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PROJECT CYCLE MANAGEMENT

TEAM Laos

World Education Laos TEAM Capacity Building Approach

As well as providing funding to 15 local and international organizations to develop and strengthen the disability and rehabilitation sector in Laos, World Education USAID-LWVF funded TEAM project works with sub-recipients to strengthen their ability to manage grants and to efficiently implement their projects. WEL-TEAM conducts an *Organizational Assessment* of all applicants for TEAM funding to look at capacity in grants management, financial management, human resources, activity implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. If the organization is approved for funding, WEL-TEAM staff work with the organization to discuss the outcomes of the assessment, including both organizational strengths and areas for improvement. TEAM and the organization then work together to create a *capacity-building plan* with specific measurable objectives. Most of the capacity-building relates to the organization's ability to successfully implement the project activities and manage the sub-award, but if there are specific areas that the organization has identified as priorities, these are included if possible.

Capacity-building is one of the core components of the TEAM project, and inputs by World Education take many forms. One approach is individual coaching, where a TEAM staff member who has the required expertise will work closely with one or several members of an organization regularly over a longer period of time, to discuss a specific issue, either by phone, email or in person, or a combination of those methods. Other times WEL-TEAM organizes formal trainings for all sub-recipients. So far, TEAM has conducted trainings on USAID Regulations, World Education TEAM Finance Procedures, and Monitoring and Evaluation. In addition, some trainings are provided on an optional basis, allowing the sub-recipient to choose topics which are most relevant or needed for their organization. So far, TEAM has offered trainings on Curriculum Development, Psychosocial Support, Training of Trainers (ToT), Project Cycle Management (PCM), and Gender Inclusion. TEAM encourages sub-recipients to send an appropriate staff member to the training, and all trainings are open to any staff member as relevant, not just project staff who are funded by TEAM. All WEL-TEAM trainings are participatory, reflective and allow as much time as possible for 'learning by doing' and practical application of skills and knowledge. TEAM recognize the importance of reflection, goal setting, and the long-term, regular follow up needed for effective capacity building. Examples of how TEAM promoted these values are:

- Many WEL-TEAM trainings are followed up by practical sessions conducted by the trainer or TEAM staff with each sub-recipient individually or in small groups to allow opportunities for the organization to apply and practice what they learn in the training to their own situation with guidance and feedback
- Video sessions are used in the ToT training practice session to allow the participants to view themselves delivering a training as a tool for self-reflection and self-assessment
- Participants in trainings set SMART goals at the end of the sessions for future action which are followed up by the organization's management, the trainers and/or TEAM staff
- Capacity building plans with individual sub-recipients are followed up on monthly in some cases to assess and reflect on progress of specific observable behaviors to measure capacity over a long period of time

These participant handbooks were used in 8 trainings for TEAM sub-recipients, and are available in print on request from WEL TEAM (bernard_franck@la.worlded.org), or online at <https://sites.google.com/site/teamlaopdr/capacity-building>

Currently available:

1. USAID Rules and Regulation for TEAM
2. TEAM Finance Processes and Regulations
- 3.1 Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation
- 3.2 TEAM M&E Monitoring Tools.
4. Curriculum and Training Design
5. Introduction to Psychosocial Impairments
6. Training of Trainers (TOT)
7. Project Cycle Management (PCM)
8. Gender Inclusive Development

Under development and available soon:

9. What to Know about Disabling Conditions
10. Understanding impairment and disability in line with UNCRPD, ICF and World Report on Disability
11. Optimizing functioning of persons with impairments by using diversified assistive technology
12. Case Management in Disability Inclusion

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Background

The World Education Laos TEAM project is a USAID-funded project that intends to develop and strengthen the disability and physical and rehabilitation medicine sectors in Laos. The goal of the TEAM project is to enable people with disabilities, especially women and girls to attain and maintain maximum independence to fully and equally participate in all aspects of life. The four components of the TEAM project are (i) Training, (ii) Economic Empowerment, (iii) Assistive Technology and (iv) Medical & Physical Rehabilitation.

Through delivering sub-grants to several national or international organizations, World Education Laos manages the overall grant from USAID and coordinates the achievement of different targets in each of the four components. World Education Laos ensures capacity-building in grant management and technical support to sub-grantees.

Purpose of Handbook

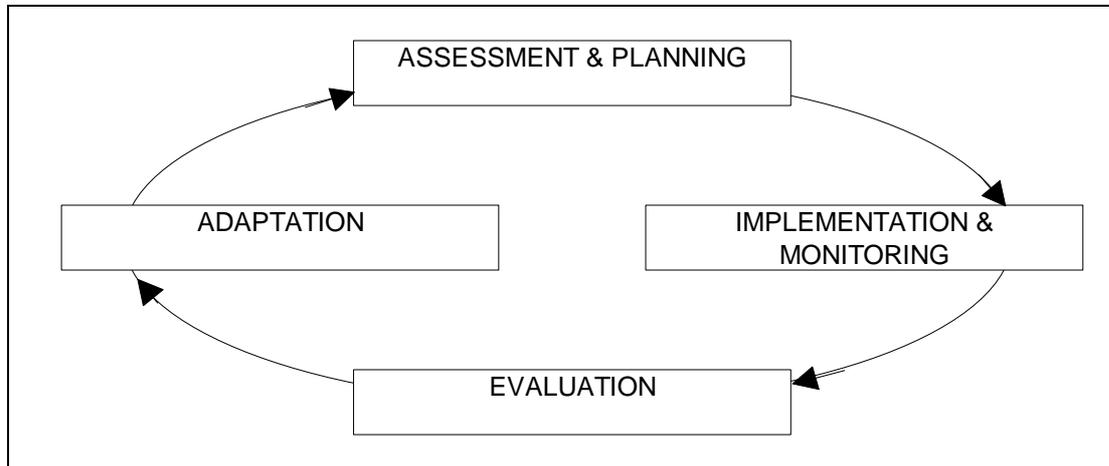
This handbook was designed to be used as an accompanying resource for a Project Cycle Management Training for TEAM sub-recipients. The objective of this training is to provide World Education's TEAM sub-recipients with a set of tools that helps identify the main steps necessary for smooth preparation of project proposals and a sound management of awarded projects. The guide is divided into four main parts. The first part goes through the key aspects of project preparation, "Assessment & Planning" and the remaining parts are "Implementation & Monitoring", "Evaluation", and "Adaptation".

The majority of explanations and examples contained in this guide are valid for all kinds of projects, independently of donors. The Handbook is intended to be used as a take-home resource for participants and their respective organizations as they design and implement their current and future projects. Participants are encouraged to share this tool with other members of their organization.

The Project Cycle – an overview

The project cycle consists of four stages: assessment and planning, implementation and monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation. Each stage has its own characteristics and requires specific knowledge and skills.

A Project Cycle Diagram



The assessment phase is sometimes also called the identification phase, as in this period the “why?” of the project is the important question to ask. In this stage the real problems and issues that need to be addressed, are identified.

The assessment phase is followed by a planning phase in which goals and objectives are defined and the feasibility of the project is carefully researched. Then an action plan is made, resources are determined and the use of the resources is planned. At this stage it is already important to think about and identify indicators to be used to monitor and to evaluate the project.

In the implementation phase, during which the project is actually carried out, continuous monitoring needs to take place, in order to watch whether the project is on the right track, is meeting its objectives and is using its resources as planned.

During the evaluation phase the project is measured against its objectives, both to see if objectives have been met, but also to see how this was done and what the impact of the project is. In other words what changes have occurred as a result of project activities?

On the basis of the evaluation, adaptation of the project can take place and lessons learnt can be identified and used for future planning.

The project cycle is continuously ongoing; after evaluation and adaptation, the planning starts again, followed by implementation etc.

Project Cycle Management (PCM)

Project cycle management is the term given to the process of planning and managing projects, programmes and organisations. In order to make development projects successful, good planning is needed. Some important factors need to be taken into account, in particular the needs and views of stakeholders. “Stakeholders” is the word currently used for everybody with an interest in the project. Stakeholders may include clients, target groups, beneficiaries – the people who, it is hoped, will be helped by the project, but may also include local leaders, the community, development workers, and donors. So to focus on the group helped, the phrase “Primary Stakeholders” is used in this document.

PCM ensures that all aspects of projects are considered. Each part of the project cycle is considered in the management process and changes in all parts are noticed and taken into account for future project planning and design. This way of working could contribute to the success and sustainability of the project.

1. THE ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING PHASE

During the assessment and planning phase you will:

- Identify the real problems and issues that will need to be addressed, through collecting information;
- Consider the feasibility of a project;
- Set your goals and objectives;
- Develop an action plan;
- Carefully plan the use of your resources;
- Identify indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

1.1 Training your staff in Project Cycle thinking;

The example used in the module is mostly drawn from a specific field - people with disabilities empowerment and rehabilitation - but you can bring your own fields of expertise in, to ensure that people are applying what they are learning.

There is a phrase: “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Think of examples of when things have gone wrong because planning was not carried out adequately. Why did things go wrong? What was not taken account of?’

1.2. Identifying the real problems and needs

The first steps of the Project cycle involve identifying the real problems and needs.

- What needs or problems exist and whom do they affect?
- Which strengths and weaknesses do different affected people have to address their problems?
- What can they do themselves?

You may already have a lot of information, and may already have a good idea of what you want to do. However this information might be less complete than you realise. An exercise in actively gathering information may bring in an extra dimension.

Accurate, reliable and sufficient information is necessary in order to:

- Plan effectively and efficiently;
- Be aware of all factors and circumstances that can influence the project, such as the context in which the project will take place;
- Understand causes of problems or issues;
- Know what others are doing already in order to avoid duplication and see where cooperation is needed;
- To define the most appropriate way to respond to a need or address a problem;
- To justify your input and use of resources.

1.3 Stakeholder Analysis

Example of the Stakeholder Analysis Matrix is in an Appendix 2

A first step in the identification of problems and needs is the stakeholder analysis. Stakeholders are those who directly or indirectly become involved in deciding what a project or programme should achieve and how it should be achieved. They may involve beneficiaries, project or program staff and management at local, regional, national or international levels, researchers, government agencies and donors.

Effective and efficient project cycle management requires a participatory approach, involving all stakeholders, in all project cycle phases and especially in decision-making.

A truly participatory approach will strengthen responsiveness and provide a sense of ownership, which will contribute to the likelihood of achieving the project's objectives. When people become committed this contributes to sustainability. Using local knowledge and skills might strengthen efficiency and avoid mistakes. When stakeholders are given sufficient information and decision-making power, then transparency and accountability improves as people are informed about what and why, and have a specific responsibility in the project.

Knowing who your stakeholders are and having an idea of the existing problems leads to the next question: what information do you need exactly, from whom and how will you gather it? A Needs Assessment or a PRA might be the right tool.

A Needs Assessment is often seen as a separate activity, when a team from the organisation and other disciplines goes and spends a week with the primary stakeholders. But some organisation plan ahead. If the primary stakeholders are nearby, living in shanty-towns or in a refugee camp, you may have already built information collection into routine organisation activities, with perhaps a pair of workers spending an afternoon a week visiting a few families or individuals and gathering information in an organised way. In such a case your organisation will already have good information on which to base future planning and decisions.

Other sources of information can be experts from outside your organisation and people who are primary stakeholders – and make sure that what they say is taken seriously. No Organisation has complete expertise. Needs Assessments can be done in partnership with other experts. These may be people working in Government offices or private enterprises. If you are concerned with poverty, you might want to involve an expert on micro-enterprises from a bank; if you are interested in health and sickness, you can talk to the local health workers. Building partnerships with such people is worth doing.

Most groups of primary stakeholders can play an active part in the process of finding out what the problems are. Children over seven, people with psychiatric problems, the elderly, and people with special education needs are still able to communicate – if you say to them in a careful and respectful way, “What are your problems?”- “What kind of place do you want to live in and why?” They will have a point of view worth hearing.

It is important to assess needs based on a gender needs assessment. As men and women have different tasks, they also have different needs. Child bearing requires natal care and access to specific health services. Being the head of the household requires the skills and means to provide sufficient income.

Needs could be divided into practical and strategic ones. Practical needs could be water provision, health care, provision of agricultural tools or income earning for household purposes. These needs are mostly connected to the reproductive and productive work and to the specific tasks of women and men. Responding to these needs will solve practical problems but mostly will not change anything in power relations, control over resources or decision-making power.

For example: the community may feel that that they have a serious problem with malnutrition in the small children and have ideas of improving the situation by growing vegetables

Looking at strategic needs means looking at power relations, access to and control over resources, and decision-making rights. For example strategic needs could be - access to credit and other resources; measures against violence; freedom of decision-making; and the rights to own land or property. Responding to strategic needs will influence and hopefully change real issues about power, decision-making and access to and control over resources.

For example: a change in the law so that women can own property would change who has control over the land. The creation of a cooperative might empower men, women or both to obtain better prices for crops.

1.4 Problem analysis

Once needs and problems have been identified, then the next step is to analyse them. No problem exists by itself; it is always part of a cause-and-effect chain of problems and these causes and effects have to be identified in order to plan well. An exercise often used is to draw the problem tree, from which project objectives can be derived.

Problem trees enable stakeholders to get to the root of their needs and problems, to investigate the effects of problems, to think about ways to address these problems and to define priorities.

Example of the Problem Tree is in an Appendix 2

1.5 Project planning and design

The next steps of the Project Cycle involve deciding what the project should do and then planning how to bring these changes about. To ensure that you get to where you want to go to, pick goals, objectives and indicators that together reflect the vision of your Organisation. A goal is the general purpose of the project, for example to decrease malnutrition of small children or to improve the clean water availability in a village.

Based on your needs assessment and problem analysis you can define the objectives of the project. This continues on from the problem tree exercise; objectives are identified and organised in direct relation to the problems. The exercise involves reformulating problems into objectives. Which changes are desired? Objectives are desired future situations, they are not activities. Writing an objective is often simply a matter of turning a problem statement around.

An example of a problem statement is that people with disability and other vulnerable groups have limited opportunities to meaningfully take part in policy development. An objective then is that people with disability and other vulnerable groups have more opportunities to take part policy development.

Example of the Objectives Tree is in an Appendix 2

Objectives are also specific, measurable results to be achieved by a specific point in time. They need to be realistic and feasible. Each will require resources, financial, human or other, and these must be available or possible to acquire.

Here are three objectives...

Two are long-term:

- *“In three years time, 75% of persons with disabilities supported by the project (40 female) continue to run their economic activities 6 months after project support has ended”.*
- *“In three years time the Under-5 children will be eating more vegetables”*

One is short-term:

- *“By October 20 beneficiaries will receive vocational training and skills development”*

Ask yourself whether these three objectives are relevant, feasible (do-able) and measurable. Now, in order to reach each objective, you need to define how you are going to do it – and that is a strategy.

1.6 Strategic planning

After the analysis, you have decided what you want to change or what needs to be changed. But how are you going to bring about these changes? What is needed? The process of planning how you will make it happen is called strategic planning.

Sometimes several problems need to be addressed at the same time, which means that you will have to develop more projects. Each project needs to be assessed in terms of the expertise required, length of time needed to put it in place, type of budget requirement and which stakeholders are involved. Smaller, simple projects will be easier to handle than large and complex ones.

To appraise strategy options, EuropeAid’s **Project Cycle Management Handbook** [see p. 3] advises to use the following key questions:

- What is likely to solve the problem?
- Can the key problem be solved by one or two projects or is it necessary to put in place a parallel set of projects all focusing on the key problem?
- Do the problems and objectives match?
- What resources are available?
- What can potential implementing agencies do?
- What other projects or initiatives are planned or being implemented?
- If the project is successful, can it be mainstreamed?

1.7 Defining indicators

In order to measure the impact of your project (impact indicators), to monitor the process, and to know in how far the objectives have been met (process-indicators), indicators are needed. These indicators are a type of measurement agreed upon beforehand in the planning stage. They are used to see how far objectives have been reached. There are several requirements for good indicators.

An indicator has to be:

- Relevant to the objective it is measuring.

If, for example, the objective is that persons with disabilities under 20 years of age will feel more included in sport activities within the community, the indicator to increase no of wheelchairs' is not relevant, because it says nothing about the basket wheelchair for persons with disabilities under 20 years of age.

- Measurable: can the indicator realistically be measured?

For example: how could you measure "more children with intellectual disabilities will receive therapy and education". Can you use the current record system that measure the quantity and quality of therapy and education?

- Sufficient: is one indicator sufficient or are more indicators needed in order to measure in how far the objective has been met?

An example might be the objective to improve lives of families with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Which indicators would you need to measure this?

- Achievable. What to think of the indicator 'in one year time there will be no Officials and parents lack knowledge about rights of Persons with Disabilities' Is this achievable?

An example of an achievable indicator: "in two years time, at least 50 persons (parents, care taker, teachers, Officials) have been trained on Rights of Persons with Disabilities".

- Specific: quality, quantity and time need to be specified. How 'good', how much (for example 50%), in which period?
- Allow for changes if something changes in the project. It should be possible to adapt the indicator if changes occur.
- Cost-effective: the resources, human, financial and other, needed in order to measure the indicators should be reasonable and in ratio to the project costs
- Available: to measure income in times that no crops are sold, might not be possible.

Preferably, indicators should be developed in a participatory way, which also could involve participatory assessment later on. Use of participatory methods will keep people feel involved and could contribute to measure the real impact of a project on the lives of the project (primary) stakeholders.

Step 1 is to identify the indicators.

Step 2 is to decide how you will measure these indicators. How will you collect your information? You would have to think about the following:

- Which methods will you use for information gathering?
- How often do you need to collect information? When?
- What will be your sample size to get the information? How to select your sample?
- Who will be responsible for the information collection, data processing, analyzing and reporting?
- What is needed? Cost, time, human and material resources?
- What will be the means of communication and reporting?
- How will the reporting be done? How often?
- Storing data: how and where will you store your data? In a written form, on CDs, computers?
- Who will be responsible for the follow up? For adaptations of the project if necessary?

For example: One of your indicators is that "In three years time, 75% of persons with disabilities in the targeted communities express increased access to livelihood services". During the project development, everyone agreed who would do the monitoring – Village Chiefs. You want them to monitor whether the project is making progress and it is agreed that they will do this every two months, with a sit-down interview in June 2010. You will also decide who will be responsible for support visits to the community, collecting the raw data, processing and analyzing it, how this will be done and who will be responsible for the follow up.

In general how much information you can gather and the method you will use are determined by the resources and time you have available.

For example: consultation with primary stakeholders is time-consuming but does not need technical facilities. Collecting a lot of quantitative information is also time consuming and might need a data-analysing computer program.

Will you develop special tally sheets for literate and non-literate committee members? Will you write the results in your quarterly report? Or summarize it in your database? Or open a specific database sheet for this information? How will you feed the findings back to the different stakeholders? Which donor(s) needs to be informed? If the result is disappointing, who will be responsible for taking action?

Specifying and planning the monitoring and evaluation in this preparatory stage will facilitate the actual monitoring and evaluation later on. For more details on monitoring and evaluation see below.

1.8 Action plan

From the objectives and strategies, the action plan can be shaped.. When the objectives have been clearly formulated, the next step is to turn the objectives into an action plan. An action plan consists of several elements:

- Activities: Which activities need to be undertaken in order to reach the objectives? When, where, by whom?
- Required input: What do we need? Human resources? Financial, physical, material resources? Time?
- Expected output: What do we expect to achieve? What will be the result of the specific activities and inputs in the course of the project?
- Indicators (see above)
- Evidence: how can you prove that the measurement of the indicator is true? For example how would you prove that more vegetables are used in the family diet?

- Expected effect: what effect will the action or activity have on the (primary) stakeholders?
- Assumptions: These are factors that are important for the project, but which are outside its scope. Assumptions are the answer to the question “What external factors are not influenced by the Organisation’s activities, but may affect its plans?” Examples are the political environment, the amount of rain in the monsoon, conflict situations or world prices for fertiliser.
- Precondition. A precondition is the first and most important assumption you define. The precondition is usually a policy that needs to be in place, or an agreement by a major contributor to your project. If the precondition is not met at the on-start of your project, your level of risk is high. *For example: if you want to start a programme for which you will need improved seeds, the co-operation of the department of agriculture might be essential in order to get access to these seeds.*

An action plan needs a time line. When will you conduct certain activities? When will you expect results? When will you measure the expected effects? And how gender friendly is the project planning? Will the project contribute to gender equity? Are needs of both men and women met (if applicable)?

1.9 The budget

Now you know what you want to do and how you want to do it. The next step is to prepare a budget, which is needed for transparent financial management, planning and monitoring. Maybe you already have money; otherwise you will have to approach donors and write a proposal.

The budget has to be established considering all the materials, activities and resources needed in order to carry out the project.

1.10 Assessing the risk of a negative outcome

Some people consider that this is an important exercise towards the end of the planning stage. Sometimes it is also called a quality assurance check. The aim is to step back from the planned project and think about all the possible ways that it could go wrong; then with each identified possible problem, the team can consider whether they have the flexibility and resources to adapt. Items to consider are:

- The technology. How acceptable is the technology? For how long will the technology be affordable? For how long will the technology be functional? Will there be money for maintenance?
- The primary stakeholders. Who do you hope to reach? What do you expect of the primary stakeholders? Who will not be reached – and how will they react?
- Your technology always costs the user something – time, money. Where would the resources have gone to if the project did not happen?
- The personnel. Are you training personnel? What will happen to them at the end of the project? Do they expect a career? Will they continue to need supervision? What could go wrong if they are unsupervised?
- The timescale. Of the plan, the money and the people. What could go wrong if they do not match?
- Do the activities match the objectives?
- Does each of the objectives have clear indicators?
- Are objectives and activities gender-friendly?

2. THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING PHASE

The implementation phase is the period in which the project is actually conducted and the planned activities are carried out. This also implies that continuous monitoring is necessary to keep up the quality of the work that is going on, to ensure that the project is heading in the right direction, that progress is made towards the objectives and problems are spotted early. In this phase it is important regularly to reassess the risks of the projects and to check if the stakeholders remain the same. The results and learning from the monitoring has to be fed back into the project design and adjustments or improvements where necessary have to be made.

In practice nothing will go completely as planned and few plans are carried out within the estimated time. Management need a good flow of believable information to do these two tasks and a large measure of flexibility. Problems will always arise.

Consider how you will respond if:

- Supplies are held up for at least a month;
- You are told that half the workers are reporting fake data;
- The Community is angry because they think they are being exploited;
- The Community has stopped doing what it promised.

2.1 Monitoring

The process of change needs continuous monitoring and evaluation. You need to check if you are on the right road or if you have taken a wrong turn. If the results are not what you expected, things may go slowly, people lose motivation and action must be taken. A change process is like a child learning how to walk: falling and getting up again. Do not get discouraged, enjoy the positive outcomes and adapt your strategies on the negative ones. Monitoring is essential in a changing situation. The purpose of monitoring is to find out whether the program and activities are effective, and how strategies need to be adapted to ensure the best possible results. Simply put: we made a plan; now, are we carrying it out, in good time and using the right means, people and approaches?

Monitoring is a continuous process for the duration of the project. It is an activity based on data collection. The knowledge and skills required for monitoring are the same as for assessment and analysis.

In fact your monitoring has been planned beforehand by defining indicators and how to collect information on these indicators. It is important that this has been done with all your stakeholders involved. Sometimes the Organisation has a clear idea of what is important and a core principle but if a donor thinks differently you may need evidence to convince them.

2.2 Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA)

Nowadays the focus of NGOs is on Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA), which is an extension of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PIA involves the adaptation of participatory tools, combined with more conventional statistical approaches, specifically to measure the impact of humanitarian assistance and development projects on people's lives. The approach acknowledges local people or project clients as experts by emphasizing the involvement of project participants and community members in assessing project impact and recognizes them as experts to indicate changes. In contrast to many traditional project monitoring and evaluation approaches, PIA aims to measure the real impact of a project on the lives of the project participants. Most evaluations tend to focus on

measuring aspects of project implementation, such as the delivery of inputs and services, the number of water points constructed or the number of people trained.

As far as possible, a PIA should use indicators that are identified by the community or intended project participants. Communities have their own priorities for improving their lives, and their own ways of identifying impact indicators and measuring change. Oftentimes these priorities and indicators are different from those identified by external actors.

Consistent with this, a project level PIA tries to answer the following three key questions:

- What changes have there been in the community since the start of the project?
- Which of these changes are attributable to the project?
- What differences have these changes made to people's lives?

Regularly updated information is vital in ensuring that programs remain relevant and effective. Regular monitoring allows managers to determine priorities, identify emerging problems, determine the effect of their responses, and guide revisions to their programmes. Regularly updated information means that questions can be asked that have more to do with evaluation – whether, for example the programme is really going to affect the problem addressed. Information derived from continual monitoring of programmes can be used for reviews, evaluations and other purposes.

Monitoring looks complex but should not be. It helps to use a monitoring system adapted to your needs and situation and specified in the preparation phase of the project. Some projects are easier to monitor than others. If you are vaccinating children, you count the kids and calculate the proportion of all children covered and not covered. Changes in attitudes or behaviour are more difficult to monitor, but the use of good indicators from the very beginning will facilitate this process.

Some additional aspects to think about:

- Information collected should be directly relevant to the programme – in other words, it should be useful and acted upon. It should also be documented; action should be taken to make it available as needed to other sectors and agencies, and to the affected population.
- The means of communication used (dissemination methods, language, etc., must be appropriate and accessible for the intended audience. A report to your donor needs to be in an official form. But information provided to your non-literate stakeholders should be in a form they will understand. In some cases you might decide to have a workshop to present the results, discuss the outcomes, and talk about the next steps.

2.3 Distributing information

Try to keep to information minimal but key, from important areas, considering who needs to know what. What does the field staff and the community need to know, what is important for the director to know?

For example: after six months of the project, the Director of an Organisation might want to know how many Disability Focal Points participate the training sessions, which the Director does not need to know the names, dates etc. the Project Officer needs a record of people attended the training, with names, contact details, gender etc

Varieties of communication forms are needed. These could be verbal, written, formal or informal. Photographs are always handy to show people what really happened, especially when they show the

situation before and after – for example uncultivated bush versus cultivated garden; or a photograph of training.

Make sure that you can crosscheck information to gather evidence and pass the right information in the right way to the right person.

For example: you receive a verbal message that the well and water pump in one village have been repaired and the pump is now working well. Your crosscheck method will be that you (or someone else) go to the village and observe if the well is indeed working properly.

Monitoring can teach you what went well, which was a right method to use, which not, why not. Have the right resources been used? Was the amount of money spent in relation to the outcome? Were participatory methods used and do people now feel involved?

For example: the community might decide to monitor whether the vegetable gardens have been dug out and fenced and whether seeds were available at the time and price agreed. Later, after complaints, they add to their list what the stakeholders think about: the variety of seeds, the taste of the vegetables... and any other comments or suggestions.

When you discover, by good monitoring, that something does not work, you are obliged to act.

For example: one of the new seeds is doing badly, which means you have to take action to ensure that the project agronomist finds out why and passes good advice via the Committee people doing the monitoring. And s/he needs to act quickly so that other crops can fill the gap.

Monitoring often overlaps with evaluation. Some means that can be used for monitoring and evaluation are:

- Discussing and exchanging information with partners and stakeholders;
- Writing reports;
- Using computers for analysis (spreadsheets, databases, statistics, graphics, or combined programmes);
- Using diagrams, matrices, graphics, mapping etc;
- Using video, photos;
- Using observation.

You can write your monitoring plan in a matrix. Have a look at your action plan, decide what you have to monitor, how and by whom. Use the indicators from your action plan to see if you're on the right road.

Steps/Tasks	Who is in charge? (Name/position)	When is this done?	How is it done?	To whom is the information transferred after it has been collected?	When is the information transferred?

Depending on the findings, you may have to re-visit your objectives and strategies and adapt your action plan.

3. THE EVALUATION PHASE

Evaluation is often the last part of a project or process but at the same time the beginning of the next phase, extension or new proposal.

Three evaluation moments can be distinguished:

- Mid-term often mixed with monitoring and sometimes called an assessment;
- Immediately after the completion of the project;
- Some time after the completion of the project.

Staff of the organisation can do an internal evaluation. An independent outside agency can perform an external evaluation, often at the request of the donor. An evaluation can also be a joint one with staff from the organisation and personnel from the outside agency. The organisation itself can also clearly indicate what they think is important to evaluate and should certainly be involved in defining the Terms of Reference.

3.1 Purposes of evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation can be twofold: to assess the actual results of an activity and/or to assess what has been learnt from the project. A difference can be made in types of evaluation, like process evaluation, where you look at the process during the project and impact evaluation, where you look at the impact of the project on the primary stakeholders.

A distinction is also made between formative and summative evaluation. This distinction is related to the perspective from which an evaluation is conducted. Formative stems from the public accountability perspective and summative from the improvement perspective.

The following could be examined during a formative evaluation:

- Effectiveness: To what extent have the objectives been achieved? And at what costs? If objectives were not met, then why? Strategies and action used: Which were the strengths in the strategies/ actions? Which the weak points? Are objectives still valid - or do these need to be adapted? Which changes need to be made in order to reach the objectives? All these questions reflect the project management and planning.
- Efficiency: Are the costs in proportion to the benefits? These costs refer to resources: human resources, time, energy, money and materials.

If, for example, a lot of women/men hours were needed to cultivate the gardens, and fertiliser had to be imported and was extremely costly, the balance between input and output might not be correct.

Or suppose a lot of time, effort and money was spent on vegetables but the farmers are making the harvest into alcohol – this project could be a waste of money.

- Impact analysis: What has been the impact on the staff, the organization and the stakeholders? What changes have been brought about by the project? These changes can be the ones desired, but sometimes, unexpected ones occur: A participatory impact analysis can be used to understand the stakeholders' perspectives.

Example; a Hygiene Education project linked to newly installed pumps and vegetable growing was very concerned with helping women get control of their home situation; they monitored the process of the project and during the end evaluation they used tools drawn from

Participatory Impact Analysis. Their findings were that women felt more empowered – but also reported less diarrhoea among the children.

The improvement-oriented evaluation could focus on:

- What went well and what not? Why? What improvements are needed in order to be more effective, more efficient or to reach the objective?
- What are the lessons learnt and how can this knowledge be used for future plans or projects? What did you learn from the practices and approaches implemented? Which methods worked well, which did not? Which were the best practices? Which were unsuccessful? Identification of these lessons should help with future planning and could contribute to organizational strengthening or institutional learning. Best practices can be used again and unsuccessful ones eliminated.

Internal evaluation is often improvement-oriented.

The practice of evaluating one's own effort is a natural one: women will look to see if spots have been removed from shirts after washing, a mechanic will check if the motor he repaired is working properly, a carpenter will run his hands over the wood to decide when a piece is smooth. If not, they might need to change their approach, tool or means.

3.2 Participatory evaluation

Participatory evaluation is getting more and more attention, but what does it mean?

According to the writers of the Participatory Impact Assessment (see above), it is “a process through which all the people involved at various levels of a project, engage in ongoing evaluation of the project and its effects. The focus of participatory evaluation is actively to engage those who the project is designed for, in all aspects of the evaluation process - sharing control in planning, undertaking, analysing and applying learning from an evaluation process.”

The guide mentions a number of aims of participatory evaluation:

- The first and most important aim is to develop and improve a project through learning lessons all the time and using the lessons to adapt the project according to its specific context;
- To build skills and knowledge that empower sustainable action in the future;
- To communicate with external and internal stakeholders;
- To provide a method of accountability for the project.

The participatory evaluation works from both the improvement-oriented and the accountability perspective. Some of the key principles, or advantages, of participatory evaluation, as mentioned in the guide, are as follows:

- It ensures the involvement of active participants, not just sources of information;
- It builds the capacity of local people to gather information, analyse, reflect and take effective action;
- It supports the joint learning of people involved in a project, including those who are involved at different levels and in different ways;
- It acts as a catalyst to help people commit to taking more effective action in a project or community.

4. THE ADAPTATION PHASE

In the adaptation phase, the project or programme is adapted based on the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation.

Feeding lessons learnt back into the planning.

During Monitoring and Evaluation, information is collected that can improve projects or programmes. These activities are part of the continuous process of re-evaluating the needs and the appropriateness of responses to the situation and desired changes. Accurate monitoring results can be fed into the evaluation process.

After the evaluation, the Organisation can identify best practices and lessons learnt. So the whole process of planning and assessing can start again. Usually an evaluation will provide clear recommendations concerning changes for the “what” and the “how”. The aim is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the project or programme.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Activities

In the context of the Logframe Matrix, these are the actions (tasks) that have to be taken to produce results.

Activity Schedule

A Gantt chart, a graphic representation similar to a bar chart, setting out the timing, sequence and duration of project Activities. It can also be used to identify milestones for monitoring progress, and to assign responsibility for achievement of milestones.

Analysis of Objectives

Identification and verification of future desired benefits to which the beneficiaries and target groups attach priority. The product of an analysis of objectives is the objective tree/hierarchy of objectives.

Analysis of Strategies

Critical assessment of the alternative ways of achieving objectives, and selection of a set of 'feasible' objective clusters for inclusion in the proposed project.

Appraisal Analysis of a proposed project to determine its merit and acceptability in accordance with established quality criteria.

Assumptions

External factors which could affect the progress or success of the project, but over which the project manager has no direct control. They form the 4th column of the Logframe, and are formulated in a positive way, e.g.: "Reform of penal procedures successfully implemented". If formulated as negative statements, assumptions become 'risks'.

Beneficiaries

Are those who benefit in whatever way from the implementation of the project. Distinction may be made between:

- (a) Target group(s): the group/entity who will be immediately positively affected by the project at the Project Purpose level;
- (b) Final beneficiaries: those who benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large, e.g. "children" due to increased spending on health and education, or "consumers" due to improved agricultural production and marketing.

Effectiveness

The contribution made by the project's results to the achievement of the project purpose

Efficiency

The fact that the results were obtained at reasonable cost, i.e. how well means and activities were converted into results, and the quality of the results achieved.

Evaluation

A periodic assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and relevance of a project in the context of stated objectives. It is usually undertaken as an independent examination with a view to drawing lessons that may guide future decision-making.

Gender

The social differences that are ascribed to and learned by women and men, and that vary over time and from one society or group to another. Gender differs from sex, which refers to the biologically determined differences between women and men.

Impact

The effect of the project on its wider environment, and its contribution to the wider sector objectives.

Logframe

The matrix in which a project's Intervention Logic, Assumptions, Objectively Verifiable Indicators and Sources of Verification are presented.

Logical Framework Approach (LFA)

A methodology for planning, managing and evaluating programmes and projects, involving stakeholder analysis, problem analysis, analysis of objectives, analysis of strategies, preparation of the Logframe matrix and Activity and Resource Schedules.

Monitoring

The systematic and continuous collecting, analysis and using of information for the purpose of management and decision-making.

Objective

In its generic sense it refers to Activities, Results, Project Purpose and Overall Objective.

Objective Tree

A diagrammatic representation of the situation in the future once problems have been remedied, following a problem analysis, and showing a means to ends relationship.

Overall Objective (also sometimes known as the 'Goal')

The Overall Objective explains why the project is important to society, in terms of the longer-term benefits to final beneficiaries and the wider benefits to other groups. They also help to show how the project/programme fits into the regional/sector policies of the government or organisations concerned. The Overall Objective will not be achieved by the project alone (it will only provide a contribution), but will require the contributions of other programmes and projects as well.

Problem Analysis

A structured investigation of the negative aspects of a situation in order to establish causes and their effects.

Problem Tree

A diagrammatic representation of a negative situation, showing a cause-effect relationship.

Programme

Can have various meanings, either: (i) a set of projects put together under the overall framework of a common Overall Objective/Goal; (ii) an ongoing set of initiatives/services that support common objectives (i.e a Primary Health Care Programme); or (iii) a Sector Programme, which is defined by the responsible government's sector policy (i.e a Health Sector Programme).

Project

A project is a series of activities aimed at bringing about clearly specified objectives within a defined time-period and with a defined budget.

Project Cycle

The project cycle follows the life of a project from the initial idea through to its completion. It provides a structure to ensure that stakeholders are consulted, and defines the key decisions, information requirements and responsibilities at each phase so that informed decisions can be made at each phase in the life of a project. It draws on evaluation to build the lessons of experience into the design of future programmes and projects.

Project Cycle Management A methodology for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes based on the principles of the Logical Framework Approach.

Project Purpose

The central objective of the project. The Purpose should address the core problem(s), and be defined in terms of sustainable benefits for the target group(s). For larger/complex projects there can be more than one purpose (i.e one per project component)

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis involves the identification of all stakeholder groups likely to be affected (either positively or negatively) by the proposed intervention, the identification and analysis of their interests, problems, potentials, etc. The conclusions of this analysis are then integrated into the project design.

Stakeholders

Any individuals, groups of people, institutions or firms that may have a relationship with the project/programme are defined as stakeholders. They may – directly or indirectly, positively or negatively – affect or be affected by the process and the outcomes of projects or programmes. Usually, different sub-groups have to be considered.

Transparency

Transparency implies that information is available in the public domain, and is accessible both in terms of its location and presentation – in a format and language that can be widely understood.

Work plan

The schedule that sets out the Activities (and may include the Resources) necessary to achieve a project's Results and Purpose.

Case Study

Case Study (Part 1)

Adapted from: Promoting full participation of persons with disabilities through policy development and increased livelihoods opportunities, Handicap International, 24 months, 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2017

The Planning Stage – what do you need to plan well?

You all belong to an organization called AA in Laos, you are based in two districts, Kaysone (Savannakhet) and Phonthong (Champasak). Throughout the district, people with disabilities generally do not sufficiently benefit from existing institutions and programs that can provide skill development and income generating support, such as market information, business development services and financing.

Since Local Livelihoods Service Providers have limited understanding of the situation and rights of persons with disabilities and lack appropriate skills, resources and confidence to include persons with disabilities in their services.

Since Persons with disabilities have limited opportunities to engage in policy development as well as to access education and vocational training. They face numerous social and physical barriers to access basic services, including livelihoods services, in their communities and may lack the self-confidence to actively pursue existing opportunities.

As the management of AA organisation and its staff, has to plan its first Project Cycle

Case Study (Part 2)

Good Objectives – what make good objectives?

Vision of AA Organisation: Outraged by the injustice faced by people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, we aspire to a world of solidarity and inclusion, enriched by our differences, where everyone can live in dignity.

Mission: AA is an independent charity working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. We work tirelessly alongside disabled and vulnerable people to help meet their basic needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights.

Goal: AA is running development projects aimed at reducing the risk of disability and improving the social inclusion of people with disabilities.

Coming down to a more specific scale, there were two main specific objectives:

- Specific Objective 1: The National Committee for Disabled People and Elderly (NCDE) Secretariat has increased skills to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the National Disability Decree in line with the principles of the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD)
- Specific Objective 2: Persons with Disabilities in the target areas of the project enjoy increased economic empowerment and social inclusion.

What do you think of these objectives:

- Do they fit with each other?
- Are they **measurable, do-able and relevant**?
- Are the objectives going to inspire AA?
- Can these objectives be developed into realistic plans and activities assigned to named project?

Group Work: Collecting Information

- Each group acts as AA Management Group. Each has a small budget and two weeks.
- Each group identifies the information needed, write very specific questions, then design the steps they will take to collect information
- Each group presents to plenary

Case Study (Part 3)

What AA did in fact?

One first step was a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). We needed to find out what should be done first in the situation that existed. We formed two teams, each having four local experts – an economist, a rural development specialist, a primary health care expert and a socialist. The teams were given a one-week training in PRA. Each team was then assigned a District for which, after the PRA, they would have to draft a reintegration and development plan – two Districts in all.

After PRA, there was a lot of planning and preparation needed before the implementation could start. Two Community Development Plans were made from the PRAs, and were validated by the two populations. The PRAs had found that in both Districts the needs were

- Authorities at all levels have a limited understanding of the situation and rights of persons with disabilities. More specifically, they lack the data and information required to inform resource mobilization to support increased inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream services.
- Local Livelihoods Service Providers have limited understanding of the situation and rights of persons with disabilities and lack appropriate skills, resources and confidence to include persons with disabilities in their services. Technical support is required to create inclusive models of service delivery at community level.
- Persons with disabilities have limited opportunities to engage in policy development as well as to access education and vocational training. They face numerous social and physical barriers to access basic services, including livelihoods services, in their communities and may lack the self-confidence to actively pursue existing opportunities. Beneficiaries targeted by the project will be supported to initiate income generating activities in their homes. DPOs will be engaged in the disability policy development process.

We were also surprised at how strongly the two populations wanted the primary and vocational schools with disabled persons-friendly facilities, e.g. sliding ladder and restroom for disabled children.

Case Study (Part 4)

Community Involvement

- Each group acts as AA Management Group.
- Each group identifies ways to handle this problem
- Each group presents to plenary

Our next step was to involve the Community as Active Partners. In one of the Districts there was an active Districts Development Committee ready to work with us. We wanted to give this committee support, help it learn by doing, and so become more capable. However, in the other District the Committee was heavily controlled by the chief and his family. It was clear that they would try to control who benefited from AA's project. Village and District Committee are elected but are mainly men from families of traditional chiefs.

So how would you deal with this problem?

Case Study (Part 5)

Transparency

- Each group acts as AA Management Group.
- Each group identifies the findings.
- Each group presents to plenary

If AA wants transparency, it needs to agree on what kinds of people will benefit from the project. So decide this before any names are mentioned and before start work. You should decide on what kind of people of people should contribute money or other resources. You decide that one group to benefit should be those that are "disabled".

- Who would you classify as "disabled" in your project?
- How would you decide who were the poor (comparatively) in your villages?

Case Study (Part 6)

Evaluation

- Each group acts as AA Management Group.
- Each group identifies the findings.
- Each group presents to plenary

A further step for AA was an Evaluation, done 1 year after the end of the project. They wanted to learn lessons for the future. From our point of view the biggest weakness of the evaluation was that we had not insisted on contributing to its Terms of Reference. We thought that the strong points of the project were the community involvement and the help given to the vulnerable. The Terms of Reference were more concerned with money, especially cost-effectiveness (value for money) which had not been a strong point in the project because of all the delays and over-spending.

For our own evaluation, we revisited the targeted villages few years later and found that the NCDE has annual capacity building plan and the National Disability Decree Implementation Monitoring Reports. This sees very positive.

1. Do you think AA's project scores well for relevance and sustainability?
2. Could you give reasons?

Appendix 1

Distinction between a 'PROJECT' and a 'PROGRAMME'

What is a project?

Definition: A project is a series of activities aimed at bringing about clearly specified objectives within a defined time-period and with a defined budget.

A project should also have:

- Clearly identified stakeholders, including the primary target group and the final beneficiaries;
- Clearly defined coordination, management and financing arrangements;
- A monitoring and evaluation system (to support performance management); and
- An appropriate level of financial and economic analysis, which indicates that the project's benefits will exceed its costs.

Development projects are a way of clearly defining and managing investments and change processes.

Types of project: Development projects can vary significantly in their objectives, scope and scale. Smaller projects might involve modest financial resources and last only a few months, whereas a large project might involve many millions of Euro and last for many years.

Examples of projects could include:

- A health service reform and expansion project, implemented primarily by the Ministry of Health of the partner government and with financial support of other donors, costing Euro 30m over 10 years;
- An emergency relief project, coordinated by the UN and implemented through International NGOs, costing Euro 5m over one year;
- Business promotion projects, providing grants to non-profit organizations of up to Euro 200,000 over a maximum time line of 2 years;
- A road and bridge building project, using a contracted project manager, costing Euro 50m over 5 years;
- An election monitoring project, conducted primarily by staff from the EC and its member states, costing Euro 600,000 over 5 months.

In order to accommodate this kind of diversity, it is important that project cycle management systems support the application of standard working modalities/rules in a flexible manner.

What is a programme?

Relationship between projects, programmes and policies:

A well-formulated project should derive from an appropriate balance between the EC's development policy priorities and the partner's development priorities.

Within the scope of these policy priorities, the executive arms of government or non-governmental agencies formulate the broad areas of work required to implement policy decisions. These broad areas of work are often called '**programmes**', which, like projects, may vary significantly in scope and scale. The definition of what a programme is depends essentially on how the responsible authority(ies) choose to define it.

For example, a programme may:

- cover a whole sector (e.g. Health Sector Programme);
- focus on one part of the health sector (e.g. a Primary Health Care Programme);
- be a 'package' of projects with a common focus/theme (e.g. ASEAN-EU university links programme); or
- define what is essentially just a large project with a number of different components.

USEFUL INFORMATION RESOURCES

Tearfund's Project Cycle Management tools:

<http://tilz.tearfund.org/Publications/ROOTS/Project+cycle+management.htm>

EuropeAID's Project Cycle Management Handbook:

http://www.stgm.org.tr/docs/1123450143PCM_Train_Handbook_EN-March2002.pdf

Networklearning's Information: Its collection and use through the Project Cycle:

http://www.networklearning.org/library/task,cat_view/gid.44/

Networklearning's Information: Gender Issues in the Project Cycle:

http://www.networklearning.org/library/task,cat_view/gid.43/

Participatory Impact Assessment:

http://wikis.unit.tufts.edu/confluence/download/attachments/10979253/Part_Impact_10_21_08.pdf?version=1

Mango's training manual: Practical Financial Management for NGOs

<http://www.mango.org.uk/guide/resources/manual.aspx>