also occur between otherwise unrelated activities that will be undertaken by the same person.

Step 4: Estimate start-up, duration and completion of activities

Specifying the timing means making a realistic estimate of the duration of each task, and then building it into the activity schedule to establish likely start-up and completion dates. Often though it is not possible to estimate timing with complete confidence. To ensure that the estimates are at least realistic, those who have the necessary technical knowledge or experience should be consulted.

Inaccuracy is a common mistake, usually resulting in an *underestimate* of the time required, and can arise for a number of reasons:

- omission of essential Activities and tasks;
- failure to allow sufficiently for interdependence of activities;
- failure to allow for resource competition (i.e. scheduling the same person or piece of equipment to do two or more things at once);
- a desire to impress with the promise of rapid results.

Step 5: Summarize scheduling of main activities

Having specified the timing of the individual tasks that make up the main Activities, it is useful to provide an overall summary of the start-up, duration and completion of the main Activity itself.

Step 6: Define milestones

Milestones provide the basis by which project implementation is monitored and managed. They are key events that provide a measure of progress and a target for the project team to aim at. The simplest milestones are the dates estimated for completion of each activity – e.g. *training needs assessment completed by January 201x*.

Step 7: Define expertise

When the tasks are known, it is possible to specify the type of expertise required. Most of the time the available expertise is known in advance. Nonetheless, this provides a good opportunity to check whether the action plan is feasible given the human resources available.

Step 8: Allocate tasks among team

This involves more than just saying who does what. With task allocation comes responsibility for achievement of milestones. In other words, it is a means to define each team member's accountability - to the project manager and to other team members.

Task allocation must therefore take into account the capability, skills and experience of each member of the team. When delegating tasks to team members, it is important to ensure that they understand what is required of them. If not, the level of detail with which the relevant tasks are specified may have to be increased.

Step 9: Estimate time required for team members

Based upon experience, this step requires a realistic estimate of the time that will be required for each of the allocated tasks, and a check whether there are at least manageable overlaps between individual tasks of the team members. Having done this exercise for all project Activities, a review should be made to check again timing and sequencing of tasks and thus workload for each individual team member.

C. Monitoring and evaluation phase

Monitoring, as well as evaluation, provides with opportunities at regular predetermined points to validate the logic of a programme or project, its activities and their implementation and to make adjustments as needed. Good planning and designs alone do not ensure results. Progress towards achieving results needs to be monitored. Equally, no amount of good monitoring alone will correct poor programme designs, plans and results. Information from monitoring needs to be used to encourage improvements or reinforce plans. Information from systematic monitoring also provides critical input to evaluation. It is very difficult to evaluate a programme that is not well designed and that does not systematically monitor its progress.

The key questions that *monitoring* seeks to answer include the following:

- Are the planned outputs being produced as planned and efficiently?
- What are the issues, risks and challenges that we face or foresee that need to be taken into account to ensure the achievement of results?
- What decisions need to be made concerning changes to the already planned work in subsequent stages?
- Will the planned and delivered outputs continue to be relevant for the achievement of the envisioned outcomes?
- Are the outcomes we envisaged remaining relevant and effective for achieving the overall objectives, goals and impacts
- What are we learning?

Like monitoring, **evaluation** is an integral part of programme management and a critical management tool. Evaluation complements monitoring by providing an independent and in-depth assessment of what worked and what did not work, and why this was the case. After implementing and monitoring an initiative for some time, it is an important management discipline to take stock of the situation through an external evaluation.

The benefits of using evaluations are multiple. A quality evaluation provides feedback that can be used to improve future programming, policies and strategies. Evaluation also identifies unintended results and consequences of technical cooperation initiatives, which may not be obvious in regular monitoring as the latter focuses on the implementation of the work plan. Information generated from evaluations contributes to organizational learning as well as the global knowledge base on development effectiveness. The three basis functions of evaluation can be formulated as follows:

- **Accountability:** hold the public institutions responsible for performance
- **Allocation:** make sure that adequate resources are allocated to activities
- **Learning:** make sure that we learn from successes and failure and improve our performance

Evaluation can take place at any stage of the project (ex-ante, intermediate, midterm or final) or after the implementation of the project (ex-post). It can be carried out by the implementing entity (internal or self-evaluation), by entities outside the project (independent or external) or in collaboration between stakeholders and beneficiaries (participatory).

Various donors have different requirements to evaluation. However, the following five criteria introduced by the DAC Working Group on Aid Evaluation have become widely acceptable by international organisations:

Relevance measures the extent to which the aid intervention is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, partner country, and donor.

Possible questions:

To what extent are the objectives of the project are still valid?

Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the broader objectives and do they contribute to the attainment of these objectives?

Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the intended impacts and effects?

Efficiency measures the outputs (qualitative and quantitative) in relations to the inputs. It requires the use of least costly resources for achieving the desired results. To see whether the most efficient approach has been used this often requires comparison of alternative approaches for achieving the same results.

Possible questions:

Were the activities cost-efficient?

Were objectives achieved on time?

What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

Effectiveness measures the extent to which an aid intervention attains an objective.

Possible questions:

To what extent were the objectives achieved/likely to be achieved?

What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

Impact describes the positive and negative changes produced by the intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

Possible questions:

What has happened as a result of the project?

What real difference has the intervention made to the beneficiaries?

How many people have been affected positively?

Sustainability measures whether or not the benefits of an intervention are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.

Possible questions:

To what extent did the benefits of a project continue after donor funding had ceased?

What were the major factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?

Setting up of a monitoring and evaluation framework

A clear framework, agreed among the key stakeholders at the end of the planning stage, is essential in order to carry out monitoring and evaluation systematically. This framework serves as a plan for monitoring and evaluation, and should clarify:

- **What** is to be monitored and evaluated?
- **Who** is responsible for monitoring and evaluation activities?
- **When** monitoring and evaluation activities are planned (timing).
- **How** monitoring and evaluation are carried out (methods)?
- **What** resources are required and where they are committed?

In addition, relevant risks and assumptions in carrying out planned monitoring and evaluation activities should be seriously considered, anticipated and included in the monitoring and evaluation framework.

In general, a monitoring and evaluation framework should have as well a narrative component which describes how the partners will undertake monitoring and evaluation and the accountabilities assigned to different individuals and stakeholders. For example, at the national result level, it is necessary to engage with national monitoring committees or outcome level groups (e.g. sector arrangements) as well as with UN interagency monitoring working groups. If these do not exist, there might be a need to establish such structures for effective monitoring and evaluation. In addition the narrative should also reflect: existing monitoring and evaluation capacities and an estimate of the human, financial and material resource requirements for its implementation.

Annex

Glossary of key terms

Accountability	Obligation for a manager of resources to demonstrate that work has been conducted in compliance with the established plans, budgets, rules and standards and to report fairly and accurately on performance results. It includes responsibility for the justification of expenditures, decisions or results of the discharge of authority and official duties, including duties delegated to a subordinate unit or individual (source: OIOS).
Activity	Action taken or work performed to transform inputs into outputs (source: OIOS).
Assumption	Hypothesis about risks, influences, external factors or conditions that could affect the progress or success of a project or a programme. Assumptions highlight external factors, which are important for the success of project or programme, but are largely or completely beyond the control of management (source: OIOS).
Attribution	A causal link between observed (or expected to be observed) changes and a specific intervention. Attribution refers to that which is to be credited for the observed changes or results achieved. With regard to attribution for the achievement of results, evaluations aim to ascertain a credible link between outputs and achieved results. In assessing this link, attribution takes account of the effects of other interventions that are independent of the effort being evaluated (source: OIOS).
Audit	An independent, objective assurance activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations. It helps an organization accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to assess and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes (source: OECD).
Baseline data	Data describing the situation prior to/at the starting point of a project or programme. It is used to determine the realistically achievable outcome of an intervention and serves as an important reference for monitoring and evaluation (before/after). Collection and analysis of baseline data is often part of a feasibility study, or the problem analysis carried out during project development. Latest at the beginning of the project implementation and the setting up of the monitoring scheme, project managers need to have baseline data available and actualized.
Benchmark	Reference point or standard against which performance or achievement can be assessed. A benchmark often refers to an intermediate target to measure progress within a given period as well as to the performance of other comparable organizational entities (source: OIOS).
Beneficiary	The individuals, groups, or organizations, whether targeted or not, that benefit, directly or indirectly, from a development intervention. See as well "target group" and "final beneficiaries" (source: OECD).
Capacity building	The process by which individuals, groups, organizations and countries develop, organize and enhance their systems, resources and knowledge, all reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives. Technical assistance in the form of knowledge transfer, activities such as training, fellowships, study tours, is used to increase capacity (source: OIOS).

Data collection method	The mode of collection to be used when gathering information and data on a given performance indicator. The term is one of the elements of the indicator methodology form for reporting through IMDIS (source: OIOS).
Effectiveness	The extent to which a project or programme attains its objectives and delivers expected accomplishments (source: OIOS).
Efficiency	A measure of how well inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into outputs (source: OIOS).
Evaluability	Extent to which an activity or a programme can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion (source: OIOS).
Evaluation	The systematic and objective assessment of a non-going or completed project; programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives; development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability (source: OECD).
Ex-ante evaluation	An evaluation that is performed during the planning phase of a project or a programme. It aims at taking up and analyzing lessons learned from other experiences. And it supports assessment and evaluation of the project idea.
Ex-post evaluation	Evaluation of a development intervention after it has been completed. It may be undertaken directly after or long after completion. The intention is to identify the factors of success or failure, to assess the sustainability of results and impacts, and to draw conclusions that may inform other interventions (source: OECD).
External evaluation	An evaluation performed by entities outside of the programme being evaluated. As a rule, external evaluation of a project, programme or subprogramme is conducted by entities free of control or influence by those responsible for the design and implementation of the project and programmes (source: OIOS).
Final beneficiaries	Those groups, population or entities who benefit on the long-term (overall objective/impact level) from a project or programme.
IMDIS	The Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System is the online tool for planning, monitoring and reporting of results-based programme performance in use at the United Nations Secretariat since 1998. IMDIS enables programme managers as well as the Office of Internal Oversight Services to verify Organization-wide progress throughout the biennium and to extract all necessary information for final performance analysis and reporting (source: OIOS).
Impact	Positive or negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended (source: OECD).
Indicator	A measure, preferably numerical, of a variable that provides a reasonably simple and reliable basis for assessing achievement, change or performance. A unit of information measured over time that can help show changes in a specific condition (source: OIOS).
Input	Personnel, finance, equipment, knowledge, information and other resources necessary for producing the planned outputs (sometimes the term “means” is used similarly).

Lessons learned	Generalization derived from evaluation experiences with programmes, projects or policies that is applicable to a generic situation rather than to a specific circumstance and has the potential to improve future actions. A lesson learned summarizes knowledge at a point in time, while learning is an ongoing process. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design and implementation that affect performance, outcome, and impact (source: OIOS/OECD).
Logical framework	Is a tool for supporting and improving the design, planning and implementation of a programme/project through a set of analytical tools and a presentation table. It is a way of structuring the main elements in a programme or project (objective, outcomes, outputs, indicators, means of verification and assumptions) and highlighting the logical linkages between them.
Mandatory external evaluation	An evaluation mandated by an intergovernmental body that is managed and performed by an entity outside the programme being evaluated. Mandatory external evaluations are mandated by bodies such as the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), functional commissions, regional and sectoral intergovernmental bodies and other technical bodies. Mandatory external evaluations are generally managed and conducted by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) as part of its UN-wide mandate, and by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), as well as by appointed external evaluators (source: OIOS).
Meta-evaluation	The term is used for evaluations designed to aggregate findings from a series of evaluations. It can also be used to denote the evaluation of an evaluation to judge its quality and/or assess the performance of the evaluators (source: OECD).
Mid-term evaluation	Evaluation performed towards the middle of the period of implementation of the intervention (source: OECD).
Monitoring	A continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specific indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds (source: OECD).
Outcome	The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs (source: OECD). (Measurable) changed behaviour, attitude, procedures, etc – the intended improved situation for of the target group at the end of the project.
Output	The products or services, which are handed as deliverables to the target groups of the project or programme.
Process evaluation	An evaluation of the internal dynamics of implementing organizations, their policy instruments, their service delivery mechanisms, their management practices, and the linkages among these (source: OECD).
Programme	Set of projects aiming to achieve a common global, regional, country, or sector development objective (expected accomplishment). A development programme is a time bound intervention involving multiple activities that may cut across sectors, themes and/or geographic areas (source: OECD).

Programme evaluation	Evaluation of a set of interventions, marshalled to attain specific global, regional, country or sector development objectives (source: OECD).
Project	Planned activity or a set of planned, interrelated activities designed to achieve certain specific objectives within a given budget, organizational structure and specified time period (source: OIOS).
Project cycle management	A tool for understanding the tasks and management functions to be performed in the course of a project or programme's lifetime. This commonly includes the stages of identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (source: OIOS).
Project document	A formal document covering a project, which sets out, inter alia, the needs, objectives, outcomes, outputs, activities, work plan, budget, and any special arrangements applicable to the execution of the project in question. Once a project document is approved by signature, the project represents a commitment of resources (source: OIOS).
Project evaluation	Evaluation of an individual project designed to achieve specific objectives within specified resources, in an adopted time span and following an established plan of action, often within the framework of a broader programme. The basis of evaluation should be built into the project document (source: OIOS).
Proxy indicator	Proxy indicators are used when it is difficult to identify direct indicators to measure an outcome or a broader impact. Normally you need more than one proxy indicator for measuring achievement of an objective.
Qualitative data	Information that is not easily captured in numerical form (although qualitative data can be quantified). Qualitative data typically consist of words and normally describe people's opinions, knowledge, attitudes or behaviours (source: OIOS/UNODC).
Quantitative data	Information measured or measurable by, or concerned with, quantity and expressed in numerical form. Quantitative data typically consists of numbers (source: OIOS/UNODC).
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies (source: OECD).
Results-based budgeting	UN approach to plan for budget allocation and monitoring.
Results-based management	A management strategy that ensures that processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of impact, outcomes, outputs.
Risk analysis	An analysis or an assessment of factors (called assumptions in the Logframe) affecting or which are likely to affect the achievement of an intervention's objective. Risk analysis enables consideration of strategies to manage identified risks.
Self-evaluation	An evaluation by those who are entrusted with the design and delivery of a development intervention (source: OECD).
Source of verification	(SoV) The sources of verification define the data sources necessary to verify the indicators. Sources of verification can be official documents and statistics, project reports, etc. Sources of verification tell evaluators and others interested in the project where to get the data from to assess the progress and success of the project based on the indicators defined in the logical framework.

Stakeholders	Agencies, organizations, groups or individuals who have a direct or indirect interest in the development intervention or its evaluation (source: OECD).
Sustainability	The extent to which the benefits of the project or programme will last after its termination; the probability of continued long-term benefits (source: OIOS).
Terms of Reference	(ToR) Written document presenting the purpose and scope of the evaluation or inspection, the methods to be used, issues to be addressed, the resources, schedule, and reporting requirements (source: OIOS).
Target group(s)	The group(s) which will benefit directly and immediately from the project or programme – on the level of the outcome/expected accomplishment. The intervention is tailored towards their needs and priorities. They are the recipients and the users of the outputs.
Thematic evaluation	Evaluation of a selection of development interventions, all of which address a specific development priority that cuts across countries, regions, and sectors (source: OECD).
Validity	The extent to which the data collection methods or tests accurately measure what they are supposed to (source: OIOS).
Work plan	A detailed document stating outputs to be delivered and activities to be carried out in a given time period, how the activities will be carried out, and what progress towards expected accomplishments will be achieved. It contains timeframes and responsibilities and is used as a monitoring and accountability tool. The work plan is designed according to the logical framework (source: OIOS).