

BEYOND LOGFRAMES



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

The logical framework, otherwise known as a logframe, was originally a tool designed for use in discrete, timebound projects. Its popularity with donors, along with the demands of results-based management, has resulted in the logframe becoming 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 a high 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 may be oversimplified so much that the logframe becomes useless for management purposes.
- Secondly, particularly if a logframe allows only one main 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

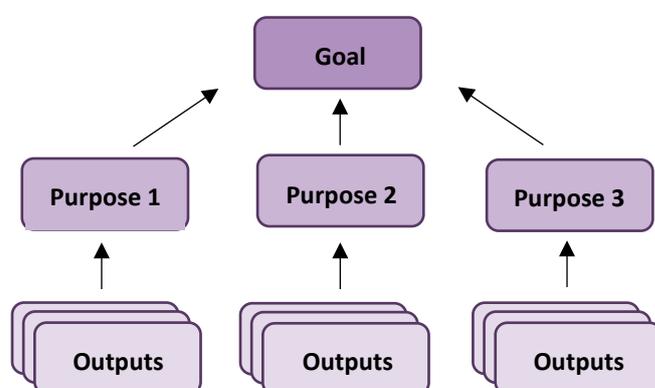
In the example provided, whilst the impact (goal) remains the same throughout, the outcome of the INGO is the same as the output (or activity) of the partner. Equally the outcome of the partner may be worded in exactly the same way as the output (or activity) of the community organisation. In such cases, 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 between different agencies.

In response to these challenges, 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:

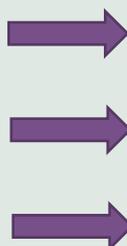
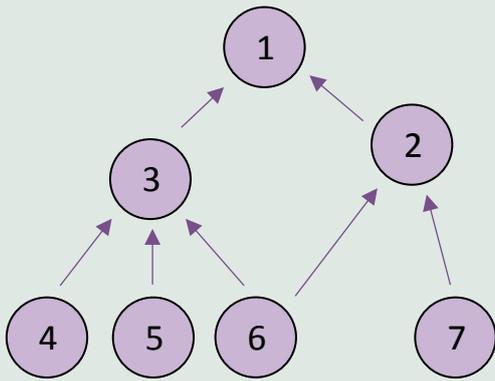
- expanding the logframe;
- using multiple logframes; and
- changing the rules of the logframe.

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. Some agencies' logframes allow multiple purposes to be defined, whilst other agencies have more rigid logframe rules.



Even if multiple purposes are not allowed, organisations can still 'strand' a logframe to a certain extent by linking different outputs up to specific indicators. For example,



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

output 1 of a logical framework could be linked to purpose (or outcome) indicator 1, output 2 to purpose (or outcome) indicator 2, etc. Whilst not ideal, this is how many large agencies have responded to the need to define multiple outcomes within a single logframe, even where the rules do not allow it.

Some logframes allow different levels of outcomes to be defined 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 a logical framework to become more representative of a complex programme.

Some organisations have gone even further and have allowed for multiple levels to be defined between the different outputs and outcomes of a programme. This is often done by first developing an objectives / problem tree or impact pathway (see diagram above). 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.

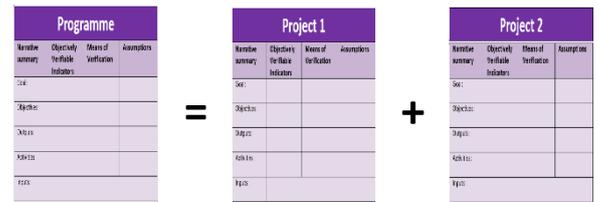
If required by a donor, the different outcomes and outputs can be categorised under the required levels of the logical framework, whilst still capturing the complexity of the programme or organisation.

Using multiple logframes

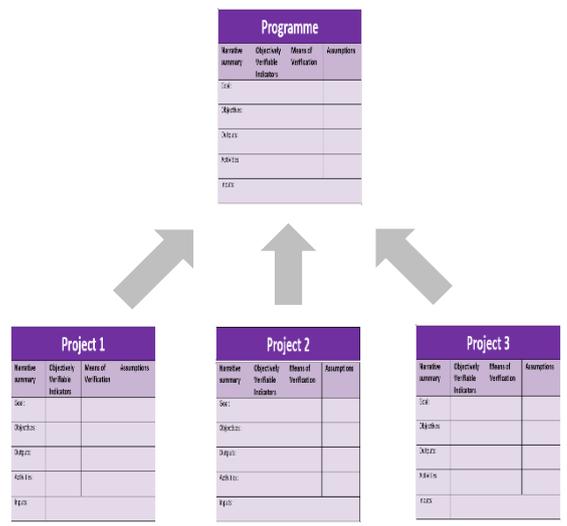
Another option is to use multiple logframes within a single programme or organisation. This is more appropriate for a complex programme than for an organisation because of the large number of different components and actors that would otherwise be needed to represent the work of an entire organisation.

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 below.



A less rigid system is applied by many international NGOs (or large NGOs based in the South) when running programmes alongside 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 (see diagram below).



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 managers to assess progress at different levels of a programme by examining the progress within each project, as well as looking at the programme as a whole.

Changing the rules of the logframe

A common complaint is that the logframe 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 to emerge.

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 influencing where change tends to arise over long time periods.

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 completely 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 more concerned with learning than 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 a 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. One example is shown in the case study below.

Case study: CSSP in Ethiopia

INTRAC supports the Civil Society Support 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.

This 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 to account, 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 results framework as well.”

Further reading and resources

The paper *“The Use and Abuse of the Logical Framework”* by Bakewell and 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 (referenced below), also contains some information on how the logical framework grid can be modified.

References

- IFAD (2002). *A Guide for Project M&E*, by Irene Guijt and Jim Woodhill, produced by the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Author(s):
Nigel Simister

INTRAC is a not-for-profit organisation that builds the skills and knowledge of civil society organisations to be more effective in addressing poverty and inequality. Since 1992 INTRAC has provided specialist support in monitoring and evaluation, working with people to develop their own M&E approaches and tools, based on their needs. We encourage appropriate and practical M&E, based on understanding what works in different contexts.

M&E Training & Consultancy

INTRAC's team of M&E specialists offer consultancy and training in all aspects of M&E, from core skills development through to the design of complex M&E systems.

Email: info@intrac.org

Tel: +44 (0)1865 201851



M&E Universe

For more papers in the M&E Universe series click the home button