

The logical framework, or logframe, is a commonly used planning tool. Initially designed for simple projects it is increasingly being applied to complex programmes and organisations. In these cases the logframe has limitations. There are several options to help overcome these limitations. These include expanding the logframe and using multiple logframes.

The logical framework was originally a tool designed for use in discrete, timebound projects. Its popularity with donors, along with the demands of results-based management, has ensured that logframes have become the dominant planning tool used within international development. Use of the logframe has spread to complex, multi-layered programmes. In many cases logframes are also being used to summarise the entire portfolio of International NGOs (INGOs).

However, the logical framework, in its initial form, was not designed to cope with this level of complexity. There are three main problems that can occur when logframes are used to summarise large, multidimensional projects or programmes; or are demanded at organisational level (see IFAD, 2002).

Firstly, work is oversimplified so much that the logframe becomes useless for management purposes. Secondly, particularly if a logframe allows only one key objective or purpose, the hierarchy of changes needed to achieve the ultimate impact may become squeezed into a single change statement, which gives no real sense of the scale or variety of changes sought or considered necessary. Thirdly, outputs and outcomes become confused. This is because a logframe is only ever written from the point of view of one agency, but in a complex programme there may be many different agencies involved. This is illustrated in the box below.

| | INGO | Partner | Community |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| Goal | Lives of communities enhanced | Lives of communities enhanced | Lives of communities enhanced |
| Outcome | Partner carries out effective mobilisation work with communities | Communities engage with local government | Local government takes actions to address needs of communities |
| Output / Activity | Capacity building sessions held with partner | Partner carries out effective mobilisation work with communities | Communities engage with local government |

In the example provided, whilst the impact (goal) remains the same, the outcome from the point of view of the INGO may be the same as the output (or

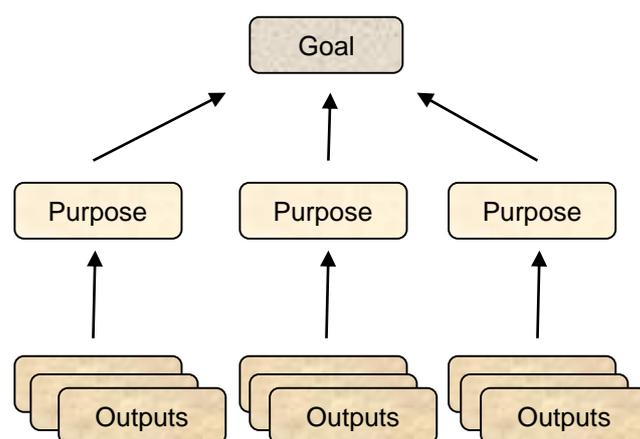
activity) of the partner. Equally the outcome of the partner may be worded in the same way as the output (or activity) of the community organisation. In such cases, categorising changes as activities, outputs or outcomes within a logframe can be very difficult, especially if the logframe is meant to be a shared document amongst different agencies.

In response to these problems, different agencies have come up with different solutions, a selection of which are described in this paper. The solutions tend to fall into three categories:

- expanding the logframe;
- using multiple logframes; and
- changing the rules of the logframe.

Expanding the logframe

The first and simplest solution is to allow multiple purpose (or outcome) statements within a logical framework. In the example provided, each organisation could have its own 'strand' of the logical framework, complete with purpose (outcome) and output statements. The different strands could then combine to support the wider goal. The logframes of some agencies allow this as a matter of course, whilst other agencies' logframes do not.



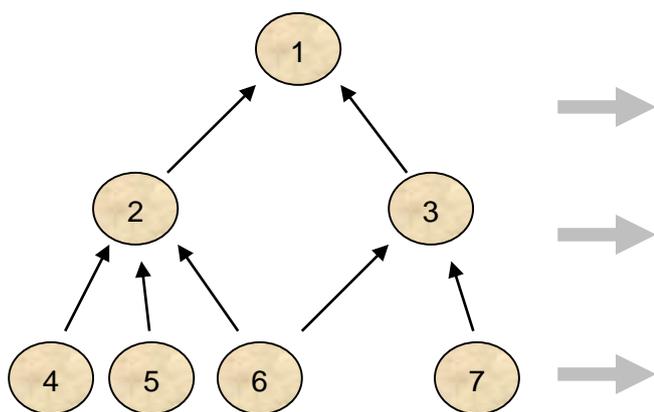
Whilst not ideal, this is how many INGOs based in the UK handle DFID's requirement to have a single purpose (or outcome) statement for their entire portfolio of work.

Some logframes already allow for different levels of outcomes that sit in between the output and primary purpose (or outcome) levels. These are often referred to as intermediate outcomes/objectives, but they go by other names as well. They can help enable a logical framework to become more representative of a complex programme.

However, some organisations have gone even further and have allowed for multiple levels and interactions

between the different outputs and outcomes of a programme. This is often carried out in conjunction with an objectives tree or impact pathway (see diagram below). The objective tree is developed so that the linkages between different outputs and outcomes (the tree on the left) can be clearly seen. The individual outputs / outcomes can then be translated into a logical framework, and the horizontal logic of defining indicators etc. can be completed.

If required by a donor, the different outcomes and outputs can also be categorised under the required levels of the logical framework.



| Output / Outcome | Objectively verifiable indicators | Means of Verification | Assumptions |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |

Using multiple logframes

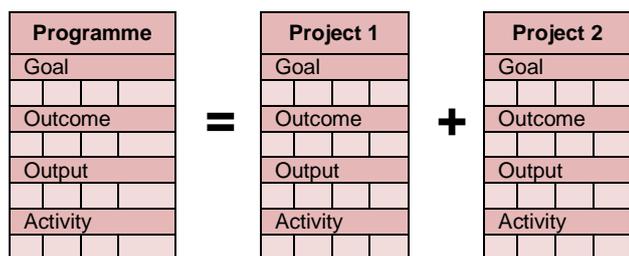
Another option is to use multiple logframes within a single programme or organisation. This is more appropriate for a complex programme than for the work of an entire organisation because of the sheer number of different components and actors that would otherwise be needed to represent the work of a large, international organisation.

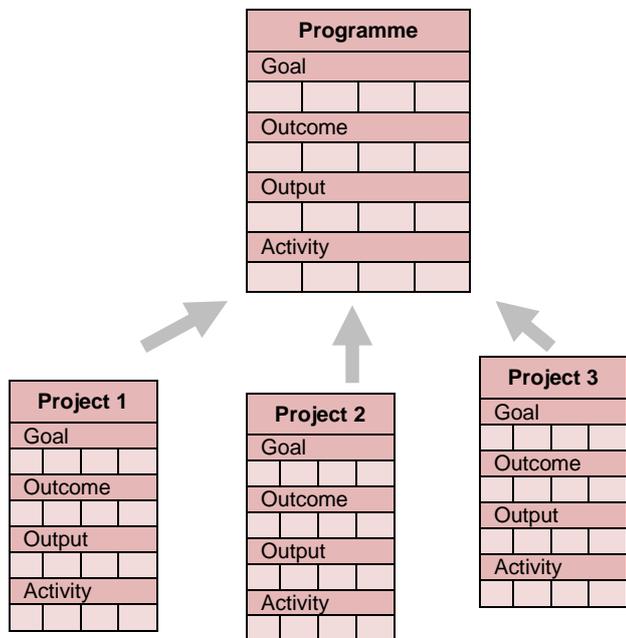
There are two main ways in which multiple logframes can be used within a programme. The first is to develop a number of logframes, each with its own purpose (or outcome), and often reflecting the work of an individual agency or a single project. These logframes then 'add up to' a programmatic logframe. The logic is that if each individual project achieves its purpose (or outcome) then the programme as a whole is likely to achieve its purpose (or outcome).

This is represented in the diagram above. The rationale is that the programme, represented by the logframe on the left, will achieve its outcome (purpose) if each of the outcomes (or purposes) is achieved in the logframes on the right.

A less rigid system is applied by many international NGOs (or large NGOs based in the South) when running programmes through multiple partners. In these cases a programmatic logframe is developed to represent the work of the entire programme. This may or may not be developed with the active participation of the partners. Each partner or project within the programme then develops its own logframe, which contributes to the programmatic logframe.

In this case the links between the different logframes may be less well defined and more flexible. The intention is usually to enable programme and project management through assessing progress at different levels of the programme using the information contained in the different logframes (see diagram below).





Changing the rules of the logframe

A common complaint is that the logframe as a tool is not very good at managing for long-term, cumulative change. This is because the average logframe covers a period of less than five years, whereas in the field of social development changes can take much longer.

One solution for multi-phase programmes is to weaken the linkages between the output and purpose (or outcome) levels. This means outputs could be set for a programme period to capture the immediate results of activities undertaken, as usual. However, outcomes could represent changes *identified* over the period that may have arisen wholly or partly through activities carried out in previous funding phases.

When logframes represent the work of an entire organisation this can be a really important change as it allows for capturing and reporting long-term changes in areas such as capacity development and policy change where change tends to arise over long time periods. In the most recent round of core funding to International NGOs, DFID allowed NGOs to capture changes resulting from previous funding period in the logframes in this way.

Some organisations also use outcome grids that keep the horizontal logic of the logframe (indicators, sources, assumptions, etc.) but which do not attempt to link outcomes to specific activities or outputs. The outcome grids represent the changes an organisation or programme is working towards, but are not explicitly linked to a pre-defined set of activities or outputs.

In some cases outcome grids are used alongside monthly, quarterly or annual activity plans and budgets. This helps draw a clear distinction between the activities for which a programme or organisation is responsible, and which are designed to be carried out

within a specified period, and the changes which cannot easily be predicted to occur within specified timescales and for which an organisation is not entirely responsible.

Some have also called for a greater emphasis on learning within the logical framework, particularly for pilot or innovation projects or programmes that by their nature are at least as concerned with learning as with the impact on a relatively small number of people. This can be achieved by placing a series of learning questions at the heart of the logical framework – areas of interest to an organisation and/or its donors that could be explored over the course of a project or programme. Organisations could then be held partly accountable for what they have learned rather than simply for achieving short-term results.

Finally, a complex programme or organisation may develop a wider results framework and embed a logical framework within it. The purpose of this is to develop and use a results framework with an appropriate level of complexity, whilst at the same time meeting donor requirements by obeying the rules of the logframe.

Case study: CSSP in Ethiopia

INTRAC supports the Civil Society Strengthening Programme (CSSP) in Ethiopia, which has to report to multiple Development Partners as well as the Ethiopian government. CSSP has a programmatic logframe which is used for basic accountability purposes. This logframe is embedded within a wider results framework that includes:

- a super-goal, which is there as a guiding objective, but for which there are no indicators or targets;
- some outcomes that are too politically sensitive to be placed in the public domain;
- some broad areas of enquiry, without indicators or targets;
- an extra level of outcomes not included in the logframe;
- some outcomes for which CSSP does not want to have associated targets;
- a few broad activities that are not included in the logframe;
- the key principles of the programme;
- some indicators relating to CSSP's internal organisational development; and
- some indicators related to the wider socio-economic environment over which CSSP has no control.

The wider results framework enables CSSP to manage the programme appropriately and flexibly; and to change objectives and indicators as desired without worrying too much about the achievement of targets. The embedded logframe allows the Development Partners to hold CSSP accountable, provides a succinct summary of the programme, and allows a window into the work of the programme.

Using a wider results framework allows an organisation or programme to develop its own M&E framework that is appropriate, flexible and responsive to the needs of that organisation or programme.

“Donors may insist that an organisation develops a logframe. I have yet to meet a donor that refused to allow an organisation to develop its own M&E framework as well.”

Further reading and resources

The paper *The Use and Abuse of the Logical Framework* by Oliver Bakewell and Anne Garbutt contains some more information on how different people have adapted the logical framework approach. This is available from the INTRAC website. Section 3 of the IFAD guide to M&E (reference below), also contains some information on how the logical framework grid can be modified.

References

- Gujit, I and Woodhil, J (2002). *A Guide for Project M&E*. Produced for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

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INTRAC is a specialist capacity building institution for organisations involved in international relief and development. Since 1992, INTRAC has contributed significantly to the body of knowledge on monitoring and evaluation. Our approach to M&E is practical and founded on core principles. We encourage appropriate M&E, based on understanding what works in different contexts, and we work with people to develop their own M&E approaches and tools, based on their needs.

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