



Programme/project management: The results-based approach

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ICRC

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PART I: CONTENT



PART I: CONTENT

INTRODUCTION



1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this handbook is to introduce the user to Results-Based Management (RBM) and its application in programme/project management. It describes the various components of RBM and Project Cycle Management and explains how to integrate and institutionalize them in field practice. It guides you through the various processes and makes recommendations on how best to apply this approach in the field.

The handbook accompanies the course on “Programme/Project Management: The Results-Based Approach” organized by the ICRC’s Economic Security Unit (Ecosec). The course aims to strengthen the capacities of teams carrying out economic security or other similar programmes/projects to design, plan and monitor results-driven interventions. It provides tools to analyse problems and stakeholders, define objectives, determine activities and monitor interventions based on the population’s needs. It is one of three Ecosec “basic courses”:

- Module 1: Assessment
- Module 2: Programme/Project Management: The Results-Based Approach
- Module 3: Measuring Results

The course is compulsory for all Ecosec team members and is open to other practitioners, such as staff of National Societies and other ICRC units.

The handbook and training package were compiled in line with the ICRC’s management priority number 2, which aims to reinforce RBM.

RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT



2 RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT

2.1 What is Results-Based Management?

Results-Based Management (RBM) is a management strategy that focuses on performance and the achievement of results (outputs, outcomes and impacts).

The aim of RBM is to manage an intervention while trying to ensure its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and other quality criteria.

RBM provides a structured, logical model for identifying expected results and the inputs and activities needed to accomplish them.

- *25 health centres built in the Nminunga region.*
- *250 food aid kits distributed to 250 displaced households in March 2007.*

Although these statistics are impressive and show the ICRC's efforts to assist a population, they focus on what was done rather than on what was achieved. They do not tell what the initial objectives were, what real changes were brought about, or the effect they had on people's lives.

- *250 households in the Nminunga region can safely access a health post on foot in less than 40 minutes, thereby improving the health conditions of the region's inhabitants.*
- *250 displaced households have access to and consume at least 2,400 Kcal/day without selling the economic assets that are essential to their return home.*

These are objectives that focus on the people's situation. They are written with the hoped-for result in mind, and thus make it possible to measure if that result has been achieved and a difference genuinely made for the people concerned.

Note

Results-Based Management is common sense. Plan, manage and measure what you do with a clear focus on the results you want to achieve.

RBM logic

-
- | | | | |
|---|---|---------------|---|
| 1 |  | Assess | What is the current situation? |
| 2 |  | Think | What caused it? Who is involved?
What are we going to achieve? |
| 3 |  | Plan | How are we going to do it? With whom? When?
With what resources? |
| 4 |  | Do | Get it done. How is it going?
Do we need to adapt? |
| 5 |  | Review | What went well/badly?
What can we learn for next time? |
-

RBM introduces a structured management approach that keeps an organization focused on the expected results throughout the process and not on the implementation of activities or on budget control. By being able to measure results, a team will better understand the value of its work.

RBM changes an organization's culture. It was first conceived for the private sector. Its objective was to track financial results, such as profits, market share, etc.

The term RBM is used to describe:

- A philosophy that focuses on achieving results, i.e. tangible changes
- A set of tools for programme/project management
- An institutional framework summarizing information on an organization's objectives

For the purposes of this handbook, RBM refers to the first two aspects.

2.2 Focus on people: an ethical responsibility

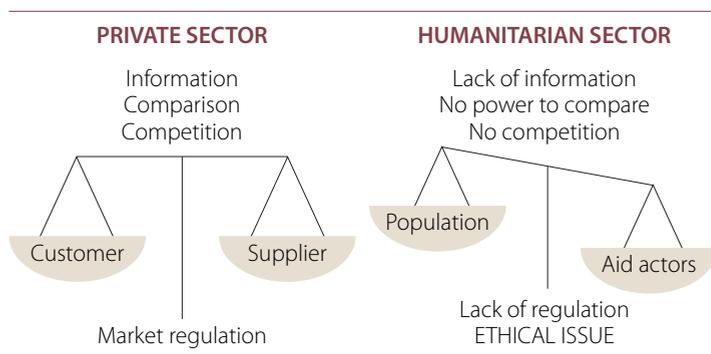
Key message

People benefiting from humanitarian/social interventions depend on the quality of work they get from an organization that they cannot really choose themselves. Those carrying out such interventions therefore have an ethical responsibility to take into account local capacities, culture and vulnerabilities and to manage resources efficiently and produce results that have a beneficial effect on the population's situation.

The humanitarian sector does not function like the private sector.

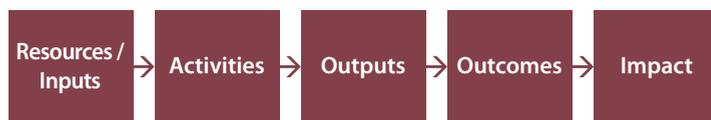
In the private – or commercial – sector, customers have a choice: they can choose between different providers of a given service or goods; they have access to information; they can put pressure on providers to compete among themselves; they can, if they wish, decide to change suppliers. Consequently, the balance of power between customers and providers of goods and services is relatively even. The market is regulated.

In the humanitarian sector, populations do not choose to be affected by a shock/hazard and are not in a position to choose the aid they receive or who they receive it from. They cannot compare different offers or put pressure on operators to deliver what they need or want. There is an uneven power balance between beneficiaries and humanitarian agencies, and no natural regulation. This is why focusing on performance and results is an ethical responsibility for the humanitarian sector.



2.3 RBM terminology

2.3.1 The results chain



Results

Results are the effects of an intervention. Such effects can be intended or unintended, positive or negative. There are three levels of results: outputs, outcomes and impacts.

Outputs

Outputs are the products, capital goods and services that are produced by an intervention, including changes arising from the intervention that are relevant to the achievement of outcomes. Outputs are the first level of results. They are the most immediate effects of an activity, the results over which you have most control.

Example: 100 farmers' associations have increased their food production by 25% in the forthcoming season.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the likely or achieved medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs. Outcomes are the second level of results. You have less control over outcomes than over outputs, but they are essential because they represent the tangible changes you are trying to bring about in your work.

Example: 2,000 households are able to meet their food needs in terms of quality and quantity at all times.

Impacts

Impacts are the primary and secondary long-term effects of an intervention, be they positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended. Impacts are the third level of results. They make up the "big picture" of the changes that you are working towards but that your activities alone may not achieve. Impacts represent the underlying goal of your work and justify the intervention.

Example: The whole population of X is able to meet its essential needs in a sustainable manner.

2.3.2 The RBM logic

As the results chain indicates, an intervention begins with a set of inputs and activities that result in outputs, outcomes and impacts.

- **Inputs** are used to carry out **activities**.
- **Activities** produce specific **outputs**.
- **Outputs** produce **outcomes**.
- **Outcomes** contribute to **impacts**.

Note

RBM has implications at every level of an operation. At field level, the delegates and field officers will focus on "outputs", while the coordinators will focus on "outcomes".

2.4 RBM in the ICRC: Planning for Results

At the ICRC, RBM is in part translated into the Planning for Results process. The ICRC defines Planning for Results as “A corporate function that assesses context, target groups, problems/needs, risks, constraints and opportunities and sets priorities to ensure an appropriate level of coordination and alignment of actions and resources towards the achievement of expected results”.

Result levels		Objective levels	
Impact	↔	Desired humanitarian impact	(Per sub-target population)
Outcome	↔	General Objective (GO)	(Per sub-target population and per programme)
Output	↔	Specific Objective (SO)	(Several SOs per GO)

2.5 Project Cycle Management

Project Cycle Management (PCM) is the term given to the process of planning and managing programmes/projects. This process can be illustrated as a sequence of different phases (the project cycle). PCM contributes to RBM by rationalizing the steps leading to a successful outcome.

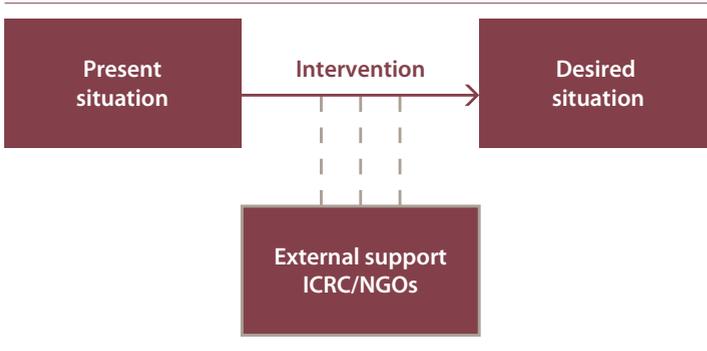
2.5.1 Defining projects and interventions

Whatever its level, an intervention has the same characteristics:

- It is a mechanism to solve “a problem”.
- It has a deadline, i.e. a timeframe and a completion date.
- It takes advantage of existing opportunities in the context and of local capacities.
- It has a specific amount of resources.

- It benefits a specific group.
- It is carried out by a team/has a team leader.

Figure 1: An intervention



The whole process of assisting a population in passing from the existing situation (crisis) to a desired future situation can be improved by using PCM/RBM.

2.5.2 The project cycle

The way in which projects are planned and carried out follows a sequence known as the project cycle. The cycle starts with an assessment that may lead to the design, implementation, review and evaluation of an intervention.

Interventions are identified in the context of an agreed strategy. The project cycle provides a structure in which stakeholders are consulted and relevant data are gathered so that informed decisions can be made at key stages in the life of the project.

The project cycle has five components (see Figure 2).¹ It is in itself a continuous process:

¹ The way a project cycle is represented can vary from one organization to another.

Figure 2: The Project Cycle

- **Assessment:** The aim of an assessment is to understand a situation in order to identify the problem(s), the source of the problem(s) and the consequences of the problem(s). The purpose of an assessment is not to identify an intervention but to find out whether or not an intervention is required, based on identified needs.
- **Planning/design:** The aim of this phase is to define the desired future situation of the affected population and to determine the objectives, strategies and activities needed to achieve it, taking into account local capacities, the ICRC's mandate and capacities, and the constraints and risks. At the end of the planning and design phase, a project proposal is produced and ready to implement.
- **Implementation:** During this phase, activities are carried out to achieve the desired results.
- **Monitoring:** This is a continuous process throughout the life of the project, involving monitoring and follow-up of all the activities. The resulting progress reports lead to decisions on whether or not an intervention needs to be changed or adapted as the situation evolves.
- **Review and evaluation:** At a given point in the intervention, an analysis of the situation is carried out, which results in intermediate/final reports that lead to recommendations for and adaptations to the intervention or to lessons learned for the organization.

2.5.3 Origins of PCM

Note

More than 50 percent of humanitarian/development interventions fail, in the sense that they:

- do not achieve all of their objectives;
- do not deliver all of the promised products or services;
- sacrifice the predefined quality;
- are not completed in the given time schedule;
- use more resources than originally planned; or
- deliver the promised products and services, but needs persist.

PCM arose out of an analysis of the effectiveness of development aid undertaken by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee during the late 1980s. Evaluation findings indicated that a significant proportion of development projects had performed poorly. In fact, the long-term benefits for the beneficiaries were much fewer than expected.

The evaluations also found that the main causes of failure were poor planning and preparation. They highlighted the following problems in particular:

- Many projects were not relevant to the beneficiaries.
- Risks were insufficiently taken into account.
- Factors affecting the longer-term sustainability of project benefits were often ignored.

To make things worse, lessons from the past were rarely incorporated into new policy and practice, which slowed down possible improvements.

2.5.4 Aims of PCM

Project Cycle Management or PCM is the term used to describe the management of activities and decision-making procedures applied during the life cycle of a programme/

project including key tasks, roles and responsibilities, key documents, and decision options.

PCM aims to **maximize the benefits of programmes/projects for the beneficiaries** by observing the following essential precepts:

- Respect the operational strategy identification phase
- Increase the involvement of beneficiaries
- Prepare a coherent and comprehensive project design
- Take factors of sustainability into account
- Apply transparent procedures
- Create a framework for learning

However, there are many barriers to effective PCM, including:

- Lack of time or not making time to plan
- Not knowing how to plan
- Difficulty in getting the right people together
- Difficulty in planning because of an uncertain future
- Wanting to do things immediately because needs are urgent, rather than think about them

PCM brings together aid management principles and analytical tools and techniques and applies them within the structured decision-making process of the project cycle to ensure that:

- Projects are relevant to the agreed strategy and to the real needs of beneficiaries.
- Projects are feasible in that objectives can be realistically achieved within the constraints of the operating environment and the capabilities of the implementing agencies.
- Projects are sustainable (with the exception of relief interventions).

Managing an intervention basically means respecting the phases of PCM. This requires time and method. It is also common sense. Lots of mistakes (and their impacts on

populations) could be avoided if people were more rigorous in the design and follow-up of interventions.

Key message

PCM provides an appropriate set of methods, tools and principles to operationalize RBM in humanitarian interventions.

Improving interventions using PCM

Projects are developed to attract funds.	→	Projects are designed to solve problems.
Projects have to fit a standardized set of outputs.	→	Projects develop local criteria and indicators to suit the local situation and achieve excellence.
The focus is on producing documents/reports.	→	The focus is on project design and making decisions.
There is poor analysis of the situation.	→	Through well-planned and in-depth assessment, the situation is well understood.
Projects are activity driven.	→	Projects are results driven.
Results cannot be measured.	→	Each result has measurable indicators that have been monitored to give evidence of the results.
Short-term vision.	→	Systemic vision.
Complex multi-objective interventions.	→	Focused interventions.
Inconsistent documentation.	→	Structured documentation based on the expected results.

2.5.5 PCM principles

PCM is based on three main principles:

1. Decision-making criteria and procedures are defined at each phase, including key information requirements and quality assessment criteria.

2. The phases in the cycle are progressive – each phase should be completed for the next to be tackled with success (with the exception of monitoring, which is a continuous process).
3. New programming and project identification draws on the results of monitoring and evaluation as part of a structured process of feedback and institutional learning.

In practice, the duration and importance of each phase of the cycle will vary for different interventions, depending on their scale and scope and on the specific operating modalities under which they are set up. Nevertheless, ensuring that adequate time and resources are committed to project identification and formulation is critical to supporting the design and effective implementation of relevant and feasible projects/interventions.

PCM often uses the Logical Framework Approach (see Chapter 6), along with other tools, to support a number of assessments/analyses, including of stakeholders, problems, objectives and strategies. It incorporates key quality assessment criteria into each stage of the project cycle and requires the production of good-quality document(s) in each phase (with commonly understood concepts and definitions) to support well-informed decision-making.

PART II: PROCESS



PART II: PROCESS

THE PLANNING/DESIGN PHASE



3. THE PLANNING/DESIGN PHASE

The aim of the planning/design phase is to define the desired future situation to be achieved by the intervention, taking into account the problems and needs, local capacities, the ICRC's mandate and capacities, and the constraints and risks.

There are four main stages of the planning/design phase:

- 1. Problem identification:** This stage focuses on absorbing the assessment recommendations and identifying more precisely the main problems. It is a transitional step between the end of the assessment and the beginning of the design phase.
- 2. Identification of the operational strategy:** This stage involves the selection of problems to be tackled, based on ICRC doctrine (especially the Assistance Doctrine 49), the Ecosec Guidelines and Ecosec capacities, and the identification of suitable strategies to solve them.
- 3. Intervention logic:** This stage entails completing the intervention's objectives, activities and assumptions and identifying the set of indicators for monitoring.
- 4. Towards implementation:** Based on the intervention logic, this stage focuses on the activities, resources, time schedule and monitoring system of the proposed intervention and paves the way for its launch.

Each stage is dealt with in a separate chapter below.

Note

The design phase should be carried out as an iterative learning process, rather than as a simple set of linear "steps". For example, you may have done your problem identification and then, during the identification of the operational strategy, be required to revise the stakeholder analysis.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION



4. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

4.1 Aims of problem identification

The problems and their interactions in a given situation must be understood. Information from the assessment is analysed and, if needed, completed using the relevant methodology and tools (see *Guidelines for assessment in emergencies*).²

It is useful to go through the analysis process in a participatory way and in consultation with the assessment team, whenever possible.

Problem identification involves:

- 1. Stakeholder analysis**, including preliminary institutional capacity assessment, gender analysis, and assessment of the needs of other vulnerable groups.
- 2. Problem analysis** – establishing a profile of the main problems, including cause-effect relationships.

The quality of the analysis at this stage will depend on the quality and representativeness of the data collected during the assessment (if the information collected is wrong, incomplete or biased, the analysis will also be wrong, incomplete or biased).

Note

Problem analysis requires the use of tools to summarize, compare, prioritize and organize data.

² ICRC/International Federation, *Guidelines for assessment in emergencies*, Geneva, March 2008.

4.2 Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder analysis is a technique used to identify and assess the importance of key people, groups of people or institutions that may significantly influence the success of your activity or project.³

Key message

Importance of stakeholder analysis:

- To place the population within the overall context
- To identify organizations that are already working in the area and their activities and to understand their position regarding the crisis and their interests, weaknesses and strengths
- To identify possible partners for the programme/project and discard others

The following method of stakeholder analysis is adapted from Alain Mourey.⁴

Humanitarian action takes place in a diversity of contexts in terms of vulnerability to crises, social and functional dimensions, and diverging interests and issues at stake. By looking at the various factors, it is possible to identify the different stakeholders in a given environment.

The general objective of stakeholder analysis is to ensure that operations take place in the best possible conditions. This requires identifying the interests, activities and needs of stakeholders and taking them into account in dialogue

³ Management Sciences for Health/United Nations Children's Fund, *The Guide to Managing for Quality*, 1998, <http://erc.msh.org/quality/ittools/itstkan.cfm>.

⁴ Alain Mourey, *Manuel de nutrition pour l'intervention humanitaire*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004, which in turn was adapted from *L'analyse des acteurs dans les actions de développement et d'urgence*, in: *Compte-rendu du modèle test "Urgence Réhabilitation Développement"*, S. Ghinet (Institut Universitaire d'Etudes du Développement) and F. Grunewald (ICRC), 1997.

with them, so that mutually beneficial arrangements can be reached and potential obstacles to successful programme/project implementation can be avoided or reduced.

On a practical level, this involves:

- Identifying the affected people and groups in a specific environment
- Defining who does what, when, how, where and why
- Identifying individual interests
- Understanding power relations
- Defining the need for assistance
- Understanding operational strengths and opportunities

Stakeholders can be:

- Individuals
- Interest groups
- Local authorities
- Services

Stakeholders are identified according to a range of criteria:

- Their characteristics:
 - Social status (their position in the social structure)
 - Identity (their image in a system of communication and exchange)
 - Projects (their purpose or objective as determined by circumstances and available resources)
 - Power (their ability to influence other stakeholders)
- Their function and role within the social system under consideration
- Their interests
- The issues at stake for them arising from specific events, and especially from humanitarian action

A variety of tools is available to support stakeholder analysis. Whatever the tool used, the quality of information obtained will be significantly influenced by how the information is

collected. In this regard, the effective use of participatory planning methods and group facilitation tools can help ensure that the views and perspectives of different stakeholder groups are adequately represented and understood.

Stakeholder analysis is conducted for each of the above-listed criteria, based on an analysis matrix. Stakeholders determine the columns, and the issues determine the rows.

Stakeholder analysis matrix – example of a General Food Distribution (GFD)⁵

Issues	Persons displaced by war	Farmers' Association	Trades-people	Authorities	Garrison
Inclusion in the GFD	Yes (they are hungry)	No	Yes (to control it)	Yes (to show goodwill)	Yes (to sell it)
Ensure GFD delivery	Yes	(depends on timing and harvest)	No (if they cannot control it)	Yes	Yes
Prevent GFD delivery	No	(depends on timing and harvest)	Yes (if they cannot control it)	Yes (if trades-people pay them enough)	Yes (if trades-people pay them enough)
Avoid negative GFD side-effects	Yes (if this ensures GFD continuation)	Yes	Yes (the GFD may cause a drop in the price of basic commodities)	Yes (to avoid unrest and pressure)	(depends on how such side-effects affect their role and influence)

The simplified matrix does not include such stakeholders as the humanitarian agency involved in the GFD, donors, and third parties that support the war effort. Stakeholders must be analysed in this example according to their relevance to

⁵ Adapted from Alain Mourey, *Manuel de nutrition pour l'intervention humanitaire*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004, pp. 426–427.

the GFD. Negotiation must be undertaken in order to ensure the smooth delivery of the planned food assistance, e.g. its acceptance by all stakeholders. Here again, participatory dialogue is the only possible approach.

4.3 Problem analysis

4.3.1 What is problem analysis?

Problem analysis can be defined as dissecting and thoroughly studying one or more problems with the objective of deciding if and how to tackle them.

The assumption behind problem analysis is that there is a clear cause (or set of causes) and a clear solution (or set of solutions). Indeed, it can be useful in many situations to find out what caused a problem and how the problem developed, because if the cause can be identified, it is easier to remove it and thereby solve the problem.

As explained in the *Guidelines for assessment in emergencies*,⁶ the aim of an assessment is to understand the situation in order to identify the problem(s), the cause(s) of the problem(s) and the consequence(s) of the problem(s). Carrying out an assessment requires doing a problem analysis.

The quality of the analysis will be significantly influenced by the stakeholders involved in the analysis and the way they have participated or been consulted. The effective use of participatory methods and group facilitation tools can help ensure that the views and perspectives of different stakeholder groups are adequately represented and understood.

A variety of tools can be used to support problem analysis. One of these is the “problem tree” or “why why tree”.

⁶ ICRC/International Federation, *Guidelines for assessment in emergencies*, Geneva, March 2008.

4.3.2 The problem tree

The aim of a problem tree is to structure, summarize and organize the findings of the assessment. It involves identifying the negative aspects of an existing situation, i.e. “problems”, and establishes the “cause-effect relationships” between them.

Note

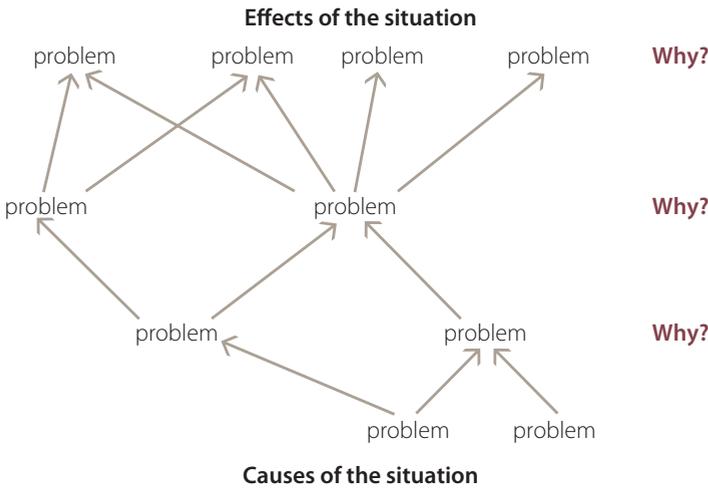
In many respects, problem analysis is the most critical stage of programme/project design, as it guides all subsequent analysis of and decision-making on priorities.

The mere listing and ranking of problems do not provide for a sufficiently deep analysis of the situation. The problem tree is therefore a useful instrument for you to engage in a systematic analysis of problems and their cause-effect relationship to an identified core problem.

The systematic analysis of a problem is important, as it provides the basis for identifying strategies to solve the problem. It opens discussion, encourages the active participation of the people concerned/affected, promotes transparency, and increases the acceptability and viability of the identified solutions.

As the name suggests, the problem tree is visually represented as a “tree”. It includes the main or core problem (the trunk), the causes of the problem (the roots) and the effects of the problem (the branches).

Figure 3: Process of creating a problem tree or why why tree



4.3.3 How to create a problem tree

Creating a problem tree should ideally be undertaken as a participatory group exercise. It requires pieces of paper or card on which to write individual problem statements, which can then be sorted visually into cause-effect relationships.

To build a problem tree, follow the step-by-step procedure below and adapt it to the specific needs of the group.

Problems are uncomfortable situations that are difficult to cope with and must be solved. A problem can pinpoint specific essential needs.

Step 1: Brainstorm the problems that participants consider to be priorities. This first step can either be completely open (no preconceived notions as to what participants' priority concerns/problems might be) or more directed (specifying

a “known” high priority problem or objective based on a preliminary analysis of existing information and stakeholder consultations). It is important to agree first on the definition of a “problem” (see box above).

Step 2: From the problems identified through the brainstorming exercise, **agree on the main or core problem**. Write it on a post-it note or piece of card and place it in the middle of the wall or floor. This constitutes the trunk. You can have several main problems, but try to focus on one at a time.

Step 3: Look for **issues related** to the main problem (i.e. causes and then effects).

Step 4: Begin to **establish a hierarchy of causes and effects:**

- **Identify the causes** of the main problem by asking “Why?” until you can go no further. Some problems may have more than one cause. Problems directly causing the main problem are placed underneath the main problem. These are the roots.
- **Identify the effects** of the main problem by asking “What happens then?” until you can go no further. Some problems may have more than one effect. Problems that are identified as direct effects of the main or core problem are placed above the trunk. These are the branches.

All other problems are then sorted in the same way. If there are two or more causes combining to produce an effect, they should be placed at the same level in the diagram. Encourage discussion and ensure that participants feel able to move the post-it notes or cards around.

Step 5: Connect the problems with cause-effect arrows clearly showing key links.

Step 6: Review the diagram, check through the problem tree to make sure that each problem logically leads to the next. Ask yourself/the group: Are there important problems that have not been mentioned yet? If so, specify the problems and include them in an appropriate place.

Step 7: Copy the diagram onto a sheet of paper to keep as a record, or take a picture of it.

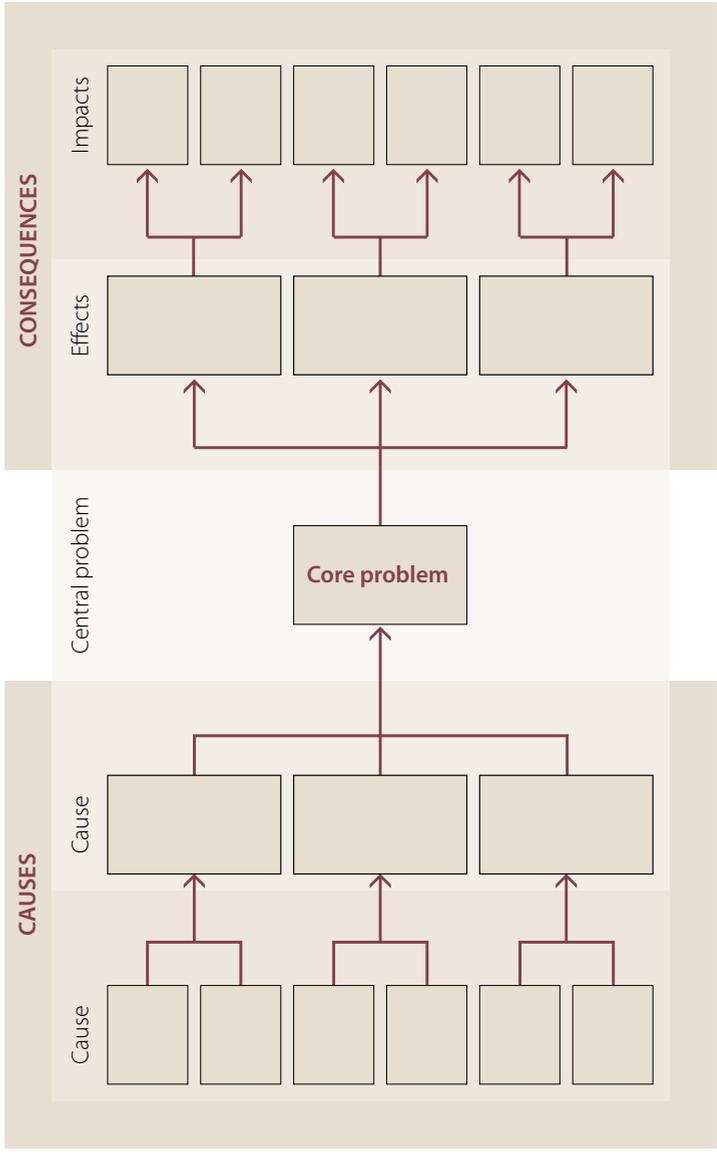
The product of the exercise (the problem tree) should provide a robust but simplified version of reality. A problem tree cannot (and should not) contain or explain the complexities of every identifiable cause-effect relationship. Once complete, problem trees represent a summary picture of the existing negative situation.

The process is as important as the product. The exercise should be treated as a learning experience and an opportunity for different views and interests to be expressed.

If necessary, the different aspects of a problem area can be further elaborated through focus groups or interviews.

When the problem tree is created with the population's participation, the analysis of the problem is enriched and joint learning among the members of the population is encouraged.

Figure 4: Problem tree





PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

OPERATIONAL STRATEGY



5. OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

5.1 The objective of an operational strategy

This is the stage at which you define the results you want to achieve and your strategy for achieving them. It entails identifying in clear terms the results being sought at all levels: output, outcome and impact. It is a good idea to conduct the process in a participatory way.

Identification of the operational strategy includes defining:

1. The **objectives tree**, to determine the expected results or desired situation.
2. The **scope of the intervention**, to identify:
 - a. what can be done by the organization; and
 - b. the external factors that can affect the intervention.

During this stage, you will verify the feasibility of an intervention, gauge its possible impact in solving the existing problem(s), and identify the key issues to take into account to ensure its sustainability.

It may be possible at this stage to return to the field to do some specific research (pre-feasibility studies).

Key message

A successful analysis of operational strategies will look at different ways to solve a given situation, focusing on the intended effects and not on the existing "know-how".

5.2 Analysis of the objectives

Note

Once you know where you are, you can define where you want to be.

5.2.1 The objectives tree

Analysis of objectives is a methodological approach employed to:

- Describe the situation in the future once the identified problems have been remedied
- Verify the hierarchy of objectives
- Illustrate the means-ends relationships in a diagram

An objectives tree is similar to a problem tree, except that it concerns objectives rather than problems. It is created by looking at the needs arising from the problems, the needs being the link between the problems and the objectives.

The “negative situations” identified in the problem tree are converted into solutions, expressed as “positive achievements”. These positive achievements are in fact objectives and are presented in a diagram of objectives showing a means-ends hierarchy. The diagram aims to provide a clear overview of the desired future situation.

The objectives tree should assist in:

- Establishing priorities
- Assessing how realistic the achievement of some objectives may be
- Identifying additional means that may be required to achieve the desired ends

The aim of the objectives tree (or solution tree) is to define the desired future situation for all the problems, so that you can identify what can be tackled by the organization.

Once complete, the objectives tree provides a summary picture of the desired future situation, including the indicative means by which the ends can be achieved. As with the problem tree, the objectives tree should provide a simplified but robust summary of reality.

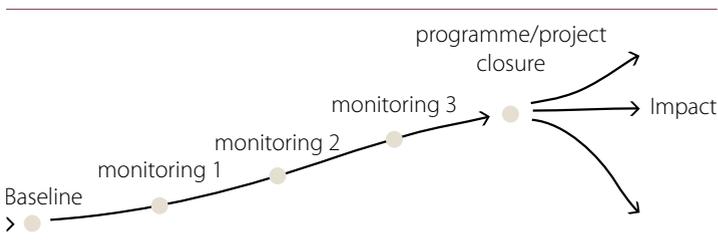
The objectives tree is a tool simply to aid analysis and the presentation of ideas. Its main strength is that it keeps the analysis of potential project objectives firmly based on addressing a range of clearly identified priority problems.

Note

Defining the baseline is essential to building an objectives tree. Indeed, it is necessary to know what the conditions are at the beginning of the programme/project in order to define what should be achieved.

A baseline is a set of information that defines the initial situation that must be improved. Each indicator can have a baseline.

Figure 5: Baseline



5.2.2 How to create an objectives tree

Create an objectives tree using the problem tree as a basis, as follows:

Step 1: Turn each of the problems in the problem tree into positive statements. This means reformulating all the negative situations into positive situations that are:

- Desirable
- Realistically achievable

For example, “poor yields” would become “yields increased”.

PROBLEMS	→	NEEDS	→	OBJECTIVES
High rate of malnutrition.		Access to an adequate food ration.		Beneficiaries in region X have access to sufficient quality and quantity of food.

Step 2: Reproduce the shape of the problem tree and place the objectives in the same place as the problems. This will result in an objectives tree.

Step 3: Check the logic – the means-ends relationships – to ensure validity and the completeness of the hierarchy (cause-effect relationships from the problem tree are turned into means-ends relationships). Will one layer of objectives achieve the next? Modify the objectives, if necessary, by:

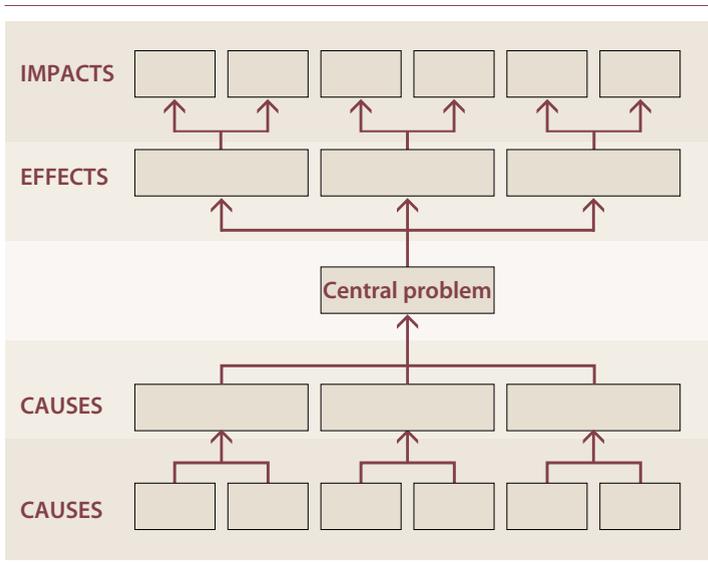
- Revising the statements
- Adding new objectives, if these seem to be relevant and necessary to achieve the objective at the next level up
- Deleting objectives that do not seem suitable or necessary

There may be some causes near the bottom of the tree that are very general. They cannot be turned into objectives that can easily be addressed by an intervention. Instead, they act as external factors, constraints that need to be considered

and assessed to verify the feasibility of the action (see Section 6.4).

As can be seen in Figure 6, each layer or level of the objectives tree represents a set of potential results for the intervention (outputs, outcomes and impacts).

Figure 6: Objectives tree



5.3 The scope of the intervention

5.3.1 Defining the type of intervention

Once the objectives tree has been created, it provides a set of overall “potential objectives” for the intervention.

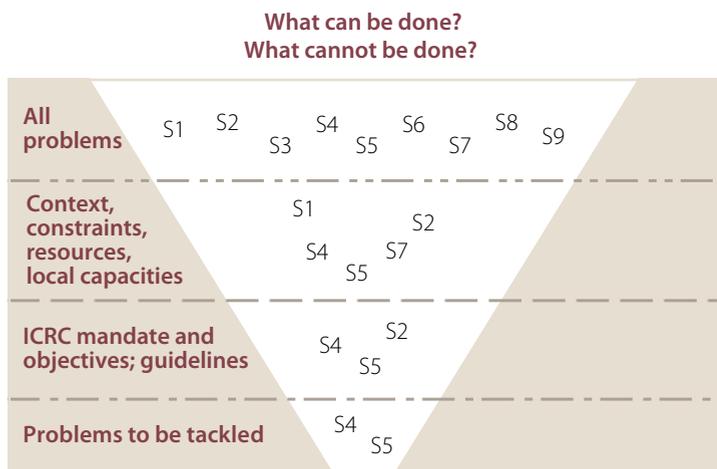
However, if you try to address all of the objectives identified, it is likely to be a very lengthy and expensive intervention. You will therefore need to focus on one or a few specific areas

in the objectives tree. If more than one objectives tree has been created, you will need to decide which of these to focus on. In other words, priorities must be established. Priorities are those needs that are identified as most urgent or likely to arise as the situation evolves.

Four essential “filters” help determine the scope of an intervention:

- ICRC capacities and mandate: Where is the ICRC’s real added value in this situation?
- Existing capacities and opportunities: What can the affected people do themselves and how will they ensure the sustainability of the results and therefore enhance their resilience?
- Constraints and risks: How vulnerable is the intervention to external factors?
- Type of intervention and degree of crisis: What kind of intervention would best respond to the degree of crisis?

Figure 7: The filter



S = Solution

Note

Different interventions are preferred in different crisis phases. The level of the population’s vulnerability, the identified needs and the varying influences of the surrounding environment on households and communities will determine which type of intervention to select.

The table below shows the relevance of possible Ecosec interventions for different stages of a crisis.⁷

Intervention	Pre-crisis	Acute crisis	Chronic crisis	Post-crisis
Relief		highly recommended		Not recommended
Production			recommended	recommended
Structural		Not recommended		highly recommended

highly recommended
 recommended
 possible

When deciding on the type of intervention, the issues to consider are:

- The benefits to the primary stakeholders
- The likelihood of achieving the objectives
- The risks (see Section 6.4)
- Whether other organizations are already addressing the problem
- Sustainability
- Environmental impact
- Cost

In summary, to determine the scope of the intervention, you need to ask yourself: Which objectives should be addressed?

⁷ As a reminder, the term “crisis” in the Assistance Doctrine and Ecosec Guidelines refers to the level of coverage of essential needs. Pre-crisis: essential needs are still covered but are at risk; Chronic crisis: essential needs are partially covered; Acute crisis: essential needs are no longer covered; Post-crisis: essential needs are covered again.

And which combination of objectives is most likely to bring about the most positive change?

5.3.2 How to define the scope of the intervention

You cannot solve all of the problems!

Look at the objectives tree and identify (circle) the branches that could be addressed.

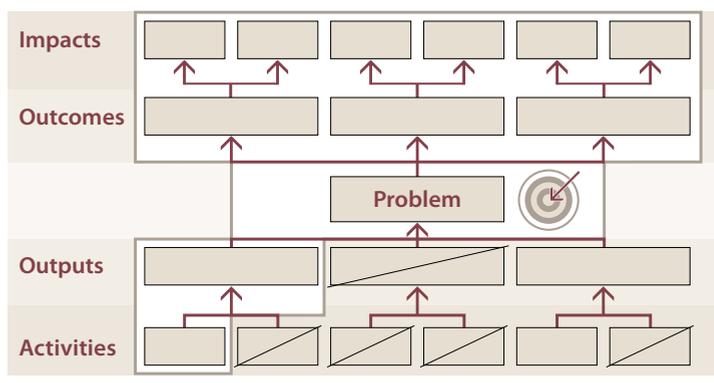
The objectives that are not in the circled area can be:

- External factors that could affect an intervention’s success (see Section 6.4)
- Problems tackled by other actors
- Problems that will not be tackled at all (at least not by this intervention)

Some key questions to consider are:

- Should all the identified problems and/or objectives be tackled or only a select few?
- What is the combination of interventions that is most likely to bring about the desired results and promote the sustainability of benefits?

Figure 8: Scope of intervention



5.4 Identification of the most appropriate strategies

5.4.1 Comparing and studying strategies

A **strategy** is a long-term plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal. Strategy is differentiated from tactics or immediate actions with resources at hand by its nature of being extensively premeditated and often practically rehearsed. Strategies are used to make the problem or problems easier to understand and solve.⁸

A **tactic** is a conceptual action to implement a specific mission and achieve a specific objective, or to advance towards a specific goal. A tactic is implemented as one or more tasks/activities.⁹

During the process of stakeholder analysis, problem analysis and objectives identification, you will have discussed the potential merits or difficulties of different ways of addressing the problems. These issues and options must now be scrutinized more closely to determine the likely scope of the intervention before more detailed design work is undertaken.

Based on the set of objectives identified in the objectives tree, you should now analyse the following:

- What are the positive opportunities that can be built on? (see Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Constraints analysis below)
- How can local ownership of the project best be supported, including through the development of the capacities of local institutions?

⁸ From Wikipedia.

⁹ From Wikipedia

- What are the likely capital and recurrent cost implications of different possible interventions, and what can realistically be afforded?
- What is/are the most cost-efficient option(s)?
- Which strategy will address most effectively the needs of the population and other identified vulnerable groups?
- Which strategy can have indirect positive impacts on other population groups?
- How can potential negative impacts best be mitigated or avoided?
- How can you take into account respect for local culture and strategies?

Note

This analytical stage is in some respects the most difficult and challenging, as it involves synthesizing a significant amount of information and then making a complex judgement about the best implementation strategy (or strategies) to pursue. In practice, a number of compromises often have to be made to balance different stakeholder interests, the demands of the population and practical constraints such as likely resource availability.

There are lots of different analytical tools, not all of which can be listed in this handbook. For reference, two of them are presented below.

5.4.2 Analysis of advantages and disadvantages

To achieve each result presented in the objectives tree, different strategies can be compared, based on specific issues or criteria. The point is to weigh the different options to solve a specific problem. The two tools to facilitate the analysis are:

SWOC analysis¹⁰

This tool enables analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints (SWOC) of a given programme. It comprises a four-box matrix, each box corresponding to one trait.

SWOC analysis matrix – example of a GFD

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributions regular • Ration adequate • Appropriate distribution method • Appropriate distribution frequency 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ration monotonous, puts small children off eating • Occasional insecurity on the way home • Beans difficult to cook
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of the health status of children • Registration for the therapeutic feeding programme • Vitamin A supplementation • Discussion sessions regarding developments 	<p>CONSTRAINTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attitude of armed groups • Distance between dwellings and distribution point • Heavy load to carry home

The resulting SWOC analysis provides the basis for enhancing strengths, investigating opportunities, resolving, where possible, weaknesses and constraints, and explaining the inevitability of some of the latter.

Advantages-disadvantages form

The advantages-disadvantages form aims to summarize and organize the data on each criterion or issue that you want to compare. It is a useful tool to promote discussion and exchanges among the project design team. As always,

¹⁰ Alain Mourey, *Manuel de nutrition pour l'intervention humanitaire*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004, p. 449.

the quality of the analysis and the accuracy of decisions made depend on the quality and legitimacy of the data being analysed (costs, prices, availability, local practices, etc.).

Objective: The population has access to food.

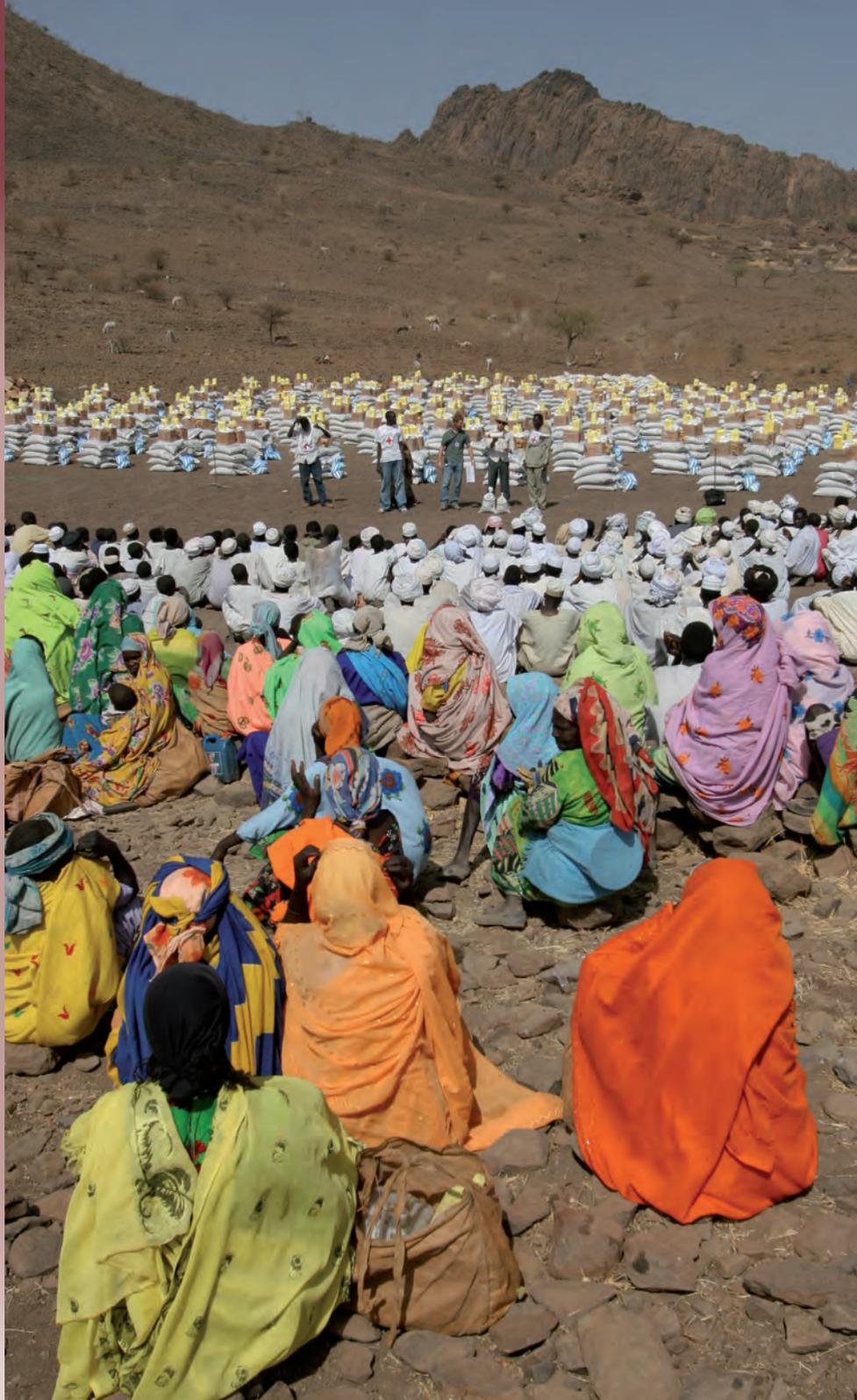
Advantages-disadvantages form

Evaluation criteria	Strategy A (i.e. food aid)	Strategy B (i.e. food for work to build the school)	Strategy C
Criterion 1 (i.e. time span/ rapidity)	+++ The ICRC has the stocks to respond quickly to the needs.	- It is necessary to organize the work for the building of the school. It is time-consuming.	...
Criterion 2 (i.e. cost)	--- Very expensive! (XXX CHF per month)	-- Quite expensive! (XXX CHF per month)	...
Criterion 3 (coverage)	...		
Criterion 4 (Respect for local practices/ culture)			



OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

INTERVENTION LOGIC



6. INTERVENTION LOGIC

6.1 The objective of the intervention logic

This stage involves clarifying the intervention objectives through the definition of precise and measurable statements of the results to be achieved and the identification of strategies to meet those objectives. It determines the results you are aiming to achieve and your strategy for achieving them. It entails identifying a measurement of the results being sought (indicators) and developing a conceptual framework for how those results will be achieved (generic set of activities).

6.2 The logical framework

6.2.1 What is a logical framework?

The logical framework (logframe) is a dynamic tool that makes it possible to reassess and revise the intervention as necessary. It helps the project design team to think through the major aspects of an intervention.

The logframe is a way to apply RBM to the management of the intervention. It is a hierarchical model of cause-effect relationships (the results chain, see Section 2.3.1) that lead to a desired end result: inputs are used to undertake activities that lead to the delivery of outputs that lead to the attainment of outcomes that contribute to impacts.

The logframe is a tool used to help project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Although it is constructed during the design phase of a project, the logframe is a living document, which should be consulted and altered throughout the intervention's life cycle.

Key message

The logical framework is an extremely useful tool to support the design and establishment of effective monitoring, review and reporting systems.

The logframe consists of a table with four rows and four columns, in which all the key aspects of a project can be inserted as a clear set of statements: activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts, along with their indicators, evidence and assumptions. It shows the intervention's structure and sets it out in a logical sequence.

The logframe does not show every detail of a project. It is an overview of the key aspects. Further detail, such as the proposal, budget and activity schedule, can be provided in other documents that accompany the logframe.

Most organizations use the logframe format shown in Figure 9. However, some adapt the logframe to their specific needs and develop software programs to manage the data.

The logframe summarizes:

- Where you want to be (set of outputs, outcomes, impacts)
- How you get there (set of activities)
- How you know when you have got there (set of indicators)
- What will show you have got there (sources of verification)
- The potential problems along the way (set of assumptions)

6.2.2 Creation of a logframe

The logframe has four rows and four columns. You complete it as follows (see Figure 9):

- Intervention logic: impact, outcome, outputs, activities (Column 1)
- External factors or assumptions (Column 4)

- Indicators and sources of verification for each objective (Columns 2 and 3 for lines 1, 2 and 3)
- Costs and resources (all columns of line 4)

The preparation of the logframe matrix is an iterative process, not just a set of linear steps. As new parts of the matrix are drafted, information previously assembled needs to be reviewed and, if required, revised.

Nevertheless, there is a general sequence for completing the matrix, which starts with the project description (top down), then the assumptions (bottom up), followed by the indicators and then the sources of verification (working across). This general sequence is illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Logframe sequences

	Intervention Logic	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
Impacts	1	8	9	
Outcomes	2	10	11	7
Outputs	3	12	13	6
Activities	4		Costs	5
				Pre-conditions

Hereafter, the logframe will be used to finalize the description of the intervention.

6.3 Formulating objectives

At the end of this stage, you will have completed the first column of the logframe.

Based on your objectives tree, you will write the set of objectives of your intervention.

To meet RBM requirements, objectives must be results-driven. This means that they must be focused on achieving real changes.

Take all the objectives you selected in your objectives tree and describe them according to the SMART rules below.

SMART objectives must be:

- Specific** Reflect what the project intends to change (include the specific target population group and the change you want to achieve for them). Ask yourself “What?” and “For whom?”
- Measurable** Precisely defined; measurement and interpretation should be unambiguous. Ask yourself “How much?” and “How many?”
- Achievable** Verify that it is indeed possible to accomplish the specified quantities (how much/how many) and end results (what/for whom).
- Relevant** Address real priority needs and problems.
- Timebound** Determine “when” a certain change is expected.

Figure 10: Lograme intervention logic

	Intervention Logic	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
Impacts				
Outcomes				
Outputs				
Activities				

Writing good objectives is a difficult task. The most frequent mistake is to define activities as objectives. Take the following example:

Activity-driven:

Ten families have [or received] sufficient quantities of seed. This is a hidden activity (distribute/give seeds).

Results-driven:

Ten families increased their crop production by 10 percent. This objective focuses on the result achieved.

To *achieve* the objective of increasing crop production, you will probably carry out activities such as a seed distribution, but the *real change* for the beneficiaries is that they are able to cultivate more crops than before (a result).

You can test an objective by asking: Can we [objective] this alone?

For example: Can we [the ICRC], without the population, increase crop production by 10 percent? The answer is “No”.

6.4 Analysing external factors

At the end of this stage, you will have completed the fourth column of the logframe.

6.4.1 Assumptions

What is an assumption?

Assumptions are external factors that have the potential to influence (or even determine) the success of an intervention but lie outside the direct control of the implementing team and the organization.

Ask yourself: “What external factors may affect the intervention’s implementation and the long-term sustainability of benefits but are outside our control?” Those factors will be the assumptions.

Figure 11: Logframe assumptions

	Intervention Logic	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
Impacts				
Outcomes				
Outputs				
Activities				
				Pre-conditions

Why do we analyse assumptions?

Assumptions are usually progressively identified during the design phase. During the analysis of stakeholders, problems, objectives and strategies, a number of issues (crisis-related, policy, institutional, technical, social and/or economic) will have come up that will have an impact on the intervention “environment”, but over which you may have no direct control.

There are usually also some issues that have been identified during the creation of the problem and objectives trees that are not directly addressed in the intervention implementation strategy, but which may nevertheless have the potential to affect the success of the intervention.

Once the assumptions have been analysed, and assuming the intervention is still considered “feasible”, include in the logframe matrix only those assumptions that are likely to hold true, but which nevertheless need to be carefully monitored during the implementation. They then become part of the monitoring system.

Note

Determining the probability and significance of external factors arising is part of assessing how “risky” a project is. Some assumptions will be critical to project success, and others of marginal importance. The main issue is to assemble and analyse adequate information from an appropriate range of sources.

What is the difference between a risk and an assumption?

A risk is a negative statement about what might go wrong. An assumption turns a risk into a positive statement. Assumptions are thus the conditions that need to be met if the project is to go ahead.

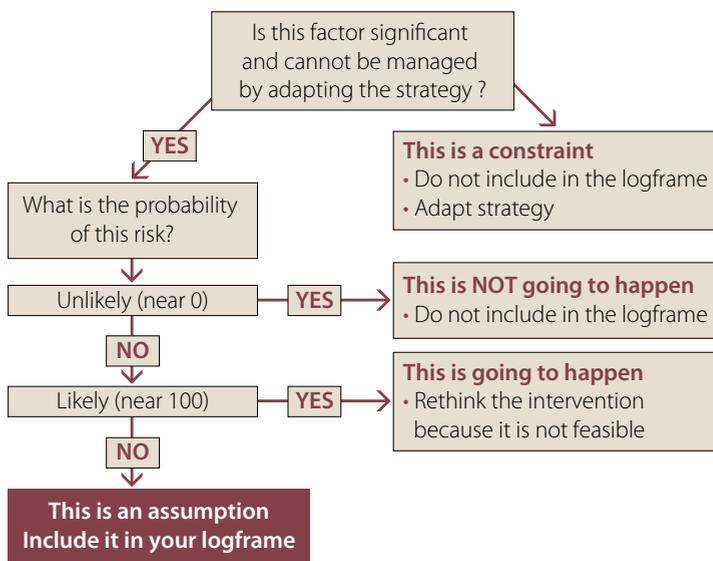
An assumption is a positive way of describing a risk, and a risk is a negative way of describing an assumption.

For example, consider a risk in an agricultural extension project. By rewording the sentence to make it positive rather than negative, the risk can be changed into an assumption:

Risk = Farmers may not be willing to try out new varieties of rice.

Assumption = Farmers are willing to try out new varieties of rice.

Figure 12: Assessing risks



How to identify assumptions

In the problem tree, you identified a list of external factors that can affect your intervention. The probability of these external factors arising needs to be further analysed to help assess the

intervention's "feasibility" (probability of success). There is no set formula for doing this, and some degree of subjectivity is involved. However, the following process can help to assess the likelihood of these external factors occurring.

Step 1: Ask yourself the question: Is this factor really "external" and can it really compromise the execution of the intervention? The answer will help you identify those factors that can and can not be managed during the intervention.

Step 2:

- a. An external factor that can be managed must be included as a constraint in your overall strategy.
- b. For an external factor that cannot be managed, examine historical records or any other relevant source and ask yourself: "What is the probability of this happening?" The answer can of course only be an assumption.

Only include in the logframe the assumptions that are both probable and manageable. For example, do not consider as an assumption something that you are sure will happen. Likewise, do not include as an assumption something unrealistic (for example, if you know that the level of water is historically very low, do not assume that "the level of water will permit the field to be properly irrigated"). In such a case, you either have to find a solution to this particular problem or consider abandoning the project as unworkable, at least in the existing circumstances.

6.4.2 Risk assessment using the logframe matrix

Start with some large sheets of paper.

Step 1: Identify the risks.

- Look at the various analyses that have been carried out, for example, stakeholder, economic, environmental, social and problem analyses

- Go back to the objectives tree (see Figure 6) and consider the constraints
- Look at each objective in the logframe and brainstorm the assumptions that will have to be made in order to achieve the objective on the next level up

A useful series of questions to ask is:

- If you do these activities, what could stop you from delivering these outputs?
- If you are successful in delivering these outputs, what could stop you from achieving this outcome?
- If the outcome is achieved, what could stop it contributing to the impact?

Step 2: At each step, use the same logic to assess the risks.

For example, in a project to improve yields, the first risk identified is that farmers may not adopt new varieties of seed. The probability of this happening is considered to be medium and the impact on the project if this risk happens is high.

Step 3: Consider the measures that will reduce or eliminate the risks.

You may want to pay less attention to the risks that are low probability and low impact, although simple steps might reduce them. It is more important to pay attention to the most significant risks. If these risks cannot be reduced, it may be necessary to cancel the project.

For example, the risk that farmers will not adopt new varieties of seed is quite high. A measure to reduce the risk could be to ensure the farmers' participation in choosing the new seed varieties. If the rains fail, the project could fail. In that case, irrigation may need to be considered as a project objective.

Remember to add these risk-reduction measures to the project objectives. In terms of the logframe, this will involve adding more activities and possibly outputs.

Step 4: Place the risks in the logframe.

Now return to the logframe and write the key risks as assumptions in Column 4. These are the factors that could actually make the project fail if they happen. They may be considered so critical that the decision is taken not to go ahead with the project at all. Figure 12 should help to decide which risks to include in the logframe as assumptions.

6.5 The indicator framework

This step identifies what needs to be measured in order to understand whether you are accomplishing the intended results and the intervention's level of quality. To do so, in consultation with the stakeholders, select the relevant indicators. Indicators used in the assessment should be the ones to be measured if the objectives are achieved. Indicators need to be developed at each level of the results chain.

6.5.1 What is an indicator?

Indicators are variables that specify what to measure along a scale or dimension (e.g. the percentage of farmers adopting new technology, the ratio of female to male students, the degree of quality of something, the perception of results, the number of products destroyed or resold, the existence of new demands, etc.).

Indicators serve to express real and measurable changes, in addition to progress made towards objectives, both during a project and after its completion.

A set of indicators provides the tool to measure the degree of achievement of an objective, not only in terms of effectiveness (quantities), but also in terms of relevance (response to needs), impact (long term and in tackling the root of the problems), timeliness, etc.

Indicators:

- Are always related to something else – a reference (e.g. when driving a car, the level of fuel is important if it is compared to the distance to cover, to the availability of fuel stations and to the average consumption per mile)
- Can be qualitative and/or quantitative
- Answer the question: How do we know whether or not what we planned is happening or has happened?
- Help to monitor, review and evaluate the project
- Show whether the project plans need adjusting
- Help to learn lessons from a project in order to avoid making the same mistakes in future projects

6.5.2 Types of indicators

Indicators come in all shapes and sizes and can be divided into two kinds: **SMART** and **SPICED**.

SMART indicators are used for gathering information for verification and planning purposes. They must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound (see also Section 6.3).

Example: How many orange trees have been planted in village A over a three-month period?

Key message

A SMART indicator, even if qualitative, is always objectively measurable. This means that an indicator should not depend on the point of view of the person measuring it. It should not matter who measures it – the same result should be reached.

SPICED indicators are used when collecting subjective information related to change. They should be:

- Subjective** Contributors have a special position or experience that gives them unique insights which may yield a high return on the evaluators' time. What may be seen by others as "anecdotal" becomes critical data because of the source's value.
- Participatory** Indicators should be developed together with those best placed to assess them. This means involving a project's ultimate beneficiaries, but it can also mean involving local staff and other stakeholders.
- Interpretable** Locally defined indicators may be meaningless to other stakeholders, so they often need to be explained.
- Cross-checked and compared** The validity of assessment needs to be cross-checked and compared, by comparing different indicators and progress, and by using different informants, methods and researchers.
- Empowering** The process of setting and assessing indicators should be empowering in itself and allow groups and individuals to reflect critically on their changing situation.

Diverse and disaggregated There should be a deliberate effort to seek out different indicators from a range of groups, especially men and women. This information needs to be recorded in such a way that these differences can be assessed over time.

Example: Elderly villagers are asked to identify indicators of change over a given time period in the history of the village. This could include the number of children in school, the number of fruit trees planted, primary income-generating crops cultivated, etc. Special consideration should be given to collecting data so that they can be analysed by gender, age, occupation, etc.

6.5.3 How to define the indicators

There are three steps in defining the indicators:

Step 1: Clarify the objectives.

Review the precise intent of the objectives and make sure you are clear on the exact changes being sought. Good indicators start with the formulation of good objectives that everyone agrees on.

Step 2: Develop a list of possible indicators.

Usually, many possible indicators can be readily identified. Often, it helps to develop first a long list through brainstorming or drawing on the experiences of similar projects. At this point, encourage creativity and the free flow of ideas.

Step 3: Assess possible indicators and select the best.

In selecting the final indicators, you should set a high standard. Data collection is expensive, so select only those indicators that represent the most important and basic dimensions of the results sought.

When identifying an indicator, clarify the following elements (again using the example of driving a car):

- The name of the indicator (e.g. average speed)
- The references (standard/target and baseline), if relevant (level to reach thanks to the project) (e.g. 50 km/hour in cities)
- The frequency, i.e. How often do I check this particular indicator? (e.g. every 10 minutes)
- The person/role in charge of measuring the indicator (e.g. the driver)
- The tool and the form to collect the information (i.e. the source of verification) (e.g. the speedometer and a logbook)

Note

Make sure the indicators respect the specified characteristics:

- Name
- References (standard and baseline)
- Frequency
- Person in charge of measuring indicators
- The tool to be used for measuring
- The form to collect the information

The most frequent mistakes made when identifying the set of indicators are:

- Selection of too many indicators
- Selection of overly complex indicators
- Over-concentration on progress indicators

A good set of indicators should be:

- Relevant
- Sufficient
- Specific
- Measurable
- Sensitive to change
- Cost-effective
- Available

TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION



7. TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

The next stages are to define, for the set of objectives:

- The sources of verification (SOVs)
- How they will be achieved (activities and timeframe)
- The resources that should/will be mobilized to achieve them (resource schedule, budget and cash flow)
- The monitoring system

For complex projects, it is recommended that you separate the programming for each output. It is at this point that the activities related to the output are set out, together with the resources needed, their total cost and the name(s) of the person or people who will be responsible for each activity.

Figure 13: Programming

	Intervention Logic	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
Impacts				
Outcomes				
Outputs				
Activities			Costs	

7.1 Source of verification

7.1.1 Defining the source of verification

The SOV describes the source of information used to measure an indicator. For example, body temperature is an indicator of health. A thermometer provides the evidence.

The SOV should be considered and specified at the same time as the formulation of the indicator. This will help to test whether or not the indicator can be realistically measured within a reasonable amount of time, money and effort.

The SOV should specify:

- **How** the information will be collected (e.g. from administrative records, special studies, sample surveys, observation, etc.) and/or the available documented source (e.g. progress reports, project accounts, official statistics, engineering completion certificates, etc.)
- **Who** will collect/provide the information (e.g. contracted survey teams, the district health office, the project management team)
- **When/how regularly** the information will be provided (e.g. monthly, quarterly, annually, etc.)

7.1.2 Collection of information

How will the information be collected?

To avoid the creation of parallel information systems and minimize additional costs, the first point of call should be to see if the required information can be collected through existing systems or at least by supporting improvements to existing systems. The point is to build on existing systems and sources, where possible and appropriate, before establishing new ones.

There is often a direct correlation between the complexity of the SOV (i.e. ease of data collection and analysis) and its cost. If an objectively verifiable indicator (OVI) is found to be too expensive or complicated to collect, it should be replaced by a simpler, cheaper and often indirect (proxy) OVI. For example, instead of conducting a detailed sample survey of the incomes of farming households (to measure income increases at the level of the project purpose or overall objective), it may be more practical to assess changes in household assets through a set of case studies.

Who is the information for?

A key question to bear in mind when specifying both the indicator and the SOV is: Who is going to use this information?

Indicators should reflect not just what the donor would like to know, but what local programme/project managers need in the way of information. The best way to determine this is to understand how local information systems work and to ensure that local stakeholders take a lead role in defining relevant indicators and SOVs.

7.2 Activity schedule

An activity schedule is a format for analysing and graphically presenting project activities. It helps to identify their logical sequence, expected duration and any dependencies that exist between activities, and provides a basis for allocating management responsibility.

7.2.1 Aim of the activity schedule

Once all the objectives, indicators and risks have been inserted in the logframe matrix, you will be able to define the activities (which may or may not be included in the matrix itself). This will allow you to further analyse issues of timing, interdependency and responsibility using an activity scheduling tool (or Gantt chart).

An activity schedule is used to determine:

- **Who** will do what
- **When** it will happen
- **What** types of inputs, besides people, will be needed
- **What** contribution the activity will make to the outputs/outcomes/impacts

The activity schedule helps to consider when an activity will happen and for how long. This in turn helps you to think

about when would be appropriate to carry out the different activities.

The activity schedule should be viewed as a flexible document that can be altered as circumstances change. With the activity schedule prepared, further specification of resources and scheduling of costs can be undertaken.

7.2.2 How to compile an activity schedule

Both the activity and the resource schedules need to be drafted during the feasibility study. Without this information, feasibility cannot be adequately assessed, particularly in terms of cost-benefit.

The level of detail required will depend on the nature and scale of the project, the phase of the project cycle, and expected implementation modalities.

During the planning stage, activity specification should be indicative, as it is usually inappropriate to try and specify too much detail, particularly when project implementation may not commence until a year or more after design work (owing to the time it takes to approve financing, conclude a financing agreement and contract consultants, as required).

The activity schedule should be clearly linked to the delivery of project results (as defined in the logframe matrix), as should the resource schedule and budget.

Note

For the ICRC, the operational plan requested after the Planning for Results exercise corresponds to this stage.

Step 1: List the main activities required to deliver the project results.

Step 2: Break the activities down into manageable tasks.

Step 3: Clarify the sequence of and dependencies between activities.

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

Step 5: Summarize the scheduling of the main activities.

Step 6: Define the milestones.

Milestones can serve as the basis on which project implementation is monitored and managed. They are key events that provide a measurement of progress and a target for the project team to aim for. The simplest milestones are the dates estimated for completion of each activity, e.g. *training needs assessment completed by January 200x*.

Step 7: Define the expertise required.

Step 8: Allocate tasks among team members.

The most common problem encountered in the preparation of activity schedules is underestimating the time required. This can happen for a number of reasons:

- The omission of essential activities and tasks
- Failure to allow sufficiently for the interdependence of activities
- Failure to allow for resource competition (e.g. 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

7.3 Programming resources

Once the activity schedule is complete, it is possible to define the resources required to carry out each activity. This process can produce modifications to the Gantt chart (timing, dependency and responsibility), in particular linked to the availability of resources (personnel, money, tools, equipment).

Whether you are seeking donor funding or using funds already available, it is important to draft a budget for the project. A budget is necessary for transparent financial management.

The donor needs to see a budget before approving the funds. Likewise, the leadership or board of your organization should see a budget before releasing funds. You can then be held accountable for spending the money in the way you say you will.

Note

You must budget very carefully. If you do not consider all the things you will need to spend money on, you will find you are unable to carry out some of the activities, and the project may fail. Conversely, if you overbudget for some things, the donor may question the costs and be unwilling to fund the project.

Resource planning is used to help you consider:

- **What** types of inputs, besides people, will be needed
- **When** they will be needed
- **How much** will be needed
- The **total cost** of the project

At the end of the planning exercise, you should have a clear understanding of:

- The budget required
- The inputs required and the timing of the activity
- The cash flow required to ensure the activity takes place
- Roles and responsibilities

7.4 The monitoring system

This section deals specifically with the design aspects of a monitoring system as these need to be well thought through during the planning/design phase of an intervention. The whole topic of monitoring is dealt with in greater depth in the handbook and training package “Measuring Results”.

7.4.1 Monitoring

What is monitoring?

Monitoring is a compulsory, continuous and regular process that aims to track the different constitutive elements of the project, in order to achieve the project’s objectives. The ultimate goal is to ensure delivery of a good quality service to the affected population.

The monitoring process leads to decisions on alterations to the project. Sometimes, the findings of the monitoring process can prompt the launching of an evaluation.

The purpose of monitoring

- The information obtained through monitoring must lead to decisions, so that the project may be adapted according to the evolution of the population’s needs, the context, activities, etc.
- Monitoring means you can be accountable to stakeholders: the affected population, donors, aid workers, project managers, etc.

Who does the monitoring?

The project manager is responsible for monitoring. But many other members of the project team are in charge of specific tasks (data collection, processing, analysis, etc.).

Key points regarding monitoring

- It is an internal management responsibility
- It measures progress in relation to the budget, activities, assumptions and results (outputs and outcomes)
- It finds problems, and identifies and implements solutions
- It uses both formal and informal data-gathering methods
- It focuses on resource allocation, expenditure and activities, planned outputs, people involvement and organizational capacity
- It is a key source of data for evaluation

Monitoring types

Once a project strategy and plan are in place, monitoring begins. Data are collected at regular intervals to measure progress towards achieving project outputs and outcomes. A distinction is often made between **activity/process monitoring** – maintaining records and accounts of project inputs and activities (chronogram, budget, cash flow) – and **results monitoring** – measuring results at the output, intermediate outcome and long-term impact levels (indicators and SOVs, objectives, assumptions and risks). RBM is primarily concerned with results monitoring.

Activity/process monitoring typically comes from ongoing project financial accounting and field records. This information is generally needed frequently to assess compliance with design budgets, schedules and work plans. It is used to guide day-to-day operations.

Results monitoring measures whether the project is moving towards its objectives – that is, what results have been

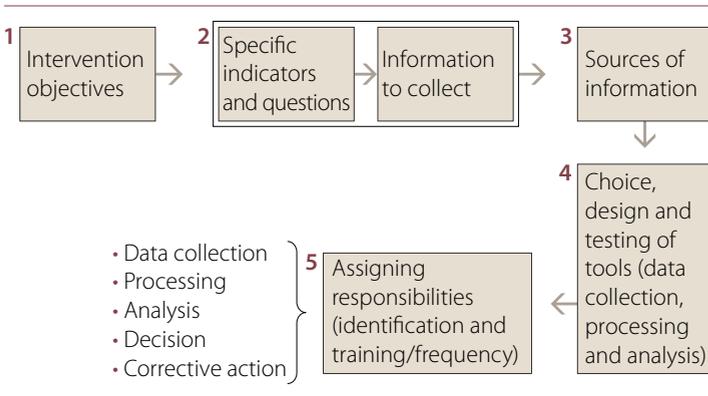
accomplished relative to what was planned. Information from results monitoring is important not only for influencing medium-term project management decisions aimed at improving the project's performance but also for reporting to donors, partners and internal stakeholders.

7.4.2 Design of a monitoring system

Elements of a monitoring system

The graphic below summarizes the various elements to be taken into account in the design of a monitoring system.

Figure 14: Monitoring system



Most frequent weaknesses of a monitoring system

The following list of common weaknesses will help you to avoid the pitfalls when designing a monitoring system.

1. Definition of the quality framework
 - a. Lack of a quality framework.
 - b. Incomplete framework, i.e. only effectiveness, efficiency.
 - c. The monitoring system is designed to satisfy stakeholder requirements and is not the result of a real commitment to quality.

- d. The quality framework is not centred on populations.
 - e. The quality framework is blurred and can lead to different interpretations.
- 2.** Identification of specific indicators and questions for the project
- a. Indicators are not linked to quality criteria, therefore the data collected lack relevance.
 - b. There are too many indicators, which can lead to duplication.
 - c. There are not enough indicators, leading to incomplete measurement of the criterion.
 - d. Indicators are not specific. Indicators are blurred. Indicators must be communicable.
 - e. Selected indicators are difficult to understand.
 - f. Indicators do not have specific contextual standards (values, maximums, minimums, qualitative values).
 - g. Indicators are not measurable.
 - h. Indicators are not realistic.
 - i. There is no timeframe for indicators.
 - j. The choice of indicators is not sensitive to the local culture.
- 3.** Definition of sources of information
- a. Problems in the typology. The choice of sources does not reflect the diversity of the population.
 - b. It is not a representative sample.
 - c. Triangulation of sources is lacking.
 - d. Sources of information are difficult to contact on a regular basis (logistical constraints, costs, time, etc.).
 - e. There are too many/not enough sources.
 - f. Sources lack legitimacy.

4. Choice, design and testing of tools
 - a. Tools are too expensive.
 - b. Tools are too complex.
 - c. Tools are not tested.
 - d. Tools are not adapted to the local culture.
 - e. Methods are not triangulated.
 - f. Staff lack training.
 - g. The budget for the design, testing, training and launch has been forgotten or underestimated.

5. Assigning responsibilities and frequency
 - a. Responsibilities only assigned for data collection.
 - b. Responsibilities are blurred or non-existent, in particular for data processing, analysis and decision-making (data collected and not analysed, for example).
 - c. Frequencies are not adapted to the type of information to collect or decisions to be taken.
 - d. There are problems with assigning responsibilities to the right person (lack of capacities, legitimacy, etc.).

7.4.3 The monitoring report

The purpose of monitoring reports is to provide updates on achievements against indicators and milestones and on trends, as well as to provide guidance on the elements of the project that need to be adjusted.

The reports are tools to summarize and link all the data collected during the monitoring and using different SOVs and indicators.

Figure 15: Monitoring

Data on...	intended achievements and baseline
are compared with data on...	actual achievements
to identify...	significant deviations from plan
as a basis for identification of...	problems and opportunities
to identify...	corrective action

Key message

To be useful, a monitoring report must provide a proper analysis that leads to decision-making. To ensure this, it is paramount to clearly define *who* the reader of the report is and *who* is responsible for adapting the project accordingly.

Minimum structure of a monitoring report

A monitoring report must include information on all the relevant components of the project, comparing the data in the time (to define trends) and to the standards and baseline (to define the degree of achievement). It should also communicate all the relevant changes in the context that can compromise the feasibility of the project, its impacts (positive *and* negative) or the security of stakeholders.

Figure 16: Monitoring report

Objective/Progress:				
Indicator	Baseline	Standard	Monitoring	Observations
Recommendations:				

A monitoring report must contain at least:

- An introduction
- Monitoring of the situation (external factors)
- Monitoring of objectives and indicators
- Progress of activities
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Annex(es)

Make your report impressive

- Keep it simple.
- Make sure that the right information reaches the right people.
- Use a form of communication that catches the attention of the intended audience.
- Communicate in a way that makes the information as understandable as possible to each particular audience.
- Present the information on time, otherwise the exercise could be a waste of time.
- Involve the target group in deciding what and how to communicate.
- Use a standardized format to allow comparison.
- Indicate the reliability of the data.

Use it, and pass it on!

Office bookshelves are sagging with impressive reports few people have ever read. Usually, the last people to access these reports are the ones whom the project most closely concerns. Plan how the information is to be disseminated from the beginning, and ensure that time and resources are set aside for translation, printing, etc.

Most frequent mistakes in a monitoring report

- Going into useless detail
- Lack of interpretation of data
- Not showing trends and warnings
- Absence of recommendations
- It is perceived as a compulsory, useless task

7.5 Fine-tuning the programme/project plan

Some key points to remember in compiling your programme project plan:

- Include monitoring (continual) and reviewing (specific phases) in the activity planning worksheet.
- Think about who will collect the evidence for the indicators and who will analyse it.
- Identify who will be responsible for making decisions for changing the project design as a result of lessons learned. Ensure that the stakeholders are involved in this process.
- If the information gathered during project identification and research is not enough to give baseline data for the indicators that have been identified, a baseline survey should be carried out before project implementation starts. This means that there will be data to compare progress against.

When the logframe has been filled in, recheck it to make sure it is logical. Ensure that:

- Objectives are stated clearly and logically linked to the objective on the next level up.
- All key assumptions have been made and the project is likely to be successful.
- The indicators and evidence are reliable and accessible.
- The indicators can measure the progress and impact of the objectives.
- The activities include actions needed for gathering evidence.
- The indicators and evidence can be used for monitoring and evaluation.

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8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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