

Section

3

Manager
M&E staff (project or partners)
Consultants
IFAD and Cooperating Institution staff

Linking Project Design, Annual Planning and M&E

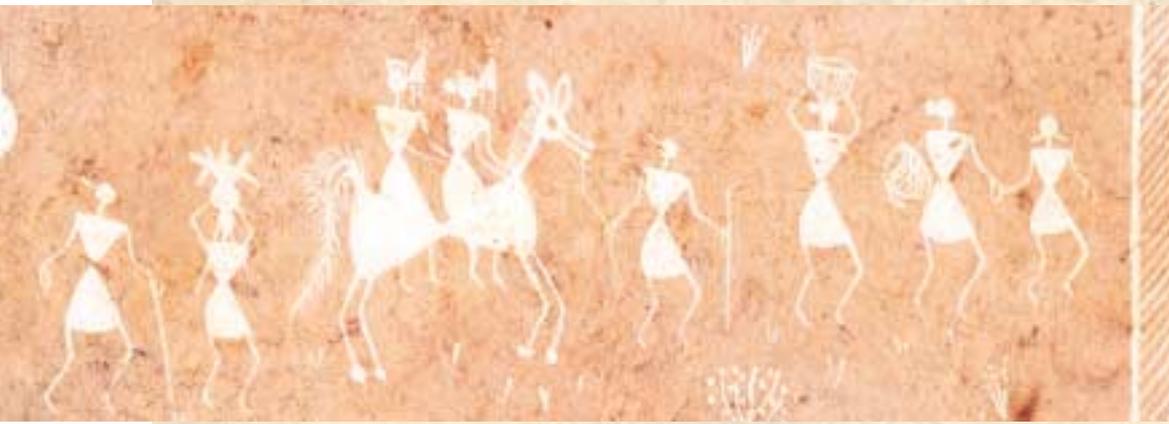


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Key Messages

- Project (re-)design is an ongoing process over the life of the project.
- Not only project designers but also implementers need to understand good design principles so they can adapt the project strategy and operations in response to changing contexts and lessons learned from implementation.
- Good practices for project design (and adaptation) include: involving stakeholders, completing a detailed situation analysis, ensuring a logical intervention strategy, identifying cross-cutting objectives, planning for capacity development and sustainability, and planning for learning and adaptation.
- The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) can help in project design if the process steps are followed flexibly and its limitations are understood and addressed.
- The output of the LFA is the logframe matrix, which summarises the intervention logic (with assumptions) and M&E.
- The logframe matrix can be used to track progress with annual work plans and impacts. To fulfil this purpose, diligent use is a must and sufficient detail is needed.
- Developing a good M&E system depends on paying adequate attention to M&E during the initial design phase. The M&E system should be outlined in the project appraisal report.

This Section is useful for:

- *Managers* – to understand the role of the logframe in project management and M&E and to know what to watch for when continually revising the project design;
- *M&E Staff* – to understand the role of the logframe in project management and M&E, and to ensure that during revision of project design, the M&E system and procedures are detailed enough for implementation;
- *Consultants* – to make a good initial design – in particular, ensuring that M&E is adequately considered – and to help revise the project design;
- *IFAD and cooperating institution staff* – to provide appropriate guidance to projects around issues of good project design, logframe and M&E design.



3.1 An Overview of Linking Project Design, Annual Planning and M&E

When you “manage for impact”, project design, annual planning and M&E become linked processes. Your starting point for implementation is the initial project design as outlined in the project appraisal report. But design is an ongoing process for the life of the project. Continually adapting the project strategy in response to new understanding and to changing contexts is key in maximising impact on rural poverty. So, good project design is as important for managers and M&E staff as for the initial design team.

Key aspects of a project’s design are built into the project loan agreement. Changing these can be difficult and time consuming. Thus it is critical that the initial design be as high quality as possible. In addition, the initial design team must build in flexibility to allow changes at project start-up when the design is revised. The PROCHALATE project in El Salvador learned the importance of rethinking the design the hard way. Staff there estimate that they could have prevented the loss of two years at the beginning if implementers had had better understanding.

3.1.1 Project Design as an Ongoing Process

Why is change to the project design necessary? First, many projects start up to several years after initial design, during which the context will have changed. The project cycle (see Section 1.4) includes the many steps that lead to start-up, each of which takes time. Second, the initial design of IFAD-supported projects is undertaken with limited time and resources. Many of the implementing partners will not have been identified and so there will have been limited participation in the process. This means that a comprehensive participatory process of reviewing and, where necessary, improving project design is critical at start-up.

After start-up, the two main opportunities for improving the project design are: (1) on an annual basis as part of the annual progress review and planning process and (2) during the mid-term review (MTR). Table 3-1 lists the design and adaptation tasks during the project’s lifetime, showing how (re-)design is ongoing.

Table 3-1. Design and adaptation tasks at key moments during the project lifetime

Moment in Project Life	Design Tasks
Initial design phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess feasibility, scope and rationale of project. • Determine the goal and objectives. • Outline main project outputs and key activities. • Outline project implementation process and structures. • Outline the M&E system. • Develop the budget and specify staffing levels.
Start-up phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop understanding of project goals and objectives with key stakeholders. • Review and revise the initial design. • Design and plan work in sufficient detail to allow for implementation. • Develop a detailed operational M&E system.
Annual review of work plan and budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check if the outputs, purpose-level objectives and goal remain relevant; adjust. • Decide what activities and tasks are necessary to deliver outputs.
Supervision (recurrent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss overall progress of the project. • Decide on changes that should be made in the annual work plan. • Assess any potential changes in the overall design that require loan agreement negotiations.
End of early implementation phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review overall project strategy in light of early implementation experience. • Develop recommendations for the work plan in the next phase. • Negotiate any significant changes to project design for the next phase.
Mid-term review (or reviews between phases if the project has a flexible lending mechanism)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review achievement of outputs and progress towards the purpose(s) and goal. • Assess appropriateness of the overall strategy. • Redesign the project as necessary.
Beginning of phase-out period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the priorities of final activities in order to maximise impact. • Review and adjust strategies with a view to sustained impact.

3.1.2 Good Practices for Project Design

There are six good practices in any design process of a development intervention. They are critical during formulation and start-up and when any revision of the project is undertaken, such as during annual and mid-term reviews.

1. Involve all relevant stakeholders in participatory processes of project design.
2. Undertake a thorough situation analysis, together with primary stakeholders, to learn as much as possible about the project context as a basis for designing a project strategy and implementation processes that are relevant.
3. Develop a logical and feasible project strategy that clearly expresses what will be achieved (goal and purposes) and how it will be achieved (outputs and activities).
4. Agree and focus on cross-cutting issues of poverty, gender and participation.
5. Plan for long-term capacity development and sustainability to ensure that the project contributes to the empowerment and self-reliance of local people and institutions.
6. Build in opportunities and activities that support learning and enable adaptation of the project strategy during implementation.

3.1.3 Using the Logical Framework Approach

Since 1998, IFAD has required that projects be designed using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). This process was originally developed in the 1970s to improve the quality and clarity of project design. The LFA process is based on participation of key stakeholders, including primary stakeholders. The project design that results from the LFA process is summarised in a table that is referred to as the logical framework matrix, or logframe (see Section 3.3.2).

While the LFA has become widely accepted as useful for project planning, it also has some clearly recognised problems. So the standard LFA planning process has been improved in different ways over the years. Flexible and critical use of the LFA means:

- *recognising that development is not mechanical* by building options and opportunities for adaptation into the design;
- *valuing outcomes* (achievements between tangible outputs and long-term impacts) by making them explicit in the logframe;
- *avoiding over-simplification* of large projects or programmes by using multiple purposes, a cascading logframe or a five-layer logframe;
- *including people's visions* and aspirations and identifying opportunities during the planning rather than focusing only on problem analysis;
- *recognising that quantifiable indicators and qualitative information*, such as opinions and stories of change, are needed for M&E;
- *guarding against bureaucratic control* by reporting more on outcomes, (interim) impacts and planned improvements – and less on activities and outputs;
- *avoiding token use* of the logframe matrix by ensuring it represents the shared vision for the development intervention, by using it as a management tool and by keeping it updated;
- *tracking assumptions* as part of M&E to help guide the project strategy.

Note that a project can be designed well in different ways - and that LFA is only one of these ways. Also, using the LFA is certainly no guarantee of ending up with a good project design. You need to be both critical and creative to ensure a design process that is appropriate for the context.

3.1.4 Linking Project Design with the Annual Work Plan and Budget

The project logframe will show the main activities for the life of the project. Each year the implementers need to identify which activities are needed for the coming year and prepare a budget. The logframe is the basis for the annual work plan and budget (AWPB). For the logframe to be useful, it must be sufficiently detailed and, in particular, updated to reflect the current situation of the project. For example, the original logframe may have included outputs or even components that are no longer appropriate and have been dropped.

How the project appraisal report is translated into operational plans varies enormously across projects, although all have annual plans. Some have an overall operational plan with milestones that look at key implementation over the project's lifetime, which can help translate the logframe into annual clusters of activity. Others have "project implementation manuals" that detail operations. Some have two- or three-year operational plans, alongside annual plans.

3.1.5 Linking M&E to Project Design

Developing M&E starts long before start-up. Initial project design strongly influences the ease with which M&E is implemented later on through, for example:

- the relationships and commitment established with partners and local people, particularly the intended primary stakeholders;
- the logic and feasibility of the project strategy;
- the resources allocated to M&E (funding, time, expertise);
- the degree of inbuilt flexibility that allows M&E findings to have a steering function;
- any operational details of M&E that might be established during initial design.

During project formulation, a broad M&E framework should be developed and included in the formulation and appraisal documents. This framework provides: a) sufficient detail to enable budgeting and allocation of technical expertise, b) an overview of how M&E will be undertaken, and c) some guidance for project staff about how M&E should be set up during start-up. The M&E framework complements the highly summarised M&E information that is the logframe (see Section 3.4). Much of what is developed for the M&E system during the initial project design phase will only be indicative of the final plan and will need to be revised and refined during start-up.

3.2 Designing for Learning, Empowerment and Sustainability

Designing a good rural development project requires careful attention to the social processes and institutional development that will enable learning and the empowerment of primary stakeholders and lead to sustained benefits.

3.2.1 Involve Stakeholders in Project Design Processes

Projects without good stakeholder consultation are setting themselves up for failure. Those that do consult widely increase their chances of success. Box 3-1 describes a simple case in Ghana where a participatory process created the opportunity for primary stakeholders to adjust part of the strategy to make it appropriate to their situation and thus more likely to meet their real needs. Involving stakeholders in project design is important specifically for:

- inspiring them to identify, manage and control their own development aspirations, and so empower themselves;
- ensuring the project goals and objectives will be relevant and, as a result, meet the real needs of the rural poor;
- ensuring the project strategy is appropriate to local circumstances;
- building the partnerships, ownership and commitment needed for effective implementation.

Local participation early on can also be cost-effective in the long run. In Uganda, more time and money were spent to involve primary stakeholders in a more inclusive formulation process of the District Development Pilot Project, which was then found to be effective because of local inputs and ownership and a deeper understanding of the project. If the investment hadn't been made up front, much money would have to have been spent later for one-way information campaigns before and during project implementation.

Box 3-1. Community participation in the project design process

When the irrigation specialist of Zebilla District, Ghana, shared his plans for the rehabilitation of the earthen dam and irrigation network in the village of Saka, the village water users' association (WUA) quickly sent him back to the drawing board! Many years before, when the dam was first constructed and functioning, the village had established a substantial mango orchard directly below it. Even though the dam had not been working for the past 17 years, the mangoes had continued to produce each year. With the start of the IFAD-supported LACOSREP project, the villagers had formed self-help groups, elected a WUA and requested their dam to be rehabilitated under the project. The project's irrigation specialist then recommended cutting down most of the mango trees to make room for an expanded irrigation scheme just below the dam. The community objected, as the mangoes were valued, especially during the dry season. One older man explained, "With the mango trees, I know that my children will have something to eat during the lunch break at school." The villagers suggested extending the canal beyond the mango orchard instead. This way, not only would the orchard be saved, but the canal would expand the amount of cultivable, irrigated land.

The first step in project design is to conduct an initial stakeholder analysis (see Annex D for more detail). This requires listing potential stakeholders (individuals, social groups and organisations), prioritising who must be involved (and not everyone who it would be nice to involve) and agreeing *with them* on how they can best be involved. This is the basis for being able to understand their needs. Box 3-2 lists questions developed by a project in Tanzania to guide an analysis of stakeholder needs.

Box 3-2. List of questions to outline multi-stakeholder-level strategy for the Participatory Irrigation Development Project in Tanzania

Farm Household Level

- * What is the present situation of the farm household?
- * What does the future, improved situation of the farm households look like?
- * What changes have to be undertaken at farm household level?
- * What support do farm households need?
- * What support do farmers and members of the water users' association need?
- * Who is to provide the support?

Water Users' Association (WUA)

- * What is the present situation of the WUA?
- * What does the future, improved situation of the WUA look like?
- * What changes have to be undertaken at the level of the WUA?
- * What support do the WUAs need?
- * Who is to provide the support?

District Councils (DCs)

- * What is the present situation of the DCs?
- * What does the future, improved situation of the DCs look like in terms of mandate, structure and services offered?
- * What changes have to be undertaken at the level of the DC and district-level project management unit?
- * What support do DCs need?
- * Who is to provide the support?

Programme Coordination Unit (PCU)

- * What is the present situation of the PCU?
- * What does the future, improved situation of the PCU look like?
- * What changes have to be undertaken at the level of the PCU?
- * What support does the PCU need?
- * Who is to provide the support?

Stakeholder participation in design is not limited to working with local communities or valuing their views above others. The idea of a "community" that one consults is quite simplistic and can cause problems. For example, if implementing partners or project staff consult a community, will all local voices be heard? Which ones will unintentionally be forgotten or ignored? Also, what is good for one community is not necessarily good for another or for its region. So which community will you listen to if they have differing opinions? Understanding differences within and between local communities means listening, listening and listening again – and working together. Only then can you gain insights into local relationships and interests.

Some people think that illiteracy and geographic isolation of target groups makes participation impossible. But many examples show how including the poorest, most isolated and illiterate of groups is possible with some creativity and time (IFAD/AGNGOC/IIRR 2001 publication, see Further Reading).

Good participatory processes involve sharing perspectives and negotiating differences. Stakeholders can be involved in many ways, including comprehensive participatory rural appraisal (PRA) processes, informal discussions and planning workshops. However, people's physical presence is not enough. Some very poorly designed projects have included many local people who did not participate freely. Ensuring high-quality participation is key and will require creating project structures that can respond to people's requests (see Box 3-3).

Box 3-3. New project structures in Colombia to create space for participation

The PADEMÉR project in Colombia negotiated several recommendations when refining the project at start-up: 1) changing focus from supply to demand, wherein project activities start with a participatory process of identifying rural microenterprise demand for services, 2) introducing competition through open tenders for service delivery, and 3) forming regional groups for selecting and prioritising projects, with primary stakeholder representatives invited to assist in selecting and supervising service delivery contracts.

Good project design requires questioning, sharing and negotiation. This happens when good information is available and when differing perspectives between community people, scientists, NGO staff and government officers are discussed openly and negotiated. Planning workshops with stakeholders are important, and a good process, understood by all, will help achieve a valuable outcome.

Some projects focus on a single workshop. This creates pressures; and agreements may be made that do not make much sense afterwards. It might be tempting to think that, because such outputs came from the stakeholders during the workshop, they are "correct" and cannot be changed. However, people learn by participating in dialogue. The views they held in one meeting might change. The next day, after having had a chance to reflect and discuss with others at home, they might see things quite differently. So rather than a one-off workshop, it's better to hold a sequence of events where people's ideas can be shared and merged, and informed agreement can be reached (see Box 3-4).

Box 3-4. A workshop process for participatory logframe design in Uganda

Ugandan project staff recommend the following workshop process for developing the logframe. At the beginning, they draw a diagram that shows the process in terms of steps to be undertaken through the workshop. This includes scanning the project environment, developing the vision, mission, goals and purposes (impacts) for the project, and then filling in the details of outputs and activities. By referring back to the visual diagram of the workshop process, participants can see the progress they are making in working through the LFA steps. The workshop lasts about two to three days. At the end, participants find they have worked through the whole logframe matrix themselves.

3.2.2 Be Clear about Cross-Cutting Issues: Poverty, Gender, Participation

A shared understanding by stakeholders of the concepts of poverty reduction, gender equity and participation is critical. It is the only way to secure agreement on how to build these concepts into the project strategy. Differing understandings can lead to diverging objectives. For example, in one project in Yemen, concerns were raised about the CACB's (Cooperative Agricultural Credit Bank) apparent lack of commitment to the project target group of small farmers. Then project staff discovered that the CACB was defining as eligible all small farmers within the project region. However, the project was targeting only those from 47 specific villages involved in project shelterbelt activities, as named in the project design documents. Different definitions had caused frustration and disrupted monitoring of credit activities.

Defining what these three concepts mean for the intended implementers is the first step. M&E experiences in India revealed that the intention to target the poorest of the poor was not always fulfilled because the official criteria for "below poverty line" (BPL) were inadequate for

the project. An NGO there used the official criteria in “wealth ranking” and “wealth mapping” methods to check the proportion of village members from poor households against the status of households who had not joined the self-help groups (SHG). They found that many households not in the SHGs did not meet the BPL criteria, yet they were still living in relative poverty.

Agreeing on terms like “poverty” and “basic necessities” is essential both for good project design and M&E. Opportunities for reaching agreement need to be created. For example, the ADIP project in Bangladesh took a group-based extension approach and kept close ties with NGOs and local agencies in the project design. This created good opportunities for agreeing on poverty indicators that guide some M&E.

The same is true for “gender” and “participation” (see Section 2.7). Even when everyone agrees on these concepts at the onset, they need to return to them regularly to limit deviations from a goal in poverty reduction and equitable development. Nevertheless, differing opinions may remain, as the activities based on these definitions are implemented in the organisational context of each stakeholder group (see Box 3-5).

Box 3-5. Definitions in an organisational context

In one project area in North Africa, the president of a rural community, who also worked in local government, was involved in linking project staff and local people. He found it difficult to justify investing the limited project resources only in poor households. Instead, he tried to spread out project resources to as many people as possible, especially those who were motivated and capable of completing what the project had started. He explained, “For the land rehabilitation work, we have the resources to remove stones on one hectare of land per household, so we choose people with more than one hectare who will be able to remove the stones from the rest of their land with their own resources.” People with more land and capacities were not the poorest, but the strategy was understandable. The local government, in which he worked, had the mandate to organise service delivery for the majority of citizens rather than to the project target of only the poorest.

3.2.3 Plan for Capacity Development and Sustainability

Many IFAD-supported projects focus on delivering infrastructure and public facilities—wells, roads, covered markets, clinics, school buildings, etc. But it is the people who use and maintain a structure. A major lesson learned by development agencies over the past 25 years is that investing in capacities is at least as important as in infrastructure for sustained poverty reduction. An interesting example of what this may mean in practice comes from the WUPAP programme in Nepal. Its overall purpose is “To assist in self-empowerment and *in strengthening the capacity of* poor and socially disadvantaged groups of people to: mobilise and increase their own resources; gain access to external resources; claim social justice.” [Emphasis added.]

To ensure this focus, questions to consider during project design and adaptation are:

1. Whose capacities are being built through the project?
3. Will these capacities reduce rural poverty?
4. If not, what else do we need to do in terms of capacity-building to have a lasting local impact?

Some people think that capacity development simply requires counting how many people attend training workshops. But attending a workshop does not necessarily strengthen capacity. Building capacity requires conscious effort to share decision-making with primary stakeholders over time (see Box 3-6).

Box 3-6. Participation and capacity-building for sustained impact

The Cuchumatanes project in Guatemala worked with organised farmers: formal organisations, interest groups and communal banks. In 1998, a beneficiary committee was created to strengthen their participation in project management. It supervised field activities and collected beneficiaries' claims. When the project finished in 2000, the beneficiary committee became an association called the Association of Organisations of the Cuchumatanes.

Monitoring and evaluating capacity-building is not as straightforward as counting infrastructure changes. "Capacity" is sometimes difficult to describe clearly in ways that will allow measurable indicators and may therefore require additional creative thinking. Box 3-7 compares performance indicators for Nepal's NWUDP rural infrastructure component with indicators from a similar component in a project in China. Note that including a capacity-development focus requires a participatory M&E approach – only the stakeholders themselves can explain if and how capacity might have been built. For example, capacity is not about how many kilometres of road have been built, but how stakeholders are going to ensure that these roads are maintained, used and extended.

Box 3-7. Comparing indicators that foster capacity development with ones neutral towards it

(Note: the italicised words indicate where capacity development is made explicit.)

Project Output	Performance Indicators in the Project Logframes
<p>NWUDP Nepal Infrastructure programme implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural infrastructure schemes identified, constructed <i>and maintained by disadvantaged groups on a demand-driven basis</i> Infrastructure-related policy developed and enforced that <i>benefits the disadvantaged</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of small-scale or micro irrigation schemes constructed/rehabilitated and <i>maintained</i> Kilometres of trails and number of bridges constructed/rehabilitated/ <i>maintained</i> Number of community facilities (including storage facilities) constructed and <i>maintained</i> Number of water supply and sanitation schemes constructed/rehabilitated and <i>maintained</i> Number of disadvantaged <i>groups successfully</i> expanding irrigated area and the per cent by which the irrigated area increased Kilometres of rural roads constructed/rehabilitated and <i>maintained</i>: 75 Per cent of labour for earthworks provided by the target group <i>identified by the communities and social mobilisers</i>: 70 (<i>of which at least 50% are female</i>) Number of disadvantaged people <i>employed</i> through component
<p>China Project Rural infrastructure constructed or rehabilitated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of beneficiary households served by new domestic water supplies: 25,000 Kilometres of rural road network upgraded to class 4: 198 Number of villages supplied with electricity: 67 Number of household biogas systems installed: 22,500

Including a capacity-development perspective has implications for policy, as existing policies can be questioned when local people take more charge of their own situation. By explicitly linking project activities to specific policies, the project team has the opportunity to engage and provide feedback to policy makers. The ADIP project in Bangladesh found this when it aimed to implement the government's New Agricultural Extension Policy. In the process, the project created opportunities for informing government on the policy itself. This link has two advantages: providing beneficiaries with a voice at policy level and ensuring that local capacity-building stays in tune with the current policy outlook.

Good capacity-building is essential for sustained impact. Three points need particular consideration.

1. *A broad base.* Capacity-building must include not only primary stakeholders but also other key stakeholders, particularly local government (see Box 3-8).
2. *The plan for phasing-out.* Project managers in India have systematic phasing-out plans that list specific responsibilities to be able to show sustainable outcomes for their investments in local development.

3. *Sensitivity in M&E.* Tracking and evaluating capacity development is particularly sensitive because it focuses on people and makes judgements about their activities.

Box 3-8. From project focus to supporting local governance

The terms of reference for M&E expertise in Uganda's District Development Support Project (DDSP) focused only on the project. Staff recognised that this could easily be changed to become a local government M&E framework that benefits the district as a whole. For the consultant to contribute to the district, and not just the project, he/she should:

- know and understand the local government system in Uganda;
- work closely with the DDSP team to create a multi-level, multi-stakeholder M&E system for the planning, allocation and implementation needs of the local governments. This would include mentoring the district planning units and other departments to help their partners/other stakeholders develop their own indicators for the M&E of local government services;
- work closely with the efforts of other agencies in developing M&E systems for local governments;
- ensure that the roles and responsibilities fit within existing local government/authority roles and responsibilities (so as not to create unsustainable committees, organisations or positions);
- have documentation and dissemination skills to assist local governments to develop communication strategies for meeting their constituencies' learning and information needs; for example, assist by documenting the local government's M&E framework for wider dissemination and use by other districts in Uganda.

In this way, there can be a shift in focus from short-term project learning to the development of longer-term institutional change.

3.2.4 Plan for Learning and Adaptation During Implementation

Any project will require many adjustments during its life. This is guaranteed. Do not overly detail a project strategy, as this hinders adjustments during implementation. Here are some ideas for a design team to build learning opportunities and change into the design.

- *Design the process, as well as objectives, at the higher levels* (also see next point). Identify the forums and processes that will be used to involve stakeholders in project review and adaptation, and build in flexibility to respond to unplanned opportunities. This approach was used to advantage by the TEPP project in Yemen to involve emerging stakeholder groups in information-gathering and feedback. Local communities had a strong sense of group action. When local youths saw what the project was beginning to develop, they started to participate voluntarily in certain aspects, lending a hand with seedling protection, community health and water supplies. The project was able to involve them in implementation and M&E, and so gained valuable support and informal feedback on the field situation.
- *Focus on clear goals (impacts) and purposes (outcomes), rather than over-specifying activities and outputs.* Project design teams commonly over-specify activities and spend time on the overall goal, then they fill the in-between steps with hastily formulated purpose(s) or outcomes. Yet these interim levels are the most important part of “managing for impact” so require most of the attention. This approach can also have secondary benefits, as was seen in Ghana where the second phase of a project was designed to be less targeted and more flexible. Project management and the cooperating institution were given the authority to adjust the components and outputs in the design to respond to locally expressed targets. This more flexible design also increased the involvement and ownership of the project by the primary stakeholders.
- *Be explicit about uncertainty.* Instead of trying to force specificity, explain what you simply do not yet know, such as exactly how communities will want to administer local development funds. Explain what is unknown and how and when project management should be clear on the issues. This means suggested targets should be approximate. State quantitative targets as being approximate and describe how the project could revise them, if necessary. For example, the logframe of the WUPAP programme in Nepal explicitly states: “As the programme is

demand driven, the output targets remain highly indicative and in some cases are not specified in detail... The logframe should be regarded as indicative, as it will need to be reworked by its stakeholders in the course of implementation.”

- *Build in mini-research phases at key moments.* Not all issues of relevance to a project can be anticipated ahead of time. List as an activity and budget for “focused studies” to answer questions about the project context that may arise. For example, if the project is testing a new kind of micro-credit scheme, then before this is expanded a focused and detailed interim evaluation is needed.
- *Make it explicit that the project strategy and logframe matrix should be revised each year.* Annual adjustments to the logframe are increasingly accepted and expected. A project design can indicate when and with whom this will take place.
- *Make “adaptive management” a key function in the terms of reference for senior management and partner contracts.* When hiring managers and selecting partners, select those who can balance uncertainty with being clear about poverty reduction goals.
- *Budget for experimentation and for the unexpected.* If the project is testing a new approach, then the budget should reflect this and more money should be allocated to later years when there is more certainty about expanding the approach. Also leave a portion of the budget and staff time for activities that do not fit into established categories. In some companies that must innovate to survive, researchers can spend 10% of their time on activities of their own choosing. This allows them to respond to unexpected opportunities.

3.3 Introducing the Logical Framework Approach

The logical framework approach (LFA) can be very useful for guiding project design and implementation. The basic ideas behind the LFA are simple and common sense for any design process.

1. Be as clear as possible about what you are trying to achieve and how it will be achieved.
2. Decide how you will know if you are achieving your objectives and put in place a monitoring system.
3. Make explicit the conditions (assumptions) outside the direct control of the project that are critical for the project to succeed and assess the risk for the project if these conditions fail to arise or change.

The LFA also has some limitations. The main criticism is that it can lead to a rigid and bureaucratically controlled project design that becomes disconnected from field realities and changing situations. However, the LFA is easy to use more adaptively, particularly if the original design is seen, at least in part, as needing future finalisation and probably revision, and project management prioritises annual reviews and logframe updating.

The logframes of IFAD-supported projects vary widely in their quality, application and terminology. Design teams using the logframe for IFAD-supported projects commonly experience difficulties. These arise because IFAD-supported projects are long term, aim at high-level poverty reduction goals and aim to undertake a wide range of development activities. These features require a fine balance between too much detail and oversimplification. So in practice, a summarised logframe will be useful to provide an overview of the project and for those making decisions about project funding. For those using the logframe as a management tool, more detail will be needed.

When facilitated well, the LFA is generally seen as very valuable by project stakeholders (see Box 3-9) and leads to a better quality and shared understanding of needs, objectives and strategies by all involved. When possible, try to follow the basic ideas without forcing everyone to understand the full detail of the logframe matrix. Visually mapping out the process steps can make them clearer than using the four-column table format. It may also be a good idea to avoid some official terminology, finding local words instead. Some people may be scared off by terms like “logframe” and “objectively verifiable indicators”. These practices all lend to flexible use.

Box 3-9. Usefulness of the logframe, as seen by primary stakeholders

When members of the water users' association of the PIDP project in Tanzania were asked their opinions on the logical framework approach, they gave the following comments:

- “It makes planning easier.”
- “Now we have a plan for the year. It helps us in scheduling and priorities.”
- “With this kind of meeting [LFA process] we get time to sit together with the technical staff and the farmers to talk about our problems and the solutions to our problems. It is a teaching approach to solving problems.”
- “It was difficult to understand in the beginning. But then when you understand, it is easy for planning.”
- “Unlike the first projects [previous development projects], now we have indicators so that we are able to judge our achievements. The problems from the first project had been continually carried over until now.”

3.3.1 Key Steps in the Logical Framework Approach

While most people are familiar with the logical framework *matrix*, the most important part of the LFA is actually *the planning process* that has been developed to improve the quality and clarity of project design.

There are various versions of the steps in the LFA. The one presented below takes account of the specific nature of IFAD-supported rural development projects. The key steps to be undertaken – with well-selected and diverse stakeholders – are:

1. establish the general scope or focus of the project;
2. agree on the specific planning framework, terminology and design process;
3. undertake a detailed situation analysis;
4. develop the project strategy (objective hierarchy, implementation arrangements and resources);
5. identify and analyse the assumptions and risks for the chosen strategies, modifying the project design if assumptions are incorrect or risks are too high;
6. develop the monitoring and evaluation framework.

Each step is discussed in more detail in the next sub-section, with detailed examples of the logframe matrix in Annex B and of the M&E matrix in Annex C.

3.3.2 The Logical Framework Matrix

The written output of the LFA is the logframe *matrix*. The standard matrix is a table with four rows and four columns. This matrix summarises:

1. what the project should achieve, from the level of an overall goal down to specific activities;
2. the performance questions and indicators that will be used to monitor progress and overall achievement;

3. how these indicators will be monitored or where the data can be found;
4. the assumptions behind the logic of how activities will eventually contribute to the goal, plus associated risks for the project if assumptions turn out to be incorrect.

Table 3-2 shows a logical framework matrix appropriate for IFAD-supported projects and consistent with ideas in this Guide. Alternative, commonly found terms used in the matrix are given in parentheses. Note that inputs required for activities to be carried out are written at the activity level in the second column (Performance Questions and Indicators) – the column is not for indicators. The table also suggests how to write the objectives in the hierarchy.

Table 3-2. The logical framework matrix and how each level is written (alternative common terms in parentheses)

Objective Hierarchy (Narrative summary, intervention logic)	Performance Questions and Indicators (Objectively verifiable indicators, indicators, targets)	Monitoring Mechanisms (Means of Verification, sources of information)	Assumptions and Risks
Goal (Overall objective, development objective) <i>The long-term objective, change of state or improved situation towards which the project is making a contribution</i> How to write it: put the verb in the past tense, as something already achieved over the long term	Performance questions and Indicators at goal level – high-level impacts	How necessary information will be gathered	For long-term sustainability of the project
Purpose (Project development objective) <i>The immediate project objective, the overall observable changes in performance, behaviour or resource status that should occur as a result of the project</i> How to write it: put the verb in the present or past tense, as if already achieved	Performance questions and indicators for each purpose (component) – lower-level impact and outcome indicators	How necessary information will be gathered	Assumptions in moving from purposes to goal
Outputs (Results) <i>The products, services or results that must be delivered by the project for the component objectives and purpose to be achieved</i> How to write it: put the verb in the present or past, as if already achieved	Performance questions and indicators for each output – output indicators	How necessary information will be gathered	Assumptions in moving from outputs to purposes
Activities <i>The actions taken by the project that are required for delivery of the outputs</i> How to write it: put the verb in the infinitive, as something to do	Note: the needed inputs go here, not indicators for activities		Assumptions in moving from activities to outputs

When using the logframe flexibly for IFAD-supported projects, two issues are important: (1) knowing how to use the matrix for large projects or programmes and (2) making sure outcomes are adequately considered.

Using the Matrix for Large Projects or Programmes

Many IFAD-supported projects involve diverse components, including health, infrastructure, extension support, irrigation development, micro-finance, organisational development and social justice. Each of these different elements could be considered projects in their own right, although they are often closely linked. So some IFAD “projects” are more like programmes, in the sense that they involve a diverse range of loosely-coordinated initiatives being implemented by different groups for the same overall goal.

Three problems occur when large and multidimensional projects (or programmes) are summarised into a four-by-four logframe matrix.

1. The project is oversimplified to such an extent that the matrix provides insufficient detail for effective management or M&E.
2. Outcomes, outputs and activities tend to become confused. For example, what might be an overall outcome for the irrigation component is written in the matrix as an output of the project; then, what are really irrigation-related outputs are included in the matrix as project activities.
3. Insufficient detail is given at the purpose level in defining the outcomes needed to guide the project strategy towards impact (see Section 2.3).

You have three options for overcoming these problems (see also Table 3-3).

- *Introduce multiple purposes for the project.* With projects that have a number of components, each component then has a separate purpose. This is commonly done with IFAD-supported projects. (Be aware that some versions of the LFA only allow one purpose per project). Try to avoid viewing large project components as outputs. An output is a specific deliverable product or service, whereas a project component is broader and is achieved by the delivery of a series of outputs.
- *Use the idea of a “cascading logframe”.* View your project in terms of one master logframe matrix, with a series of smaller, linked logframes (or sub-projects).
- *Extra level of objectives.* Introduce an extra layer into the logframe matrix between “Outputs” and “Purpose”, which could be called “Component objectives” or “Key outcomes”.¹ Many projects already implicitly or explicitly work with this idea but do not include it in the logframe matrix.

The most common version of the LFA suggests only one purpose per project. However, the size, range of components and long timeframe of IFAD-supported projects means that having a single project goal and only one project purpose is not helpful. Therefore, many IFAD-supported projects have moved to using multiple purposes that relate to each of the major components. It is this model of the logframe matrix that guides the examples in the Guide.

Another problem of concern in complex projects is the difficulty of including cross-cutting concerns in a linear objective hierarchy. For example, you may want to pay particular attention to women’s empowerment in project activities. Setting up an output layer around gender equity may isolate gender, when what you want to do is integrate gender into all activities. Yet you cannot ignore this output as distinct, since it risks leaving out indicators for assessing performance on the gender front.

This dilemma can be overcome by including separate cross-cutting objectives or principles. Sometimes these fit into the logframe in an integrated manner. If not, they need to be included in the project document and preferably as an attachment to the matrix. Being

¹This is now a standard approach by AusAid’s (Australian bilateral aid agency) approach to the logframe.

explicit about these cross-cutting objectives or principles is important in order to include them not only in activities but also in M&E.

Table 3-3. Three options for adjusting the structure of the logframe matrix

Type of Structure	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Standard objective hierarchy	Four levels: 1 x goal, 1 x purpose, any number of outputs, any number of activities per output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is very simple. • Is commonly used and understood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversimplifies larger, multi-component projects. • Does not make project outcomes clear.
Multiple purposes	Four levels: 1 x goal, as many purposes as needed, any number of outputs per purpose, any number of activities per output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains the standard four levels of the logframe matrix. • The standard is one purpose, so this may cause confusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion between purposes and outcomes can still occur.
Cascading logframes (objective hierarchies)	Several interlinked, standard four-level logframes; each project component written up in a separate logframe; the purpose level = the component objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains the standard four levels of the logframe matrix. • Enables a focused, “sub-project” approach to management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn’t give an overview of cross-cutting objectives. • Focusing on integrative impact is difficult. • Is more complex.
Extra layer(s)	Five levels: 1 x goal, 1 x purpose, any number of key outcomes (or component objectives), any number of outputs per outcome, any number of activities per output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes a clear distinction between output, outcome and purpose levels, facilitating M&E. • Is consistent with standard LFA. • Some donors already use it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More detail has to be included in the logframe matrix.

Recognising the Importance of Outcomes

Your project may have one output that is formulated as: “improve the capacity of the agricultural extension service and the skills of extension workers”. Many projects use an indicator such as “number of extension workers trained”. But if you want to manage for impact, you need to know the extent to which extension staff are using new skills in the field and, in turn, the extent to which farmers are developing and adopting improved agricultural practices. These are *outcomes* that occur after you have achieved your *outputs* (number of extension agents trained) and are necessary in order to have *impact* (increased productivity and income for farmers). If your M&E data show that although many extension workers have been trained, farmers are not adopting improved practices, then you can question what might be going wrong with your strategy of improving the extension service through training. This is why monitoring change at the level of *outcomes* is so critical in managing for impact.

For IFAD, outcomes are also recognised as lower, purpose-level impacts. So, for communication and reporting reasons, it is important not to limit the documentation of impact to only the goal level of the objective hierarchy.

Most people who use the standard LFA and matrix focus on tangible outputs. Outcomes should be included as indicators at the purpose level, but this is rarely done well. This is partly because the logframe was originally designed to focus on controlling the delivery of tangible outputs to be produced, such as kilometres of road built or area of irrigation scheme constructed. The three ways of dealing with larger projects, mentioned above, all help make the outcome level more explicit and detailed and also easier to monitor and evaluate.

3.4 Using the Logical Framework Approach

3.4.1 Step One: Establish the General Scope and Focus of the Project

The starting point for any project is to identify the general situation that will be improved, the likely beneficiaries and stakeholders, the geographic scope of the project, the range of issues that will be addressed, and the likely length and expenditure of the project. Also find out what the community, government and potential funding agencies' interests are in the project. This initial information provides the starting point for defining and guiding the detailed situation analysis and design steps. Some of this information will be outlined in the Country Strategy Paper (COSOP).

During this initial step, it is important to find out if the basic concept underpinning the project is feasible and if there is sufficient support from key stakeholders for it to be worthwhile to proceed to the next step.

3.4.2 Step Two: Decide on the Planning Framework, Terminology and Design Process

As already discussed, there are different planning frameworks and various approaches to the use of the LFA. In different countries, people will have had experience with different models and be used to a particular set of terms. It will help everyone if early on in the design process there is agreement about the approach to planning that will be followed, how the logframe will be used and what terminology will be used.

Also define clearly what the design process will be, in terms of who will be involved, how and at what stage; what information needs to be gathered and how; and how the final design will be checked with key stakeholders. Box 3-10 lists key elements of participatory design based on IFAD experiences in Asia.

This “designing the design process” step is often given very little thought and is the source of many problems that emerge during design and implementation.

Box 3-10. Weaving together a participatory design phase (based on IFAD experiences in Asia)²

- Establish a mentoring team – a group of committed, experienced and respected nationals who, on a voluntary basis, act as resource persons to advise the formulation process and champion the goals, strategies and approaches proposed by the project.
- Undertake a participatory stakeholder analysis through a process of brainstorming with groups/individuals/institutions, grouping stakeholders, assessing their interests and impact on project success, assessing their influence and importance for project success, and outlining a strategy for their participation.
- Establish the design team with national specialists from different professional sectors, relevant NGOs and government agency staff.
- Train the design team in the use of diagnostic participatory tools and in drawing implications for project design from qualitative discussions with groups of stakeholders.
- Review secondary data and key informant interviews.
- Formulate the study design and analysis plan based on the information gaps you have identified.
- Divide the project area into study zones, by identifying a number of relatively homogenous agro-ecological areas.
- Undertake village-level problem identification and needs assessment through focus-group meetings and household interviews:
 - Assess problems: discuss problems, issues and concerns of villagers; assess causes and effects; identify which issues could relate to the project being planned; agree on criteria for prioritising problems; and prioritise problems.
 - Analyse options: discuss strategies and options proposed/desired by the community to overcome the problem situation.
 - Analyse alternatives: agree on criteria for comparing options to overcome problems and realise visions, then identify and assess alternative strategies/options available to reach the desired objectives.
- Undertake a cross-cutting analysis, by agro-ecological zone and socio-economic stratum, to integrate analyses from different communities.
- Hold design workshops involving different levels of stakeholders to work together on the logframe matrix:
 - Summary of objectives (objective hierarchy): develop project concept, vision, mission, results and activities.
 - Indicators: together identify which indicators capture and measure the different levels of changes the project is anticipated to affect.
 - Means of verification: agree on the sources of information to be used for monitoring impact.
 - Important assumptions/external factors: discuss the attitudes, behaviours, processes, trends, natural hazards/disasters, etc. outside the control of the project that could affect it positively or negatively.
- Conduct continual surveys of beneficiary opinions to ensure that the consultation process and the interim results are as good as possible.
- Hold national-level project reality-check and planning workshops to which a wide range of (primary) stakeholders are invited and during which initial ideas are presented and debated to consider different realities.
- Draft the project proposal, based on workshop outputs, with a team of national and international experts.
- Verify the draft project outline with the key stakeholders, particularly the intended primary stakeholders, in a series of discussions or workshops.

3.4.3 Step Three: Undertake a Detailed Situation Analysis

Situation analysis involves learning as much as possible about the project context and the interests and needs of local people in order to design a relevant project. This learning is best if done with several groups of stakeholders. Box 3-11 provides a list of key situation analysis topics, questions and useful methods.

The standard LFA focuses project planning on developing a problem tree for the situation. A problem tree works well for simple situations. However, problem-based planning fits with a more mechanical approach to development where projects are designed to “fix” problems rather than to facilitate local development processes. Furthermore, people see their future in terms of visions and aspirations – not just as problems. Analysing future visions helps identify opportunities for improvement and of successes that can be further developed. The LACOSREP water users’ association (WUA) programme in Ghana developed four complementary visions to describe the ideal WUA that they were aiming to help create.

²From: V. Altarelli. Participatory Diagnostic Study in Project Formulation and Beyond: A Process Approach. J. Kumar Dutta. Stakeholder Involvement in Participatory Practices: An Overview of Bangladesh NGOs. Both in: IFAD, ANGOC and IIRR. 2001. *Enhancing Ownership and Sustainability: A Resource Book on Participation*.

A good situation analysis will combine information gathering and analysis about the local context, expert advice and participatory processes such as participatory appraisals, community meetings and multi-stakeholder workshops. A creative and learning-oriented situation analysis will combine several methods (see Annex D).

One result of a good situation analysis is that stakeholders have more insights about their situation and have better capacity to design a solid project. However, this will not be achieved in one community meeting. People's perspectives evolve as they debate and listen. After a community meeting, subsequent discussion in people's homes might have led to adjustments if a meeting were held the following day. Take care that the situation analysis is designed as a series of events.

Updating the situation analysis is critical for the M&E system. Note that a situation analysis is not the same as a baseline survey. Both are information-gathering exercises. But a situation analysis is more open-ended in terms of the themes and questions that are analysed, while a baseline survey only includes data that are needed to make impact-related comparisons. A baseline survey is undertaken after project design has been completed, while a situation analysis is undertaken as part of design.

Box 3-11. Key themes, questions and methods (italicised, see Annex D) for a thorough situation analysis with stakeholders

Stakeholders (*stakeholder maps, institutional diagrams, secondary data*)

- Who are the local people likely to benefit from the project?
- Who are the other key stakeholders?
- How do different stakeholder groups interact?
- What are the power relations between different groups?

Problems and Issues (*rich pictures, conceptual maps, focus group discussions, historical analyses, secondary data, matrix ranking*)

- What problems or issues are central to the focus of the project?
- What are the main problems or concerns of the different stakeholder groups and how do these relate to the focus of the project?

Visions and Opportunities (*rich pictures, role plays*)

- What changes would different stakeholder groups like to see the project bring about?
- Generally, what visions, hopes or dreams do different stakeholders have and are there implications for the project?
- What opportunities do stakeholders see for realising their visions?

Biophysical Setting (*maps, transects, field visits, seasonal calendars*)

- What are geographical characteristics of the project areas?
- What are the climatic conditions?
- What are the main forms of land use?
- What are the environmental problems or risks?

Organisations (*institutional diagrams, network diagrams, flow charts, matrix ranking*)

- What are the important government, business and NGO organisations?
- How effectively are these organisations performing?
- How are the different organisations linked together (power relations, communications, joint work, competitors)?

Infrastructure (*resource maps*)

- What are the key infrastructure issues for the area?

Legal, Policy and Political Institutions (*rich pictures, institutional diagrams, historical analyses, focused interviews, secondary data*)

- What legal factors are significant for the project?
- What government policies and programmes are significant?
- What are the main government and political structures and processes in the area?

Economic (*wellbeing ranking, daily activity charts, seasonal calendars, secondary data*)

- What is the economic situation of local people?
- What are the main forms of economic livelihood?
- What are the key characteristics of the local economy?
- What are the market opportunities and constraints?

Social and Cultural (*historical analyses, focus group discussions, SWOT analyses*)

- What are the main social and cultural conditions relevant to the project?

3.4.4 Step Four: Develop the Project Strategy

With a good understanding of the situation, you are now ready to start developing the project strategy. This simply explains clearly **what** everyone hopes to achieve and **how** it will be achieved. A project strategy includes the objective hierarchy, implementation arrangements and resources required. This sub-section focuses on the objective hierarchy – column one of the logframe – central to the strategy. The objective hierarchy is a tree-type structure that maps out how activities and outputs contribute to the project purpose(s) and goal (see Figure 2-4 and the method description in Annex D).

A project strategy will only work well if it is logical. This means that all the outputs required to achieve a particular purpose have been correctly identified and, in turn, that all the activities needed to deliver an output have been identified. For example, you cannot have as your output “production and certification of seed of improved varieties”, without also including “testing and setting up private production of seed” and “training of ministry of agriculture staff for certification” as activities. Once the objective hierarchy is drafted, the logic needs to be tested (see Table 3-4).

The standard LFA uses a very structured method of converting a problem tree into an objective tree or hierarchy. When working with project visions and in more complex situations where the problem tree becomes unwieldy in size, you could use a more open and iterative approach. The main steps in developing an objective hierarchy are outlined below and described in Annex B with a detailed example.

1. *Define the project goal.* This should reflect the longer-term and highest-level impact to which the project will contribute.
2. *Identify the purpose(s).* This is what must be achieved by the project in order to contribute to the goal. The purpose level generally describes major changes in behaviour or capacity. Because a project can contribute to the goal in many ways, the stakeholders will need to decide what is most worthwhile and feasible for this particular project. It helps to establish criteria to help make these decisions.

It is good practice to include a separate purpose for project management. Here, key project management tasks can be included as outputs (see next step), such as staff management, financial management, plant and equipment maintenance, and M&E.

3. *Establish necessary outputs.* For each purpose, identify what outputs are necessary for the purpose to be achieved. Think of it a bit like designing a car. If a key part is left out, like the wheels or the engine, it will not matter how good the rest of the car is – it still will not work. Also you do not want tractor wheels on a car or a motor-bike engine in a big tractor. In other words, make the outputs fit the real needs and avoid outputs that are not absolutely necessary. Any purpose can be achieved in several ways. Think creatively and analyse the advantages and disadvantages of different options before making a choice.
4. *Identify activities.* Each output is delivered via a set of activities. At the initial project design stage, the best way of achieving purposes and outputs may be unclear, so activities may need future finalisation and probably revision.
5. *Check the logic.* Once the objective hierarchy has been drafted, use the logic testing questions in Table 3-4 for checking and finalisation.
6. *Allocate resources* required for activities and develop an overall budget.
7. *Develop a work schedule* for the main activities over the life of the project and establish key milestones.
8. *Establish the management and operational arrangements*, with key responsibilities and working procedures.

Table 3-4. Logic testing questions

Level	Logic Testing Questions
Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Does the goal express some future desired state or higher-order impact towards which the project is contributing? ✓ Does the goal help to place the project in a wider context that provides the rationale for the project? ✓ Is the goal narrow enough that it is meaningful given the scope of the project? Avoid goals expressed at an excessively general level. ✓ Is the goal something owned and shared by relevant stakeholders?
Purpose <i>(if a single purpose)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is the purpose a succinct statement of what the project will achieve overall? ✓ Is the purpose realistic given the resources, time span and working context of the project?
Purposes <i>(if multiple purposes)</i> or Outcome or Component Objective <i>(if an extra level is included)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are the outcomes/component objectives the set of main outcomes necessary to achieve the purpose? In other words, if the outcomes/component objectives are achieved will the project purpose be achieved? ✓ Do the purposes/outcomes/component objectives reflect the highest-level achievements of the project for which it can realistically be accountable? ✓ Are the purposes/outcomes/component objectives realistic for the project to achieve during its lifetime? ✓ Is there a set of practical actions that can be carried out to achieve each purpose/outcome/component objective? ✓ Is one of the purposes/outcomes/component objectives dedicated to effective project management?
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do the outputs together describe the set of achievements that must be realised for the outcome/component objective to be realised? In other words, if the outputs are achieved will the outcome/component objective be achieved? ✓ Are any outputs unnecessary to achieve the outcome/component objective or logically belong under another outcome/component objective? ✓ Are the outputs realistic for the project to achieve during its lifetime? ✓ Is there a set of practical actions that can be carried out to achieve each output?
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do the set of activities for each output reflect the main actions that must occur for the outputs to be achieved? ✓ Are any activities included that are unnecessary for achieving the outputs or that logically belong under another output? ✓ Are there any activities that need to be split up and partly allocated to different outputs? ✓ Are the activities all roughly equivalent in terms of their level of detail? In other words, are you sure that some activities are not more at an output level while others are at a task level? ✓ Is the list of activities manageable (not too long)?
For All levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are all levels understandable to project stakeholders and expressed as plainly and succinctly as possible? ✓ Are any unnecessary means of achievement included? ✓ Are there between three and about seven items for each of the (outcome/component objective, output and activity) levels?

Developing a good project strategy does not happen in one go from top to bottom. You will need to return to earlier steps as thinking becomes more detailed. For example, when you start thinking about the cost and practicality of some activities you might realise that some outputs and purposes might be unrealistic. Box 3-12 lists some mistakes to avoid when drafting the objective hierarchy.

Box 3-12. Common mistakes to avoid when formulating the objective hierarchy

- Defining overly ambitious goal/purposes, given local conditions and available resources and capacities
- Overlooking key activities and outputs that are needed to achieve higher-level objectives (outcomes/purpose/goal)
- Poor logic as to why particular activities are needed for a certain output or particular outputs for a certain purpose
- Objectives expressed too vaguely to know what will be achieved or how to implement ideas
- Inclusion of principles, such as “stakeholder participation” or “gender equity”, as separate purposes or outputs, instead of integrated into project activities
- Confusion in the levels of the objective hierarchy

As far as possible, make each level in the objective hierarchy SMART (see Box 3-13). Remember that the logframe is only a summary of a more detailed description and justification for each level of the project strategy in the appraisal report. Try to make each statement in column one of the logframe as specific as possible. Additional targets can also be included as indicators in column two of the logframe.

To avoid blueprint planning, remember that outputs and purposes are not only physical, such as roads, irrigation schemes or yield increases, but also include dialogue processes and capacity development. You can include approximate targets and explain that these will become more precise after the participatory planning processes at start-up that will lead to clearer understanding of primary stakeholders’ priorities.

Box 3-13. Ensuring you have SMART objectives

The goal, purpose, component objectives, outputs and activities should be SMART if they are to be impact oriented:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant (to the project purpose and goal)
- Time-framed

But don’t get too SMART!

- What is achievable may need to be developed from experience.
- Good ideas take time to develop.
- Not everything that is worth doing can be easily measured.

The project strategy is something with details that evolve over the life of the project. For example, at start-up a more detailed project strategy is necessary than for appraisal, and even more detail is required for an annual work plan and budget.

Developing a clear, logical and feasible project strategy is worth all the time and analysis that is invested. Very often project staff – understandably – are impatient to “get started”. However, if actions are based on a shared clear understanding of the project strategy, then they will be more easily directed towards achieving the desired impact. Without this understanding, team members may end up doing good but isolated bits of work that do not reinforce each other. For example, in one Indonesian project, both a logframe and a work plan were produced, but they bore little relationship to each other and the logframe was therefore not used optimally by the project.

3.4.5 Step Five: Identify and Analyse Assumptions and Risks

Assumptions, in the fourth column of the logframe, are the logframe “orphan” (see Box 3-14). They often receive little serious thought or time. Yet assumptions are the very backbone of the

project strategy. They specify the necessary conditions (if-then relationships) outside the *direct management control of the project* that must exist for the project to achieve its objectives. They are fundamental to the overall logic of the project and therefore to project success (see Section 2.3, Box 2-9). Ideally, think about assumptions as you develop the objective hierarchy and do this again with the full draft.

Assumptions are only important when they describe conditions that – if they do *not* occur – may jeopardise the project’s success. Many logframe matrices only note assumptions that are extremely obvious, general and often very probable, such as: “national security maintained”, “free market policies”, “foreign exchange bottlenecks”, “limited flexibility of government administration” and “environmental degradation”. These are not useful for giving strategic guidance to a project.

Box 3-14. Assumptions column: the “rubbish bin”

According to an M&E consultant in Uganda, the assumptions column of the logframe is like “the rubbish bin where everything goes”. Instead of dealing with them as an integral part of the project, design teams tend simply to throw all the institutional aspects in this column. This means that such issues are not dealt with by the project staff who then see them as being beyond project control. More time is needed in the planning process to analyse the assumptions and think about what could be done with them.

Most projects recognise the importance of assumptions that show up as problems during project implementation. Many of these can be identified during project design, helping improve it. They are not recognised when a situation analysis is absent, has not been thorough or has not been analysed well enough to tease out the underlying assumptions. For example:

- In one project, one of the main targets was “non-rice cropping area increased by 10%”. It was only during implementation that the project became aware that the target group of small farmers did not have access to any additional land for planting such crops. Verdict: poor situation analysis.
- Another project had the output “radio programs developed and aired” and as an assumption “*communities have access to radio media*”. Communities did not, in fact, have radios. Verdict: poor situation analysis.

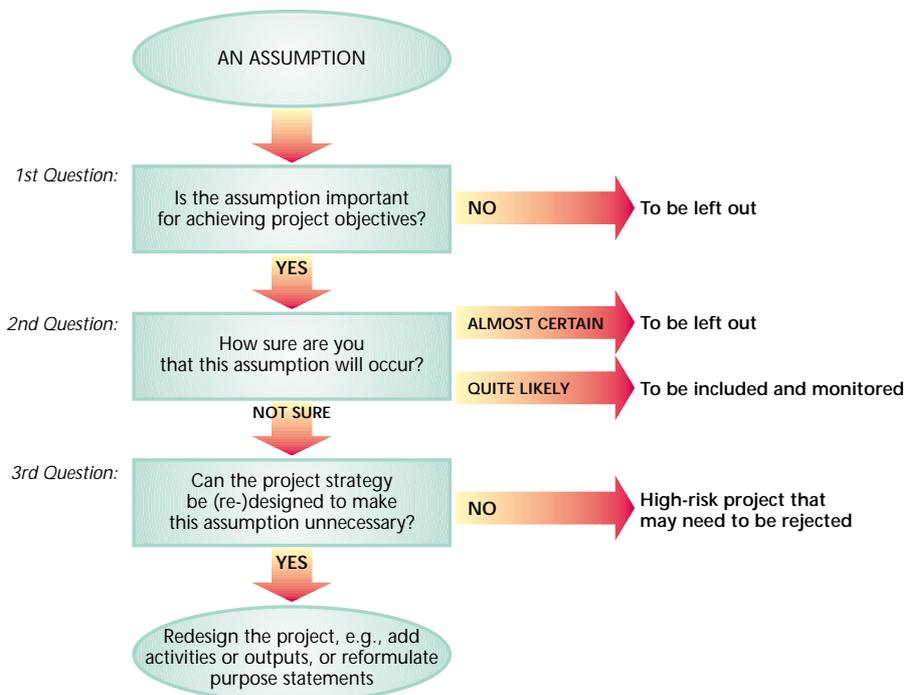
In both cases, the assumptions should have been checked out before the outputs were affirmed. If they had been, and it had turned out that the communities did not have necessary access to land or radios, the outputs would either have been thrown out or redesigned. For instance, in the latter case, outputs might be redrawn to provide radio access and the extra budget this would require.

Risks are the reverse of an assumption. One look at the assumptions for a project will give an idea of the level of risk that the project is taking. The more assumptions there are, the more improbable they are and the more they are out of the project’s control. This makes the risk of project failure higher. One project had as an assumption “the annual rainfall is above the annual average for the region”. If project success is based on this assumption (which may have been developed in haste without much thought), then it is certainly a high-risk project.

Good M&E needs clear, valid assumptions. When a certain objective is not realised or problems occur, you will often find a faulty assumption is the cause. Part of good M&E means keeping a close check on the validity of assumptions. Here are a few tips to make assumptions a useful management tool:

- *Think of assumptions first as risks.* When identifying assumptions, you might find it helpful to start by thinking of possible risks to the project. For example, if you think that a risk for the project is “non-delivery of contracted services on time by project partners”, then this would appear in the logframe matrix as “project partners will comply with their contracts on time”.
- *Consider assumptions about:* performance of public agencies, performance of private organisations, performance of NGOs/CBOs, performance of contractors/consultants, performance of funding agencies, policy environment, natural events, world or domestic markets and prices, and war/civil disturbance.
- *You cannot observe a large number of assumptions.* Limit the number of assumptions to only those that are most critical for success. After listing all possible assumptions, filter out those that are not important to project success and those that are almost certain so don't demand monitoring. A useful method for assessing the importance of assumptions is through the use of a risk assessment analysis (see Figure 3-1).
- *Focus on those assumptions about whose probability you are uncertain.* Such assumptions need to be monitored as they may seriously endanger the project if they turn out not to be true. Examples of such assumptions from project logframes include: “larger lessees are cooperative”, “beneficiaries will be effective in the management of their newly acquired land”, “climate fluctuates within normal ranges” and “community abides by fishery regulations on size of nets”.
- *Check that the assumptions are clearly outside the control of the project.* Use a decision tree for this (see Figure 3-1). The process of formulating assumptions is very important. It helps in checking that the project strategy is on course to achieve its purpose, having considered in its design as many components as possible that assumed factors might affect. If you realise that assumptions can fall within the control of the project, you can use them to indicate additional outputs and activities in the logframe matrix. The following assumptions, taken from IFAD-supported projects, could all have been tackled as part of the project strategy: “department of agricultural extension staff motivated”, “nutritious feed available” and “monitoring reports are based on contextual analysis”.
- *If important assumptions are very unlikely to be true, then these are “killer assumptions”.* The project must be redesigned to remove these assumptions. An example of a killer assumption is: “training of extension agents will lead to more uptake of new technologies by farmers”. This cause-effect assumption needs to be dealt with by the project because it is, in fact, very unlikely that lack of knowledge is the key constraint for extension agents (you don't know if you have enough people whom you could train nor if they are the right people). It is also extremely likely that farmers face many other constraints to the uptake of technologies, not just extension agents' knowledge.
- *Revisit your assumptions regularly,* at least during the annual review, to adjust or remove those that are no longer valid and add those that have emerged. A reflective participatory project will formulate new assumptions as the strategy changes and initial results become clear. Compare your M&E data to the assumptions to see if there are contradictions that need to be removed. For example, you might assume that a 25% increase in household income would lead to less illegal firewood collection. When the monitoring data show that incomes are up by 35% and such firewood collection is still at the same level, then you need to rethink the project logic if you want to reduce deforestation. Increased local purchasing power could be stimulating the demand for more firewood. You can probably conclude that “increasing incomes” is not the best strategy for “reducing illegal firewood collection”.

Figure 3-1. Deciding which assumptions are important to keep



3.4.6 Step Six: Develop the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The final step is to develop the monitoring and evaluation framework for the project. The key performance questions and indicators are summarised in column two of the logframe and the main monitoring mechanisms in column three. However, remember that this is only a summary of the overall M&E framework. The details of setting up the M&E system are the subject of the remainder of the Guide so will not be discussed further here.

3.5 From a Logframe Matrix to an Annual Work Plan and Budget

Translating a project strategy, as worded in the logframe matrix, into an operational annual work plan that is clear to project staff and partner organisations transforms ideas into actions. An operational plan is detailed enough when staff and implementing organisations know what they are expected to do, when and how.

3.5.1 What is the AWPB?

The most important operational and planning tool of a project is the annual work plan and budget (AWPB). The AWPB guides daily implementation and includes:

- Work plan: a logframe-based description of each activity/output/indicator per component;
- Schedule or time plan: specifying when activities are to take place and in what order;
- Budget: identifying the cost of each output and activity per component;
- Personnel plan: identifying responsibilities, additional staff needs, staff training;
- Material/equipment plan: requirements for each output and activity per component, including procurement.

The AWPB describes the annual commitment of the project towards the communities, the government and IFAD. The AWPB is normally integrated into ongoing government budget processes. With that, the AWPB has acquired legal endorsement and forms the formal base for implementation and release of funds (for IFAD funds and counterpart contributions). In some countries, immediately after AWPB approval, required counterpart funds are released to the project.

The AWPB process is usually initiated before the fiscal year ends and is based on experience gained at the field level during implementation. With the detailed AWPB, the importance of the project appraisal report fades away over the project's lifetime. After the first year, it is no longer useful for planning, except for general guidance on objectives, principles and approaches. The project appraisal report does, however, remain an important evaluation reference point, as AWPBs do not include references to long-term objectives and general principles.

The AWPB sits within the framework of the loan agreement, which can be amended when required. Changes come from the experiences of all project participants, who prepare the AWPB based on experiences and actual performance results. The first AWPB usually relies on the project appraisal report, updating details such as prices and actual requirements. Subsequent AWPBs are best when prepared during a participatory review and planning workshop process. Communities and project and partner staff jointly review performance of the past year. The outcomes of these discussions form the basis for participatory, goal-oriented planning for the next AWPB.

In an increasing number of projects, AWPBs are preceded by participatory appraisals during which beneficiaries with the guidance of project staff, identify their community's needs, resources and priorities. These form the basis for "community action plans" that are the building blocks for higher-level plans (e.g., district or ward) from which the project derives its AWPB (see Box 3-15).

The AWPB not only guides the project for a year but is also the mechanism by which the project can review the experiences of the previous year and make modifications accordingly. It adapts the project's operational plan to the current situation and specifies for the year: the outputs to be achieved, the activities to be undertaken to achieve these outputs, the resources required to undertake the activities and the costs of these resources as well as the institutions with financial responsibility. The AWPB should be the basis on which IFAD, the cooperating institution and project participants will assess implementation progress.

3.5.2 Preparing the AWPB

To prepare the AWPB, information is drawn from the project appraisal report, the loan agreement, any specific strategic plans, and plans and reports of previous years. AWPBs are produced for each level of participants in the project, starting with the project primary stakeholders according to their needs and demands using a bottom-up participatory process. At the highest level, preparation of the AWPB should be made just before government funding allocations for the following fiscal year, to give a clear indication of the funds required by the project.

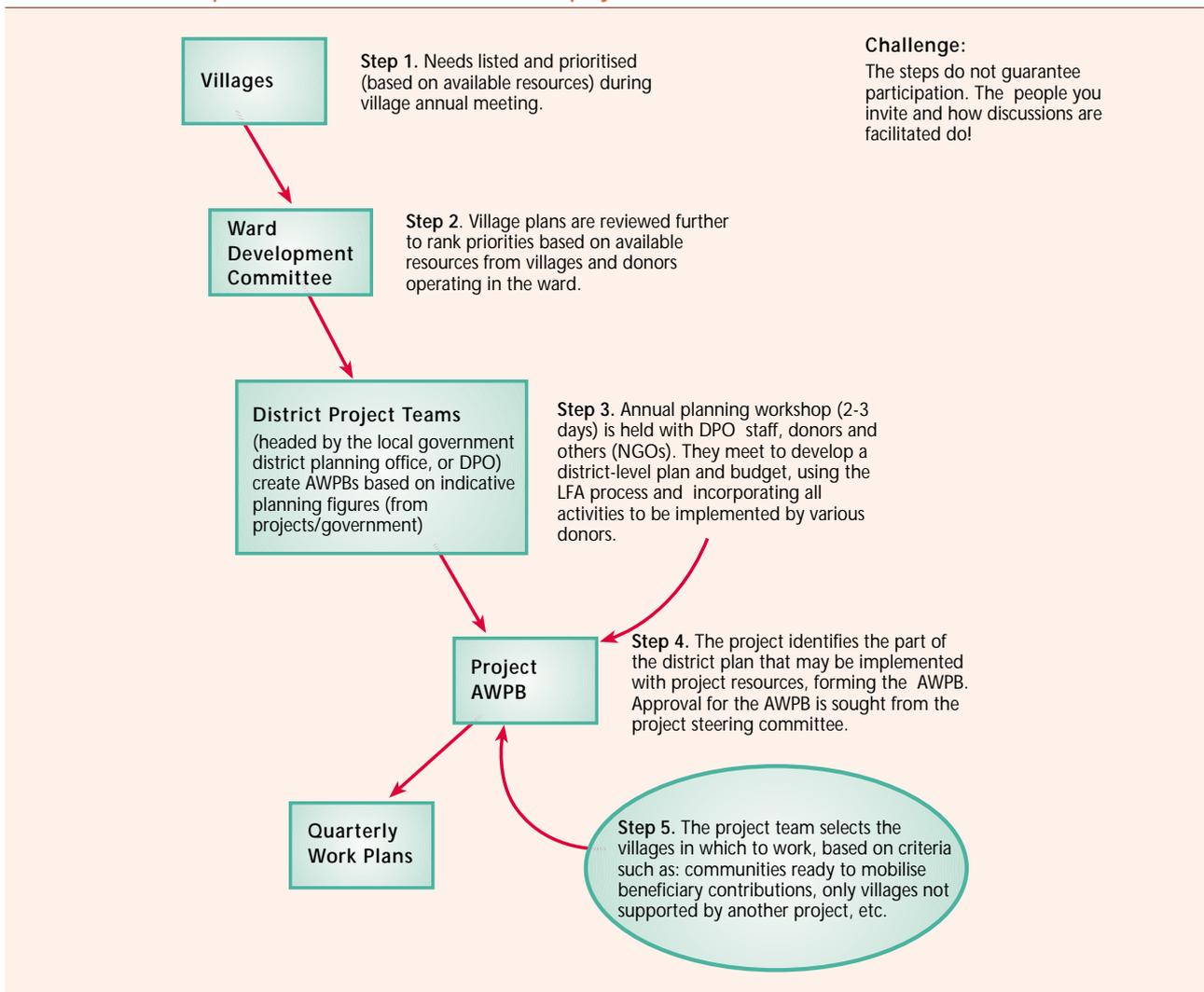
To develop an AWPB, here are some basic steps (also see Box 3-15):

1. Take the activities from the revised project logframe matrix and list them in the first column of the work plan. List them in terms of which activity is needed in order to do others. Clarify them further and add sub-activities, if needed.

2. For each (sub-) activity, specify the following: milestone – what is to be done by when, who is responsible for implementing it and for checking it, when it should start and finish, staff requirements in terms of person-months, quantity of material and equipment needed, cost and cost category and important assumptions.
3. Check the plan by ensuring that the total cost is within the budget (see Box 3-16) and that people are not overloaded or forgotten in terms of responsibilities (or that there are gaps or contradictions). Also make sure that timing is realistic and consistent. You cannot have the same person or piece of equipment scheduled at the same time!
4. Do the above with the main stakeholders to ensure a shared sense of responsibility (see Boxes 3-15, 3-16 and 3-17).
5. Compile the final consensus into the AWPB document (see Table 3-5) and send this to the appropriate body for approval, including a “no objection” from the cooperating institution.

The AWPB is the basis for more detailed operational planning: work plans per project component, per staff member, per month/quarter/half-year, etc. Some projects use Gantt charts to show when activities are to happen during the year. However, these charts do not show other important information, such as responsibility and resources, so other charts are also needed (see Annex D).

Box 3-15. The development of the AWPB in a Tanzanian project



Box 3-16. Participatory revision of the budget and project strategy

Even simply integrating the budget with the logframe can, as project staff in Uganda found, prove difficult. At a participatory workshop on developing the logframe, the participants were in a hurry simply to plug in the numbers and leave. Project staff had to encourage them to justify the expenses as part of the wider strategy and activities. Not surprisingly, the budget was far beyond the resources available. To reduce the budget they had to review their thinking process and identify those activities which most contribute to the outcomes they wanted to see. This process of backtracking helped the participants explain and justify why the activities were important and what would not be undertaken if not for external resources.

Box 3-17. Validating and documenting the planning system in Nicaragua

Tropise in Nicaragua developed a guide that summarised their participatory planning and M&E system. The guide was an important resource for the project management unit and implementing partners, covering the concepts and procedures to be considered during their relationships, organisation and verification of actions. The system and guide were validated in several joint workshops, where it was recognised that neither should limit the creativity and innovative capacity of stakeholders. During the project lifetime, both the system and guide were modified based on suggestions for improvements from stakeholders and a formal M&E review by implementing partners. The guide became more user friendly, suggesting basic tips for grassroots organisations and implementers in general.

Table 3-5. Example table of contents for an AWPB

Topic	Description
1. Introduction	Summary of project objectives, area and components that focuses on the strategy to reduce poverty. Describe any critical issues or recommendations resulting from changes in policy, government directives or supervision missions.
2. Analysis of implementation to date	Description of progress made, problems experienced, adequacy/inadequacy of project inputs, lessons learned for each level of logframe. Indicate any adjustments needed to the logframe and justify them.
3. Budget summary	Consolidated budget: summarised per project component, per output, per district/facilitation unit and at national and overall project levels. Explain how components are to be financed by different stakeholders: government, primary stakeholders, IFAD and other funding agencies, as well as what each stakeholder is contributing to each component.
4. Overall work plan	For each component, an explanation of what is to be funded, rationale, strategy, expected outputs and any changes from last year's AWPB, outlined following the logframe format. Explain which of these relate to needs prioritised by primary stakeholders and which needs are left out and why. Summarise the process to be followed for primary stakeholder participation in the coming year.
5. Output/activity plans	Plans for each component, including what is needed in terms of project support and coordination and training activities for project/partner staff and primary stakeholders; how plan implementation is to be monitored.
6. Procurement plan	Types of facilities and equipment to be purchased, quantities, cost, destination and description of purpose.
7. Contracted services plan	Technical assistance, NGO and private sector services to be contracted.
8. Required plan and budget	Output/activity budget: definition of the input requirements for carrying out the activities, by component and by expenditure category. This is directly related to the work plan.
9. Overall schedule (Gantt chart)	The period during which activities are to be undertaken and outputs to be achieved, who is responsible and key milestones for the year.
Appendices	Outlines of formats: output/activity plan, output/activity budget, indicators and monitoring schedule, contracted services monitoring, training activities monitoring, implementation progress monitoring, financial status, project status summary, credit analysis, project outputs summary and calendar of activities.

3.6 Outlining M&E During Initial Project Design

3.6.1 How Initial Project Design Influences M&E

Unintentionally, M&E is often set up to fail during initial project design. How? For example, there is not an adequate budget for M&E, insufficient time and expertise have been allocated to M&E during the start-up phase, or there is insufficient flexibility in the project design to enable the M&E system to influence the project strategy during implementation.

Initial project design influences M&E through:

1. the relationships and commitment established with partners and local people, particularly the intended primary stakeholders;
2. the logic and feasibility of the project strategy;
3. the resources allocated to M&E (funding, time, expertise);
4. the degree of inbuilt flexibility;
5. the operational guidelines for M&E.

Let's consider each point.

First, during project implementation, the effectiveness of M&E will be greatly influenced by the attitudes and commitment of local people and partners involved in the project and how they relate and communicate with each other. Individuals or organisations that have been active in the design phase are more likely to know if the project is genuinely in their interests and to understand the objectives. They are more likely to take an interest in monitoring the progress and achievements of the project. Alternatively, if people have been disillusioned, frustrated by or left out of the design process, then they are less likely to be interested in and committed to M&E activities.

In practice, projects experience considerable delays between design and start-up and related changes regarding who is involved. Nevertheless, the experience and legitimacy of the design process will have lasting consequences for implementation. The definition of clear responsibilities may also require the formation of new institutions or groups/units within institutions to undertake them. The appraisal report of the PADEMÉR project in Colombia defined the coordination component as including the shaping of a national technical coordination unit "that will integrate the functions of the monitoring unit with the evaluation unit and will be framed within the national evaluation system". It further stipulated that this coordination unit would be responsible for the annual work plan, the systemisation of information on project progress to guarantee timely decision-making by the management, and the preparation of relevant reports. Box 3-18 describes the importance of relationships and organisational structure for laying the foundation for effective M&E.

Box 3-18. A weak basis for effective M&E

In the initial project design of the TEPP project in Yemen, the project M&E department was not part of the project-management organisational structure. Instead, it fell under and was directly responsible to a government agency with a long-established M&E unit of its own based on national guidelines. Similarly the project director was also directly responsible to the chairman of the agency. This structure meant that the M&E unit had no direct access to resources and relied on minimal government funding. So no M&E reporting was undertaken. M&E activities required approval via a complex hierarchy of top-level managers. As the M&E department was responsible to the agency, relationships with project management were sensitive. This further affected the M&E budget, project incentives for M&E and adoption of M&E recommendations by the project. To make matters worse, project M&E was based on the existing government system without necessarily holding relevance to project specificities. This was compounded by the fact that project M&E staff were also responsible for M&E activities of other projects under the auspices of the government agency.

The second design fault is when a project lacks logic in its strategy or has unrealistic objectives, making good M&E almost impossible. This is because the evaluation questions and indicators often become quite meaningless and will not produce useful information. Furthermore, if you don't know clearly where you are heading then you will not know how best to use any information that might be produced. A good M&E system can help put a poorly designed project back on track, but this creates considerable extra work during start-up and implementation.

The third is when the design team does not allocate enough resources to the M&E system (see Section 7 for more on budgeting). Critical resources include: **funding** for information management, participatory monitoring activities, field visits, etc.; **time** for a start-up phase that is long enough to establish the M&E system, do a participatory baseline, train staff and partners, include primary stakeholders in M&E and monitor and reflect; and **expertise**, such as a consultant to support M&E development. As the design team, you must negotiate the level and extent of M&E that is possible for a given budget. Then you can make a detailed M&E budget.

The fourth factor is critical if M&E systems are to generate the learning that helps a group of project partners continually improve implementation and strategy. The more rigid a project design is, the more difficulty the project team will have in adjusting it as a result of changes in the context and understanding of interim impacts. As the design team, identify how flexible you feel the project design needs to be and what the boundaries of and processes for design adaptation should be. A project with inbuilt flexibility provides an important rationale for the M&E system.

Fifth, it is important that during design, the broad framework of the M&E system is established. Then everyone's expectations about his or her responsibilities and information rights can be clear. The next sub-section indicates what could be included in the documentation that describes the M&E system in the project appraisal report.

3.6.2 Documenting M&E in the Project Appraisal Report

The last M&E-related step for the design team is writing down the suggested M&E framework in the appraisal report. How this is done can strongly affect the start-up of the project (see Box 3-19).

Box 3-19. Implications of how the M&E system is documented at appraisal

The appraisal report of one project had included the design of a baseline survey and even the follow-up survey, but not the overall M&E system, specific targets by activity or a systematic way for data collection. According to the project staff, "The design of the project does not include a full description of how an M&E system looks and functions, nor what it would produce." Due to this, although the M&E unit existed before the project became effective, the data collected were not directly relevant to project objectives. It was more than a year after the start of field implementation that a supervision mission drafted a performance-indicator framework based on the AWPB targets, and constructed a more elaborate logframe. Also at this time, a technical advisor was appointed, which stimulated the construction of a database, prototype forms for data collection and so on.

Table 3-6 outlines what to include in the appraisal report as related to the M&E framework. This can serve to guide the writing process. As management functions relate to project M&E and implementation, so the M&E component of the appraisal report may either be included as a separate section or be integrated into a section on project organisation and administration and/or management. The main point is that the more the M&E component is integrated into the management system, the more useful and effective it may be.

Table 3-6. Suggested contents lists for the M&E component in a project appraisal report

Section Heading	Description
Introduction	Overview of purpose of this section of the appraisal report plus a summary of key innovations and potential obstacles for the project implementers to consider
1. Specific Project/Context Features that Affect M&E	Features affecting the resources required for the M&E unit to remain viable, including, for example, geographic coverage and level of in-country communication systems; other contextual features: the range of project components and the project organisational hierarchy
2. M&E Purpose and Scope	Broadly defined purpose and scope of M&E in the project context, including the project M&E needs and the information to be generated
3. Key Performance Questions, Indicators, Information-Gathering Requirements and Implications for the M&E System	List of possible key questions and indicators for the goal, purpose and output levels, plus generally described information gathering and organising methods to enable resource allocation
4. Internal Self-Evaluation Processes (input/output monitoring, ongoing evaluation and impact evaluation)	General outline of key processes, tasks and events
5. External Evaluations (ongoing and impact evaluations)	The frequency of external evaluations and how the project will be integrated into this evaluation process, including special evaluation studies or thematic studies that might be needed at key moments in the project
6. Intended Primary Stakeholder and Partner Participation in M&E	Including the early identification of stakeholders for their involvement in M&E planning at start-up
7. Structures and Staffing for M&E	Approximate staffing levels and types, roles and responsibilities related to activities, and a clear description of the organisational structure of M&E and its interaction with other project sectors, particularly with project management
8. Capacity-Building for M&E	Types of support needed to create sufficient appropriate M&E capacity among project stakeholders
9. Information Management	Any specific information management systems that are recommended for the project context
10. Process for Detailed Planning of M&E during Start-Up	Including draft timeframe for development of the M&E system
11. Communication Strategy	Broad description of key audiences and types of information that should be communicated to them
12. Budget	Approximate budget for key items (staff time, materials, evaluation and training events, publication/documentation, consultants)
Appendices	
M&E Responsibilities of Project Management	
Terms of Reference for those Responsible for M&E and for Consultants Providing M&E Support	
Detailed M&E Budget	

Further Reading

Sites for overview of logframe or objective oriented planning:

- AusAid Logframe. Clear overview of logframe steps and issues, with examples. View online at: www.ausaid.gov.au/ausguide/ausguidelines/1.html.
- Objectives-Oriented Project Planning document. Download from: www.gtz.de.
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). See publications section (in multiple languages) online at: www.sdc.admin.ch.

Broughton, B. and Hampshire, J. 1997. *Bridging the Gap: A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Development Projects*. Canberra: Australian Council for Overseas Aid. Contact: reception@acfoa.asn.au.

IFAD, ANGOC and IIRR. 2001. *Enhancing Ownership and Sustainability: A Resource Book on Participation*. International Fund for Agricultural Development, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and International Institute of Rural Reconstruction. Contact: info@ifad.org.

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Section 1. Introducing the M&E Guide

Section 2. Using M&E to Manage for Impact

Section 3. Linking Project Design, Annual Planning and M&E

Section 4. Setting up the M&E System

Section 5. Deciding What to Monitor and Evaluate

Section 6. Gathering, Managing and Communicating Information

Section 7. Putting in Place the Necessary Capacities and Conditions

Section 8. Reflecting Critically to Improve Action

Annex A. Glossary of M&E Concepts and Terms

Annex B. Annotated Example of a Project Logframe Matrix and Logframe Explanation (relates to Section 3)

Annex C. Annotated Example of an M&E Matrix (relates to Section 5)

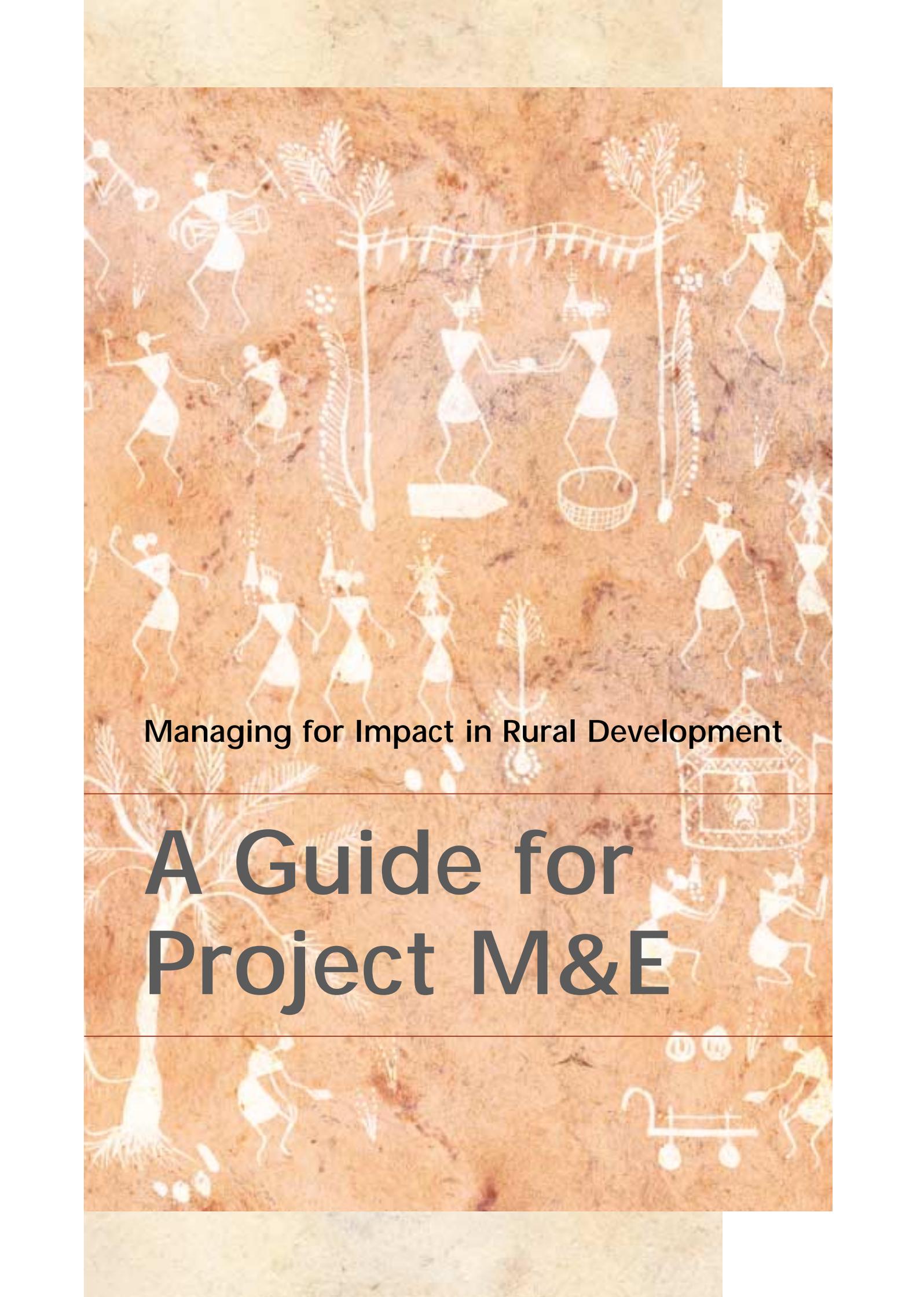
Annex D. Methods for Monitoring and Evaluation (relates to Sections 3, 6 and 8)

Annex E. Sample Job Descriptions and Terms of Reference for Key M&E Tasks (relates to Section 7)



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Managing for Impact in Rural Development

A Guide for Project M&E

Credits

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Foreword

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and its partners in developing countries share the challenging mission of enabling the rural poor to overcome their poverty. A partnership which takes shape primarily through hundreds of rural development projects and programmes at grass-roots level, often in the poorest and most remote regions of the world.

Although the performance of these projects has improved in many aspects over the years, external evaluations continue to report weaknesses in their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, in particular in the way impact M&E is carried out and used at project management and policy level. The need for support is also evident from the numerous requests that IFAD receives each year from its partners for assistance in M&E system design and operation.

In line with the IFAD Action Plan 2000-2002, which seeks to “improve impact assessment”, this new practical guide was developed through a yearlong consultative process with its potential users: project M&E officers, managers, designers and supervisors. Its purpose is to facilitate the development and use of effective and participatory M&E systems as tools for impact-oriented management, shared learning processes and accountability.

As such, it is an integral part of our global effort to improve the performance and monitor the results of our common initiatives to strengthen the capacity of the rural poor and their organisations, improve equitable access to productive resources and increase access to financial services and markets.



Lennart Båge

President
International Fund for Agricultural Development

Preface

After a long consultation process and much work by a variety of M&E specialists from all regions of IFAD operations, I am pleased to present the IFAD Practical Guide for Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Development Projects.

The process began in 2000 when the Fund's Office of Evaluation and Studies conducted a stocktaking exercise, which covered a decade of IFAD experience with M&E at project level. After which, a comparative review was undertaken of the strategies and approaches to M&E systems at project level of several major development agencies. While the stocktaking exercise observed a general weakness in most M&E systems, the comparative review concluded that there is substantial material on M&E concepts and theories, although there remains a lack of practical resource kits on the methodologies and processes at operational level.

As such, the overriding goal of the guide is to improve the impact of IFAD-funded projects, through the introduction of effective M&E systems. It focuses on a learning approach to management that uses achievements and problems to improve decision-making and accountability. This requires creating an M&E system that helps primary stakeholders, implementing partners and project staff to learn together in order to improve their development interventions on a continual basis. As the ultimate objective is to ensure the maximum possible benefit for the rural poor, they are the ones best placed to assess project impact and must therefore be considered full partners in any future M&E. The guide also suggests ideas for implementing this and other forms of participatory M&E.

The primary target audience is composed of staff from project management units, in particular project directors and M&E officers, together with their implementation partners, such as, public services, NGOs and CBOs. The guide is also aimed at technical consultants and supervisors from co-operating institutions. Because the effectiveness of M&E systems also depends on the decisions taken during project design, specific sections of the guide provide advice to project designers, including IFAD staff and their consultants.

This guide presents a number of original features that I believe could contribute to its success and usefulness:

- It has been developed together with its potential users through a consultative process lasting over a year. It addresses their practical problems, starting from their current M&E practices, however rudimentary, and whenever possible uses examples of good practices from IFAD-funded and other rural development projects.
- The guide is geared to the specific context, procedures and partnerships of IFAD supported operations. It emphasises participatory processes throughout, and proposes options that can be adapted to the requirements of project managements in different regional and national contexts.
- The guide is organised in eight stand-alone modules that are tailored to the needs of different categories of users with specific yet differing monitoring responsibilities and tasks.
- The guide is also available to the public in a user-friendly, electronic format on the IFAD web page (www.ifad.org/evaluation).

Furthermore, the guide is not a stand-alone initiative. In fact, it forms part of broader spectrum of activities which include, more specifically, improvement of the logical framework approaches in project design and supervision, training, translation of the guide into local languages and the development of regional M&E support networks which take stock of IFAD's experience with the PREVAL (Programme for Strengthening the M&E Capacity of IFAD-funded Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean). This regional customisation should further adapt the contents of the guide to the needs of its users and their feedback will be incorporated in future versions.

I trust that the guide will be a valuable tool and contribution to the enhancement of impact assessment and achievement in IFAD-supported projects.



Luciano Lavizzari

Director
Office of Evaluation and Studies

Navigating the Guide

Manager		
<i>Are you responsible for managing the project or a project component?</i>		
<i>Phase in Project Cycle</i>	<i>Tasks You Face</i>	<i>Section Number</i>
Start-up	Revising the project design (logical framework)	Section 3, Annex B
	Obtaining an overview of M&E responsibilities	Section 2
	Supervising development of the M&E system	Section 5, Annex C
	Using the logical framework as a basis for developing the annual work plan and budget	Section 3
	Ensuring M&E staff have sufficient resources, capacities and structures to develop and implement the M&E system	Section 7, Annex E
Implementation	Requesting and using M&E information to guide project implementation and make decisions	Sections 2 and 8
	Supervising the contributions and performance of staff, partners and consultants	Section 4, Annex E
	Engaging team members, primary stakeholders and partners in joint analysis, learning and decision making	Section 8

M&E staff (project or partners)		
<i>Are you responsible for ensuring that M&E in the project as a whole or in a project component is being set up and implemented well?</i>		
<i>Phase in Project Cycle</i>	<i>Tasks You Face</i>	<i>Section Number</i>
Start-up	Developing clarity about the role of M&E in project management	Section 2
	Ensuring that during revision of project design, the M&E system and procedures are detailed enough for implementation	Sections 3 and 4
	Guiding project implementers in agreeing what to monitor and evaluate	Section 5, Annex C
	Guiding project implementers in deciding how to collect and communicate information	Section 6, Annex D
	Checking that proposed resources, capacities, support and structures are sufficient for M&E to be effective	Section 7, Annex E
Implementation	Supporting partners and consultants in fulfilling their M&E responsibilities	Section 4
	Encouraging reflective use of information by implementers	Section 8
	Engaging key stakeholders in joint analysis of information	Section 8
	Reporting findings from M&E	Section 6

Are you responsible for providing external technical assistance in the areas of project design, M&E and information management for the project or a project component?

Consultants

<i>Phase in Project Cycle</i>	<i>Tasks You Face</i>	<i>Section Number</i>
Design	Ensuring that the proposed project design is based on good design practice	Section 3, Annex B
	Ensuring that the M&E component has been designed comprehensively enough and with sufficient resources, capacities and flexibility	Sections 4 and 7
Start-up	Ensuring that the M&E system is designed to support “managing for impact”	Sections 2 and 4
	Supporting M&E staff in developing appropriate monitoring mechanisms	Sections 5 and 6
	Ensuring that enough and appropriate resources, capacities and support structures exist for carrying out M&E responsibilities	Section 7
Implementation	Building critical reflection into M&E processes	Section 8
	Reviewing and updating the M&E system	Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8

IFAD and Cooperating Institution staff

Are you responsible for providing guidance, supervision and support to the project?

<i>Phase in Project Cycle</i>	<i>Tasks You Face</i>	<i>Section Number</i>
Design	Checking that the proposed project design meets “good practice” standards	Section 3, Annex B
	Stipulating relevant elements of learning-oriented M&E in job descriptions and terms of reference	Annex E
	Ensuring that the proposed project design includes sufficient resources, capacities and enabling support structures for M&E	Section 7
Start-up	Ensuring that the project design is being revised appropriately with sufficient detail to M&E	Section 3
	Encouraging impact-focused monitoring	Section 5
Implementation	Ensuring that key aspects of the M&E system are in place	Section 4
	Recognising if a project is taking a learning approach in its implementation	Section 8
	Checking reports and suggesting reporting formats	Sections 3 and 6

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Acronyms

APR	annual project review
AWPB	annual work plan and budget
BPL	below poverty line
CBA	cost-benefit analysis
CBO	community-based organisation
CCU	central coordination unit
CI	cooperating institution
COSOP	Country Strategic Opportunities Paper
CPM	country portfolio manager
CV	curriculum vitae (résumé)
DC	district council
DPF	district project facilitator
DT	district team
FUG	forestry user group
GIS	geographic information system
GPS	global positioning system
HYVs	high-yielding varieties
ICGs	income-generating activities
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LFA	logical framework approach
MIS	management information system
MOVs	means of verification
MTE	mid-term evaluation
MTR	mid-term review
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MU	monitoring unit
NTCU	national technical coordination unit
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PCU	programme coordination unit
PD	project director
PIM	participatory impact monitoring
PM&E	participatory monitoring and evaluation
PMU	project management unit
PNGO	participating NGO (i.e. implementing partner)
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
SHG	self-help group
SOF	Special Operations Fund
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TA	technical assistance
TOC	table of contents

TOR	terms of reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WB	World Bank
WUA	water users' association

Projects mentioned by name in the Guide

ADIP	Agricultural Diversification and Intensification Project	Bangladesh
APPTDP	Andhra Pradesh Participatory Tribal Development Project	India
	Cuchumatanes Highlands Rural Development Project	Guatemala
	District Development Project	Zambia
DDSP	District Development Support Programme	Uganda
FODESA	Sahelian Areas Development Fund Programme	Mali
KAEMP	Agricultural and Environmental Management Project	Tanzania
	Karnataka Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project	India
LACOSREP	Upper East Region Land Conservation and Smallholder Rehabilitation Project	Ghana
MARENASS	Management of Natural Resources in the Southern Highlands Project	Peru
	Maharashtra Rural Credit Project	India
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province Barani Area Development Project	Pakistan
	Northwest Agricultural Services Project	Armenia
WUPAP	Nepal Western Uplands Poverty Alleviation Development Project	Nepal
P4K	Income Generating Project for Marginal Farmers and Landless	Indonesia
PADEMER	Rural Micro-Enterprises Development Programme	Colombia
PDR-San	Income Diversification Programme in the Mali Sud Area	Mali
PIDP	Participatory Irrigation Development Project	Tanzania
PROCHALATE	Rehabilitation and Development Project of Areas Affected by Conflict in the Department of Chalatenango	El Salvador
PRODECOP	Economic Development of Poor Rural Communities Project	Venezuela
PROSALAFA	Support Project for Small Producers in the Semi-arid Zones of Falcon and Lara States	Venezuela
RADP	Raymah Area Development Project	Yemen
RDRS	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service	Bangladesh
RTIP	Root and Tuber Improvement Programme	Ghana
SAIP	Smallholder Agricultural Improvement Project	Bangladesh
SARAGURO	Yacuambi Rural Development Project	Ecuador
SDPMA	Smallholder Development Project for Marginal Areas	Tanzania
SFPD	Smallholder Flood Plains Development Project	Malawi
SISP	Smallholder Irrigation Support Programme	Zimbabwe
TEPP	Tihama Environmental Protection Project	Yemen
TROPISEC	Project for the Capitalization of Small Farmers in the Tropisec Area of the Segovias – Region 1	Nicaragua
TNWDP	Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project	India

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