

## **ONTRAC 37: Rethinking M&E**

### **Rediscovering the Logframe?**

How far are logframes useful planning, monitoring and evaluation tools? Despite their clear limitations, can they still be used in a participatory way that lets stakeholders agree on what they are going to do and how they will measure this? The debates around logframes have typically been highly polarised. There are those who have made the decision that the Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) is a 'Lock Frame' that does not assist with planning or monitoring poverty reduction programmes. Others grin and bear it as they struggle on with them, acknowledging their imperfections, but feeling the logframe is still the best tool available.

In research for Sida conducted by INTRAC, it was concluded that the LFA may be deeply flawed - but that it is a component of currently in-vogue results-based management and can involve intensive stakeholder participation, at least at the planning stage.

### **Taking logframes to Oman**

INTRAC has been working in Oman since November 2005 with a small group of CSOs registered with the Ministry of Social Development. Omani civil society is still in its infancy - the first four CSOs were only registered in 2001. In March 2007 I had the pleasure of working with a group of Omani NGO leaders, introducing them to the practice of project management. We discussed the use of different tools to help with project planning, monitoring and evaluation.

As all the participants were newcomers to development and project planning processes, they had not been exposed to the concept of the project cycle or the LFA. During a previous scoping visit, all the associations' leaders had clearly stated that one of the major weaknesses was that the projects they supported were often based on one individual's impression of a community's needs rather than the whole community's perception of their collective needs. During our week together in March we began a process of identifying the core problem, involving stakeholders in developing a problem tree followed by an objective tree and finally developing a full logframe for a group of seven associations.

At these meetings the participants highlighted three problems they face, and designed three projects using the logical framework process. This was generally popular with the participants as it allowed them to look practically at community problems. They commented that it gave them the opportunity not only to learn from the facilitator, but also to spend a great deal of time learning from each other. It also gave the facilitator the chance to ensure that the learning process touched on the reality of the Omani situation, and was not simply based on external theories of no local relevance. They saw the logframe as a simple tool that helped them think through what they wanted to do, how they were going to do it and how they would monitor the project implementation.

**Pull quote: "They saw the logframe as a simple tool that helped them think through what they wanted to do"**

Such positive feedback received during and after introducing the logframe in Oman made me begin to question the many negative connotations associated with it, and the frequency with which logframe discontent is voiced by both Northern and Southern development workers.

This begs the question: Is the logframe inherently bad or can it also be used in a way that is participatory and sensitive to local realities and context?

The Omani associations were introduced to the logframe as a management tool to help them think through what they wanted to achieve in their own organisations. It was not imposed on them as a crude matrix that they had to complete in order to obtain funding. The participatory way in which they were introduced to the traditional logframe was focused on their own needs.

INTRAC's long-established M&E work has focused predominantly on participatory approaches. Our experience of working with the Omani CSOs shows that this approach does *not* exclude providing support and understanding of the traditional logframe in order to enable a better understanding of different contextually-tailored approaches to M&E.

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