Using logical framework with multi-party projects

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The author has worked extensively with Logical Framework and other planning and design methods as a consultant, trainer and workshop facilitator since 1988 in international projects in Europe and abroad. The insights and solutions described in this paper were developed in part to assist transnational projects funded by the European Commission's Innovation Programme (DG Enterprise) and programmes of DG Region.

Summary: Projects with partners in dispersed locations each pursuing their own activities are difficult to plan using standard project design tools like logical framework or other results-oriented systems such as logic modelling. The problems arise from the nature of the *cause-effect* or *means-end* logic in such systems. Simple solutions, such as adding additional logic steps or levels are unlikely to resolve these problems adequately. In many cases, a better solution is to prepare separate logical framework matrixes or logic chains for each separate element of the project (i.e. sub-projects) and for the overarching project.

This working paper assumes some familiarity with the theory behind and practical use of logical framework approach (LFA) or of logical framework as used in Goal-Oriented Project Planning (GOPP, also OOPP or ZOPP) and Project Cycle Management (PCM). The procedures used in these approaches are not explained in depth in this paper nor is it intended as a step-by-step instruction on how to apply logical framework.

What is the logic in a Logical Framework Matrix?

Logical Framework Approach (or, Analysis, LFA) is a widely used method for project (and sometimes programme) planning. A "Logical Framework Matrix" ("logframe") forms the basis of any project designed with LFA, GOPP or PCM. It consists of a matrix with a number of levels (originally four, but now sometimes five or six) and a number of columns (originally four, but the layout is often now varied). The terms used for these different levels vary and the definitions of the different levels show some variation between different agencies and practitioners; however, these are not fundamental differences.

A generic logframe matrix is usually presented as shown below (although there are many variations in practice):

Internal			*External*
Impacts[1]	Indicators	*MoV**	*… factors influencing* Impacts
Effect(s)	Indicators	*MoV*	*… factors influencing* Effects
Results/Outputs	Indicators	*MoV*	*… factors influencing* Results/ Outputs
Activities	**Means**	***Budget***	*… factors influencing* Activities

*MoV = Means of Verification, i.e. where the data required to measure the progress of indicator can be found.

The objectives[2] of the project (*Impacts, Effects, Results and/or Outputs)* and the project *activities* are described in the first column. External factors (also referred to as *conditions* or *assumptions*) which present potential risk to the project and may affect project success are described at the appropriate level[3] in the right-hand column. *Indicators* for success are given in the second column for the objectives; the place where data can be found which can be used to verify whether the indicators have in fact been achieved are given in the third column (*Means of verification*). In the generic format shown here, the *Resources* or *Means* and the *Budget* are included in the second and third columns respectively at the level of *Activities*.

The logframe presents a *chain* of logic, from the inputs and activities through outputs and results[4] to the effects of the project and its wider impact:

Inputs → Activities → Outputs/Results → Effects → Impacts

LFA and associated methods emphasize the need to plan from the desired effects and results/outputs, rather than from the inputs and activities, so the logic chain could perhaps better be written the other way round:

Impacts ← Effects ← Results/Outputs ← Activities ← Inputs

[1] A variety of terms are used. Other terms often used are (from top to bottom):
Overall Objectives ← Project Purpose ← Results ← Activities ← Means;
Goals ← Purpose ← Outputs ← Activities;
Long-term Objective ←Short-term objective ← Sub-objectives ←Activities;
Development objective ← Immediate objective ← Outputs ← Activities
Terms may be used interchangeably by practitioners and agencies.

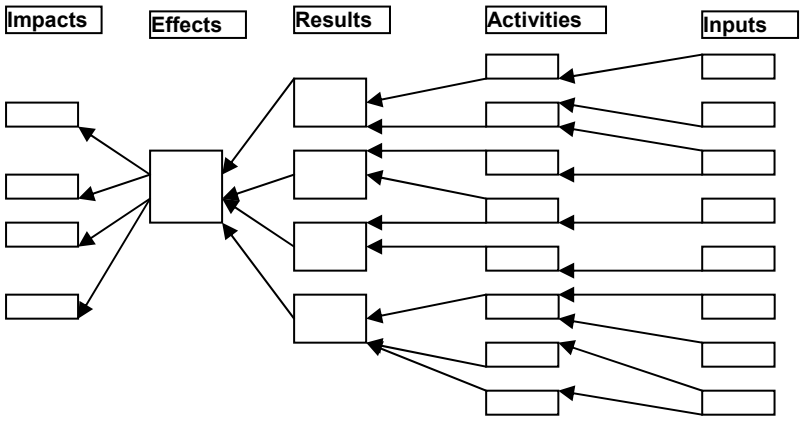
[2] "Objectives" is used here generically to refer to any of the top three (or four) levels of a logframe.

[3] Some logframe formats in common use place the *assumptions* in the row **below** the level they influence.

[4] **N.B.** Some practitioners and agencies use either the term *results* or *outputs* interchangeably; others make a **distinction** between these two terms, placing *outputs* below (leading to) *results* and ***defining them differently***.

As is shown in the logframe matrix given above, this logic is presented ***vertically*** in the matrix, with the impacts at the highest and the inputs at the lowest level.

Multiple inputs may be needed for any set of activities, multiple activities will be needed to achieve the outputs/results, multiple outputs/results are needed to achieve the effects, etc. There are therefore multiple "strands" of logic (multiple "logic chains") in a logframe, in the form of a *branching* logic.



These are usually presented in logframe matrixes by number-coding or by placing individual strands of logic in their own columns.

A complete logframe matrix compresses a large amount of information about the logic in a single presentation (often on a single page). It is intended to be a summary of the complex reality of the project design, which is complete in all essential details.

What are the design requirements of a properly constructed logframe matrix?

A properly constructed logframe must include all relevant elements of a plan, all at the correct level, and these must be placed in the matrix in such a way that the logical connections between specific individual elements are clear (i.e. the causal links must be explicit and not tacit). This means that:

- The ***chain*** of logic must be **unbroken**, with *clear* and *explicit* causal relationships between *specific* elements at one level and the next. It is not sufficient to place a set of elements at one level and imply some general relationship to elements at the next (higher) level.

- The logic must be **internally consistent**: *only* those elements in the plan which are essential for the next level of the matrix are included. It must be evident from the presentation in the matrix what the causal logic is (reading from the bottom of the matrix up to the top: "How will doing/achieving *A, B* and *C* lead to *X*" or "What does *D* lead to?").

- The logic must be **complete**: *all* the elements needed to allow the next level in the chain of logic to be realised must be included (either as the project's internal *"intervention logic"* or as *external factors*,). This logic is tested by reading from the top down to the bottom ("If we are to achieve/do X, will A, B and C be sufficient, or is more needed?")

- Objectives at all levels must be **concrete, specific** and **measurable** in some way. The intention is that the intended objectives are unequivocal and clear. Vague or broad objectives do not assist persons who read the logframe matrix to understand the real intentions of the project designers.

It is therefore not actually possible to construct a properly-formed logframe for projects in which many elements are unknown and cannot be hypothesized, and it is difficult to construct a logframe for projects in which process plays a primary role (i.e. when the activities or even the outputs or results are determined at a later date according to the way in which the project develops).

Where are the parties involved in a project shown in the logframe?

The different levels in the logframe focus on the different parties involved in the process. These are as follows[5]:

Level	Intervention logic defines:	Focuses on:
Impacts	*… the expected impact in broader terms and over a longer period*	Society in general
Effects	*… the expected effects or outcomes of the project*	All beneficiaries of the project
Results or Outputs	*… the concrete services or products to be provided by the project*	Direct recipients (sometimes, partners in the project)
Activities	*… the activities which will be carried out by the project staff*	Project staff

The *means* (*resources, inputs*) may or may not be given a separate level[6].

Level	Intervention logic defines:	Focuses on:
Means	*… money, people, equipment, material or other resources made available for the project's activities*	Financiers, other parties involved

It should be clear from the descriptions given for each element in the matrix which parties are involved. For results, for instance, it should be clear not only what change is expected in actual performance but also ***who*** is actually expected to change their behaviour.

It also assists in preparing a logframe matrix if there is a clear focus on different parties at different levels. Failure to do so leads to confusion between different levels in the matrix, and stimulates vague formulations of objectives.

How does logframe deal with projects focusing on capacity or institutional development?

In recent years, with the greater emphasis on the development of capacity of organisations and institutions, an additional level is often introduced so that the logic chain is as follows:

Overall Goal ← ***Development Goal*** [7] ← Project Goal ← etc.

There is some variation in the way in which plans based on this extended logframe are defined. A common set of definitions for the objectives[2] such a logframe is as follows:

- The ***Overall Goal*** describes the societal benefit, sectoral benefit, etc. and focuses on the public in a geographical area or a sector in the wider and longer-term.
- The ***Development Goal*** focuses on the people who are *served* by an institution or agency (the *end users*), and explains what they are enabled to do or achieve because of the changed (improved) quality of service in the institution (i.e., as described in the *Project Goal*). It is the proper use of the institution's services by the "clients" of the institution which contributes to the higher-level societal or sectoral goals.
- The ***Project Goal*** describes the improvements in the way in which the institution provides *service* to these "clients". The *Project Goal* therefore focuses on all persons working in the institution or agency and the changes to their job performance, or to the performance of departments in the institution.
- The ***Results/Outputs*** explain what service or product is delivered to the *direct recipients*; these may or may not be some or all of the persons working in the institution or agency.

This allows a logic chain to be developed such as (for a project on quality development in a farm extension department) as follows:

[5] Although the terms used may vary, their relative position in the logframe is the same because of the requirements of a causal *if-then* logic chain.
[6] In the original format, developed in the 1970's for USAID, *Activities* were not mentioned, and the *Inputs* were placed in the bottom row of the matrix. When GTZ adapted this for their ZOPP planning methodology in the 1980's, they placed *Activities* at the lowest level and *Inputs* in the second of four columns at the level of *activities*. The logic, however, is also in this case: "***if*** the *inputs* or *resources* are made available, ***then*** the *activities* can be carried out".
[7] Terms used may differ: for instance, *Intermediate Goal* is sometimes used.

Project Activities→	Results / Outputs→	Project Goal →	Development Goal →	Overall Goal
"The project does activities such as training events, development of coaching skills, etc. within the organisation …"	*"…as a result of which extension workers transfer relevant knowledge and skills on appropriate new methods, techniques, crops to farmers."*	*"The risk of crop failure from pests and diseases is reduced and production of marketable produce increases…."*	*"…thus ensuring increased income and prosperity for the members of farm households and related sectors served by the department."*	*"This contributes to increased domestic income in the region and improved food security."*

Note that the logic narrative given here is only exemplary and is **not** complete; many other elements would be needed in the project as well and there are substantial risks at each level from external factors related to, for example, access to inputs, price mechanisms in the market, economic and social aspects, etc., etc. All these must be covered in a complete logframe matrix.

In the example given above, the *project goal* focuses on the **farmers**. It would, of course, also be possible to construct a logic in which the *Project Goal* focuses on the **Extension Department.** In that case, the "increased income and prosperity" would become part of the *Overall Goal* (multiple objectives are acceptable in the high levels of the logframe matrix). The "transfer of relevant knowledge and skill" would become part of the *Project Goal*. And the improved ***ability*** of extension workers to do their work well would become the *output* or *result*. This is often the way in which such projects are defined.

However, objectives related to increased ability, knowledge or attitude as a result of training, coaching, and other interventions properly belong not to the logframe itself but to the design objectives of the specific training events, management agreements, etc.

The policy of the organisation responsible for designing and approving the project and the willingness of the project implementers to accept higher "aspiration" levels determines in practice how the logframe matrix is constructed.

How does logframe deal with multi-party projects focusing on networks, etc.?

Where a project aims not a single institution but at a network of institutions, agencies or other parties, the planning matrix becomes more complex.

- The ***Overall Goal*** describes the societal benefit, sectoral benefit, etc. and focuses on people in one or more geographical areas and/or sectors in the wider and longer-term. At an abstract level these will be the same benefits; at a concrete level (e.g. if indicators are needed for evaluation purposes) they may be different.

- The ***Development Goal*** focuses on the same or different groups of people (possibly in different locations or sectors) who are *served* by different institutions or agencies, and explains what they are enabled to do or achieve because of the changes in the different institutions. What people are enabled to do or achieve may or may not be the same between different target groups served by different parties.

- The ***Project Goal*** describes the improvements in the way in which the institution provides *service* to these "clients". The *Project Goal* therefore focuses on the persons working in the different institutions or agencies and the changes to their job performance, or to the performance of sections and departments in these institutions. Evidently, these changes and improvements probably will not be the same among different institutions (except in abstract terms).

- The ***Results/Outputs*** explain what service or product is delivered to the *direct recipients*; these may or may not be the same in different institutions, geographical locations, sectors, etc.

As discussed earlier, a logframe matrix is intended to describe *explicitly* the logical causality between *specific* elements in the matrix. When different parties are involved, and where the improvements and changes expected from the project are not the same, it becomes difficult to express these clearly in a single logical construct.

In such cases, it may be clearer (and certainly simpler) to prepare ***multiple matrixes***, one for each network or for each geographical location or sector involved in the project. Preparation of multiple logframes might seem to increase the complexity of planning, but in fact it reduces the complexity in each individual logframe matrix and therefore makes the planning and design process easier. It will also be evident that it makes more sense for networks in, say, four countries to each prepare their own plan, since they are knowledgeable about their own situation and that of the members of their network. In effect, such a project is designed with discrete *sub-projects*.

However, this raises the question of coordination of objectives and of the strategies to be applied in such a project. A multi-party project which spans multiple locations, with different networks of partners in these locations all pursuing different objectives, will almost certainly still require an overarching plan which describes what the partner networks provide to each other by way of support, how they transfer information, share expertise, exchange experiences and learn from each other.

Many projects carried out within Europe under funding by the European Commission are of this type. One solution which has proven effective in such situations is the design of a separate logframe matrix for the "transnational" project.

Although this logframe matrix is constructed using the same principles as those described earlier, the focus of the various levels is different, since it is directed internally to the project partners or participating networks. This gives the following definitions of logframe levels:

Level	**Intervention logic defines:**	**Focuses on:**
Goal	*… real contributions to the programme under which the project is funded and thus to achievement of the programme or high level strategic goals*	Those involved in *programme* management and through them the supporting institutions and (public) bodies (and thus in the end the general public)
Purpose	*… successful and timely project implementation in each network or sub-project; timely corrective measures*	Members of the different networks in each location
Outputs	*… support needed by the collaborating networks or sub-projects in different locations in order to implement their own work; products or services which transcend the sub-project (e.g. collating learnings across different networks or sub-projects.*	Management of the leading partners in the different networks; people working in taskforces or cross-cutting themes; permanent or ad hoc groups charged with specific tasks at the transnational level of the project
Project Management Activities	*… the activities which will be carried out by the project management and by project members to support each other, exchange experiences, transfer information, share expertise, learn from each other*	Project management, support staff, and lead partners in the sub-projects or networks in each location; designated individuals from the networks; specialists or additional (sub-contracted) consultants
Means	*… money, people, equipment, material or other resources made available for support, exchange, project reporting, wider dissemination, etc.*	Financiers and other parties involved in the funding of the overarching transnational project

As noted earlier, the actual terms used for each level may be different for different agencies or practitioners.

In many cases, complex projects of the kind described in this paper are forced to prepare a single logframe matrix. This often leads to confusion and lack of clarity in the plan and difficulties in choosing appropriate objectives at the various levels. A common solution is to make the objectives broad and vague, something which the logical framework approach was designed to prevent.

Is all this also relevant to planning systems other than LFA?

In general, all planning tools which use causal logic (means-end or if-then chains) to describe a project design share characteristics with logical framework approach. This is true of logic modelling (with its inputs→ activities → outputs → effects or outcomes logic) and the results-based planning and accountability systems currently used in Project Cycle Management (PCM) and the Dutch "VBTB" approach. The differences are mostly superficial, and relate to the terminology used and the format of presentation. The underlying logic is in general the same and therefore all such planning systems face similar constraints and the issues discussed here are not the result of deficiencies in LFA as a planning method.

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