

TOOL

M&E BASED ON THE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK APPROACH

WHY

Most DUF projects are designed based on a planning tool called the “Logical Framework Approach”. The LFA is good for creating an overview of a project and checking if there is a logical connection between the activities you do, the results you achieve and the overall development goals you are aiming to contribute to.

The idea is that you use the LFA matrix to manage your project and check if you are on track throughout the project.

The basis for monitoring and evaluation is created, when you formulate your immediate project objectives and your success criteria in the LFA matrix.

A monitoring plan will help you to regularly check if you are on course and adjust the project along the way. That way you will have a better chance of achieving your objectives.

WHEN

Start thinking about how you will monitor and evaluate your progress, when you formulate the objectives and success criteria for your project. Create your plan at the start of the

»» How do we measure if the project has changed anything?

To have a basis for comparison, it is a good idea to conduct a baseline study when the project starts.

A base line study maps out the situation at the start of the project. When you complete the project, the study may be repeated. By comparing the two studies, you can see the changes that have happened during the project period.

project – and use it as a dynamic tool throughout the project to see if you are on track and adjust your approaches if necessary.

HOW

How to plan your M&E based on your LFA

Based on your LFA, you can think through the design of the monitoring and evaluation process – from the start of the project to the end of the project.

	Before the project	Start of the project	Mid Way	At the end of project	Some time after the project
Ask yourself	How do we formulate our project objectives? Success criteria?	What baseline data do we need in order to assess changes at the end of the project?	How far are we? Are we making a difference?	Have we made a difference? Have we done the right things?	Have we made a difference? Have we done the right things?
Purpose	Integrate M&E and learning in the project from the start	What is the situation at the start of the project?	Adjustment of the approach to reach objectives	Assess changes. Learn from experience.	Assess changes in the longer term. Learn from experience
Method	LFA or Theory of Change	Base data collection on success criteria and objectives	Follow up on relevant success criteria and objectives	Base data collection on LFA success criteria and objectives – and complement with more open evaluation methods	

»» Key concepts in LFA

The development objective is what you want to change in the long term.

This could for instance be that Projects by youth organizations are planned and implemented with and by youth rather than carried out for youth.

The immediate objectives set out what you expect to achieve by doing the project. They describe the new or changed situation, which you expect to see by the end of the project period.

This could for instance be that by the end of the project 30 youth in the partner organization plan and manage projects effectively together with the staff of the partner organization.

Success criteria (often called indicators) are used to assess if the project achieves what you have planned. Success criteria can be used both for ongoing measuring of progress (monitoring) and at the final evaluation. This could for instance be that 30 youth have expressed new confidence in project management after the training or 30 youth have planned and carried out projects together with staff of the partner organization by the end of the project.

Results (often called outputs) are produced by the activities you do in the project and contribute to reaching the objectives.

This could for instance be that 30 youth have improved skills in project management

Activities are the actions you do in the project to achieve your results.

This could for instance be a training in project management for 30 youth

CLEAR OBJECTIVES

Projects carried out by DUF supported partnerships are often about awareness-raising and advocacy on youth issues, youth empowerment and organizational capacity-building.

These are broad and general terms, which can be understood very differently by the various project participants.

Project objectives frequently feature expressions such as “youth has been empowered” or “capacity has been built”. However, it is difficult to steer a project based on a vague immediate objective – and it is difficult to monitor and evaluate on progress.

A vague objective is likely to be interpreted differently by different people – and it is difficult to measure how progress is made and to what extent the objective has been achieved.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

In order to make it even clearer and more concrete what you wish to achieve, the LFA also makes use of success criteria. Success criteria are the measurable indicators that are used to assess if your project achieves the changes you want to create.

»» Clear objectives

In the example of “capacity has been built...” the objective could be formulated more clearly to describe what the capacity building entails and what change it creates.

To the extent possible, the immediate objectives should answer the following five questions – ‘the five Ws’.

When? By what time should the change be achieved?

Who? Who is involved?

Where? Where will the change take place?

What has happened? What is the new situation, what is the qualitative change?

How much has happened? What is the amount of change?

Answering these questions, the immediate objective could instead be phrased:

“By the end of the project period, June 2017, 30 youth leaders from the partner organization at the level of 3 local branches have used participatory methods, so that child and youth members of 3 local branches are actively involved in planning and decision making on activities”

» SMART success criteria

When you are deciding on your success criteria it is a good idea to check if they are SMART:

Specific – Be precise. What is the change you want to see? Who is involved? What quantity and quality indicate success?

Measurable – Is it possible to measure success criteria at reasonable cost and effort? How?

Achievable – Is it realistic to reach the target set out in success criteria?

Relevant – Is the success criteria relevant to the project objectives and the people who take part in the project?

Time-bound – When will the success criteria be reached? It can be useful to set milestones or intermediate goals if your project runs for a long period of time.

Usually one or more success criteria are formulated for the overall development goal, for each immediate objective and for the results. It is not necessary to set up success criteria for the activities.

When setting success criteria, ask yourself: “What is the change we would like to see with this objective or result? How would we be able to see if change has happened?”

If your immediate objective is “youth have been empowered”, how would you be able to see that youth have been

empowered? Maybe they have gained new leadership skills and put them to use in their organization – or they have learnt how to handle difficult situations in their lives?

WHAT METHODS DO WE USE TO MEASURE IF WE HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE?

When you do your LFA matrix it is also good to consider how you will measure your success criteria. What methods are you going to use? What is realistic and possible?

An example of a LFA matrix

Overall development objective To strengthen youth participation and influence in youth organizations in Malawi

Immediate objective

By the end of the project period, June 2017, 30 youth leaders from the Malawian partner organization at the level of 3 local branches use participatory methods, so that child and youth members are actively involved in planning and decision making on activities

Success criteria:

By the end of the project 23 out of 30 youth leaders (75%) express enthusiasm towards participatory methods

By the end of the project children and youth in at least 2 out of 3 local branches explain that they are involved in planning and decision making on activities.

Output / results

By Jan 2016, a 3-day training in participatory methods has been carried out for 30 youth leaders from 3 local branches

Success criteria:

By the end of the training 30 youth leaders express that they have gained new knowledge and skills in participatory methods

Activities

3-day training in participatory methods
Learning needs assessment

An example of a LFA matrix

Overall development objective	To strengthen youth participation and influence in youth organizations in Malawi		
Immediate objective	By the end of the project period, June 2017, 30 youth leaders from the Malawian partner organization at the level of 3 local branches have learnt and use participatory methods, so that child and youth members are actively involved in planning and decision making on activities	Success criteria: By the end of the project 23 out of 30 youth leaders (75%) express enthusiasm towards participatory methods By the end of the project children and youth in at least 2 out of 3 local branches explain that they are involved in planning and decision making on activities.	Means of verification: Survey among youth leaders Focal group dialogue with children and youth in 3 local branches Means of verification: Questionnaires by the end of the training and verbal final evaluation
Output / results	By Jan 2016, a 3-day training in participatory methods has been carried out for 30 youth leaders from 3 local branches	Success criteria: By the end of the training 30 youth leaders express that they have gained new knowledge and skills in participatory methods	
Activities	3-day training in participatory methods Learning needs assessment		

➤➤ A brainstorming session may produce a lot of good ideas on **success criteria** from which you can select the best ones. Perhaps you can look into how other organizations in the same field do M&E and ask about their experiences of monitoring and evaluating their projects. Make sure both the partner organization and the Danish organization find the success criteria meaningful and possible to monitor.

➤➤ Keep it short and simple.

Make success criteria and objectives as clear and simple as possible. That way it will be easier for you to steer the project – and it will make monitoring and evaluation as simple as possible. One or two precise success criteria that are relevant and easy to measure are much more useful than ten inaccurate and complex indicators.

➤➤ **The Logical Framework Approach** has been in use in development cooperation for many years. If you are not familiar with the LFA method, there is a wide range of literature and courses available. You can read more about LFA in the CISU publication **Guide for the formulation of NGO projects** or NORADs **LFA handbook**.

The LFA does have its limitations as it is very focused on measuring if you have achieved the change you planned for. It is good to complement it with other approaches that catch both intended and unintended changes and looks beyond the project LFA matrix.