Logical Framework Approach and Outcome Mapping
A Constructive Attempt of Synthesis

A Discussion Paper by

Daniel Roduner and Walter Schläppi, AGRIDEA

Walter Egli, NADEL (ETH Zurich)

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AGRIDEA: www.agridea-international.ch
NADEL, ETH Zurich: http://www.nadel.ethz.ch

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1. Introduction

The question of effectiveness of development measures is as old as efforts to achieve development (development in the sense of social, political and economic change to reduce poverty). What do development activities achieve? How must they be structured to achieve the greatest possible effect? How can we determine whether the desired effects have actually been achieved and what are their causes? These and other questions have occupied development practitioners from the outset.

The questions about effectiveness are relevant and legitimate for three reasons. First, they are important to the poor, who have an interest in knowing the extent to which their situation will be improved as a result of measures carried out for their benefit. Second, those who provide services with the aim of reducing poverty, as well as their donors – whether from the North or the South (or East) – need to know whether the resources they invest and the activities and services they finance have indeed made the greatest possible contribution to poverty reduction. And finally, local as well as national and international development organizations have a need to learn from experience: it is of interest to know not only *whether* a contribution was made but also *what* are the resulting changes, as well as *what* is being done differently *by whom*. Clear indications of changes in behaviour, and hence of sustainable development, are required.

Accordingly, methods have been developed in international cooperation to provide answers to these questions to the different actors involved: beneficiaries, practitioners, political authorities, donors. The present paper will examine to what extent the methodological approaches presented here – the Logical Framework Approach and Outcome Mapping – can meet the expectations for "results-based management" of development activities.

Focusing on results has become a cornerstone of the new architecture of international cooperation since the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. In many international conferences and high-level meetings the importance of results-based management (RBM) or "Managing for Development Results" (MfDR) has been emphasised. A large number of methodological guidelines have been developed and many examples of good practice have been compiled.[1]

In a background paper presented at the Third International Roundtable: Managing for Development Results, in Hanoi in February 2007, the following principles of results-based management are stated:

- ***Goal-orientedness:*** *setting clear goals and results provides targets for change, and opportunities to assess whether change has occurred*
- ***Causality:*** *various inputs and activities leading logically to outputs, outcomes and impact, also called the 'results chain'.*
- ***Continuous improvement:*** *periodically measuring results provides the basis for adjustment (tactical and strategic shifts) to keep programmes on track and to maximise their outcomes.*"[2]

These concepts and terms have long been known to practitioners in international cooperation as the Logical Framework Approach – a methodological basis for managing projects and programmes used by bilateral and multilateral development agencies and NGOs. What is new is the call for these concepts to be used in the planning and management of national development strategies and policies in the partner countries. This constitutes a demand on public officials in developing countries of the sort that has been discussed in industrialised

[1] Monterrey (2002), Rome (2003), Marrakesh (2004), Paris (2005), Hanoi (2007)
Publications: e.g. OECD/DAC: Emerging Good Practice in Managing for Development Results, Sourcebook, 1st and 2nd Edition (2005, 2007).

[2] Monitoring and Evaluation: Enhancing Development Results, Background Paper, Third International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, Hanoi, Vietnam, 5-8 February 2007, p. 2

countries since the 1990s in the framework of so-called New Public Management, i.e. results-based management as a basis for planning and management in the provision of public services.

The focus on results in international development cooperation gives a central place to the logic model of the Logical Framework Approach. However, the innovative methodology of Outcome Mapping presented as an alternative is generating growing interest among practitioners of international cooperation.[3] This raises the question of whether we are dealing with two mutually exclusive methodological approaches or whether a synthesis might be achieved that would make it possible to combine the strengths of both approaches. The present paper aims to contribute to the discussion of this point.

In order to analyse these two approaches, following assessment aspects will be considered:

- **Focus on results, determining effectiveness:** Methods should foster results-based programme/project management. By results-based we understand the use of programme or project designs and logic models that allow a clear attribution of the effects (changes) at the level of the beneficiaries with the products or services provided by a programme/project.
- **Programme/Project cycle management (PCM):** The methods should be appropriate for systematic and coherent programme/project cycle management. They should, on one hand, provide methodological bases for tasks to be performed at each stage of the cycle: planning, implementation, monitoring (i.e. adaptation of planning and implementation), reporting, and evaluation. On the other hand, the methods should allow for systematic linking of the key documents that serve as basis for decision-making and management in PCM: programme and project documents, annual operation plans, progress reports, etc. These linkages constitute a prerequisite for rigorous knowledge and information management among all stakeholders.
- **Partnership:** The methods should be suitable for implementing projects jointly or in partnership in different institutional, cultural and social contexts and set-ups.
- **Easy to understand:** The methods should be simple and understandable, both in relation to the underlying impact or logic model and to application in the context of PCM, and be appropriate for use in an intercultural and inter-institutional context.
- **Participation:** The methods should allow the broadest possible participation by partners and target groups in all programme and project management tasks.

In this present paper we will first present what we consider to be the standard Logical Framework Approach (Logframe) that has been widely used since the 1980s. Then we will examine some changes in the functioning of international cooperation, that make it difficult to apply the Logframe Approach as a method for results-based management of development projects. Some of the strengths and weaknesses of this methodological approach will also be discussed. The next section will present the methods used in Outcome Mapping and describe how they differ from the Logframe Approach. Finally, we will compare both methods and discuss the possibilities of a synthesis.

[3] Outcome Mapping was developed and published in 2001 by the Canadian research organisation IDRC (International Development Research Centre).

2. The Logical Framework Approach (LFA)

Background and terminology: LFA has its foundations in the 1960s, when an American consulting firm retained by USAID proposed the matrix of the logical framework as a basis for monitoring and evaluation of development projects. Building on this matrix, a team consisting of experts from the American consulting firm and the German development organization GTZ developed the method known as Object-oriented Project Planning (OOPP), or the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). GTZ made this approach a mandatory standard for project planning and project management in the 1980s. The methodology of the LFA was adopted by most development agencies in the 1980s and 1990s.

Since the 1990s this approach has been applied in different ways. Use of the matrix, designated in brief as the logframe, is still the standard applied in practically all bilateral and multilateral agencies and many NGOs. However, the steps of the planning process as originally defined in the OOPP or LFA methodology, although they have not lost their validity and logical rigor, are applied today far more flexibly and pragmatically. In PCM manuals used by many agencies there are still detailed description of the methods and instruments of this planning methodology. For the purposes of the present paper, it will suffice to characterize the core elements of the logframe matrix.

The Logical Framework matrix: This matrix consists of 16 fields divided into different areas. The matrix makes it possible to present the core elements of a project in the form of a simplified overview. In the planning phase, the matrix is used to elaborate the project design or logic model step by step. The same logic model is used as a basis for other tasks in project cycle management such as annual operational planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

Causal chain of results, hierarchy of objectives, intervention logic: In the first column of the Logframe matrix a hierarchical project causal chain is presented on four levels. At the centre are the direct effects (outcome) of the project, formulated in terms of project objective. At the two lower levels are the outputs (services or products) that the project will provide in order to achieve these effects and the activities needed to produce the outputs. At the highest level, the logic model describes the overall, long-term structural changes to which the project is expected to contribute.

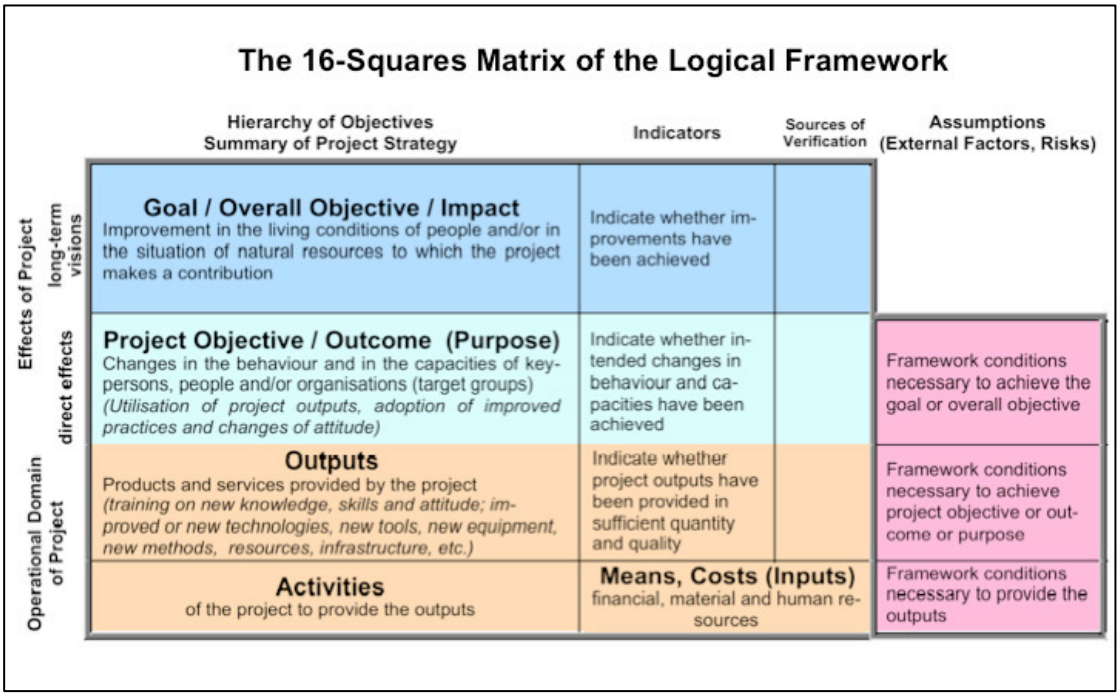
The stringency of the causal relations between the four levels decreases from bottom to top, as external influences increase at each level of the logframe. The key element determining the effectiveness of the project design or project strategy is the expected causality between the levels of outputs and outcome (development hypothesis). Will the outputs of the programme/project really have the desired effects and thus cause the changes to be achieved at the outcome level?

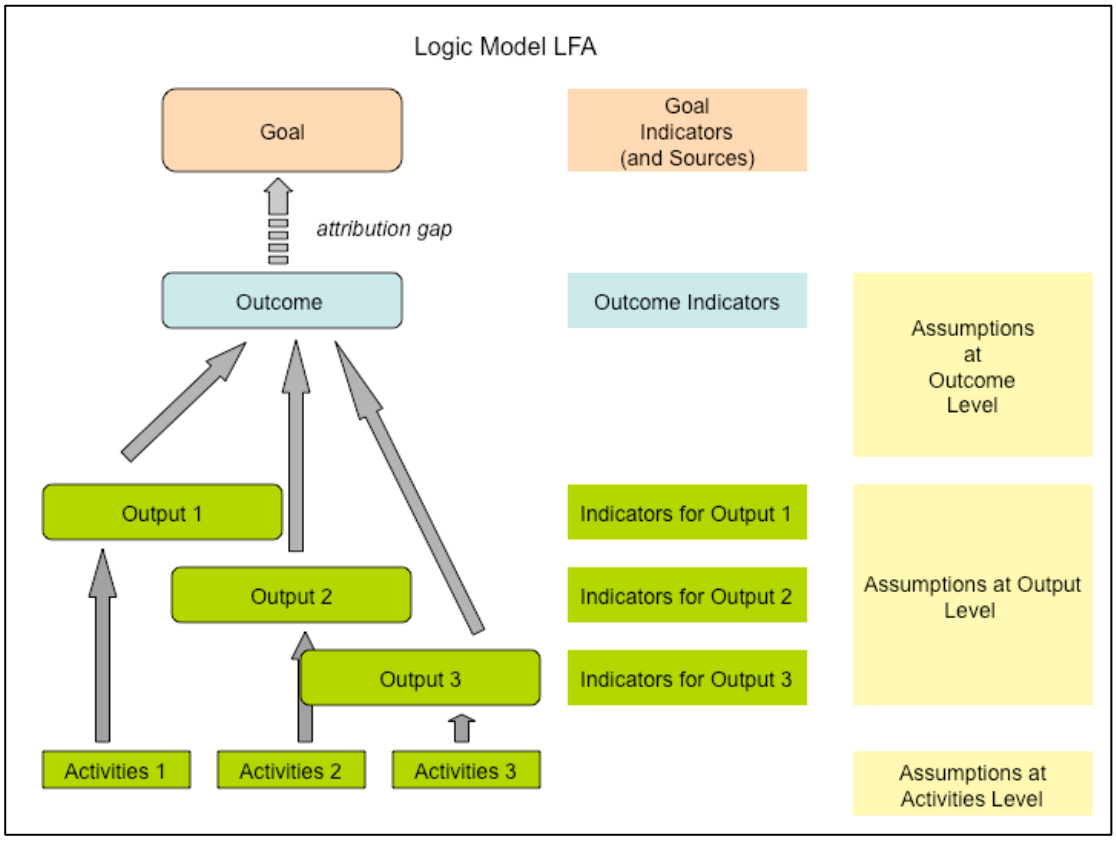
In general the programme/project strategy should be designed in a way that a direct and causal attribution of effects between outputs and outcome is ensured. Attribution of cause and effects between the levels of outcome and impact cannot be conclusively determined in most cases. This uncertainty in attribution is known as the “attribution gap” and is inherent to the logic model of the logframe.

Although it is precisely this linear causality underlying the logic model of the logframe that is regularly criticised (see below), it is also a source of its strength. "*The major strength of the LFA is that it does force people to think through their theory of change - a process which many people find difficult*," observe O. Bakewell and A. Garbutt in a paper on the logframe approach that is otherwise rather critical.[4] At another point in the same study, the authors comment on answers to a survey of NGOs on the use of the logframe approach: "*For many*

[4] Bakewell and Garbutt, The Use and Abuse of the Logical Framework Approach, SIDA 2005, p. 20. The paper by Bakewell and Garbutt is based on a survey of 19 development organisations analyzing the use of the LFA.

respondents, the advantage of the LFA is that it forces people carefully to think through what they are planning to do ... As a result many see the LFA as a useful way of encouraging clear thinking. One donor commented that it reduced people's tendency to 'waffle' - to write long and unclear project documents."[5]





[5] ibid, p. 12

Indicators: Closely related to the first column of the matrix, in the second and third columns of each level of the hierarchy, is the description of indicators and the information on which they are based. Indicators make it possible to monitor achievement independently and objectively. Although they are identified already at the planning stage, they must frequently be adapted or modified during the course of project implementation. Establishing indicators that incorporate measurable target values whenever possible helps to make goals more precise.

As no indicators are necessary to monitor the execution of activities, the corresponding fields in the matrix are used for a summary presentation of the resources (inputs) needed to carry out activities.

Assumptions (external risks): The logframe matrix includes the context in the logic model of the project identifying external risks that are formulated as positive assumptions. In contrast to the direct causal relations in the hierarchy of objectives, the causal relations with the assumptions are indirect or passive. For example, if activities are being carried out and if assumptions identified at this level are valid (i.e. if risks do not materialize), then the project is in a position to deliver outputs. This causal chain is repeated at each level of the logframe matrix.

Logical Framework and Results-based Project and Programme Cycle Management (PCM): PCM defines the key documents, decision-making processes and management tasks for the stages in the project cycle: planning, monitoring, implementation and reporting, evaluation, and redesign. In our view the use of the logframe as a methodological approach has proven to be an effective basis for results-based project or programme management:

- **Focus on results or effects:** Clear formulation of aims, use of measurable indicators, and clear attribution of outputs and effects allow for results-based project and programme management.
- **Focus on learning and information management:** Consistent application of the logframe as a basis for the key documents and their systematic linkage throughout all stages of the project cycle allows for learning-based management and effective, comprehensive information management involving all stakeholders.
- **Transparency and accountability:** The use of the logframe encourages clear formulation of outcomes and goals, as well as precise definition of quantifiable targets, thus enhancing transparency and accountability between implementers, beneficiaries and donors.

2.1 The Logical Framework Approach in Practice

Use of the Logical Framework and its underlying linear-causal logic model has been the subject of frequent criticism for a number of reasons. Criticisms follow several lines of argumentation:

- It is argued that new modalities of cooperation make it increasingly difficult to attribute development results to the outputs provided by individual programmes and projects on the basis of a linear causality model.
- The principle of causality is seen as too rigid, culturally unadapted, and unrealistic as a basis for planning and management.
- The model offers the temptation to engage in inflexible "blueprint planning". Modification of goals or indicators is often avoided during implementation.

Following three sub-chapters will look into these argumentations and some conclusions are drawn in the forth sub-chapter.

2.2. New modalities of cooperation

Since the Logical Framework Approach was introduced in the 1970ies and 1980ies, a series of fundamental changes has taken place in the ways in which development assistance is delivered. These changes raise questions about the explanatory power and the performance of the logframe approach with respect to results-orientedness. Seen from the perspective of donor countries, these changes can be characterised as a process leading from project to programme approach. In concrete terms, these changes can be divided into four partly overlapping areas or trends.

From direct poverty alleviation to capacity building and social development: This trend is an expression of a changed perception of the roles of actors in international development cooperation. Originally, actors in the North saw it as their task to contribute to alleviate poverty by means of development projects in developing countries. Gradually, however, providing support for partner organisations in the South to build their own capacity for poverty alleviation seemed a better way to foster development. This would ultimately enable them to combat the causes of poverty through their own projects and programmes in their own countries. As time went on, actors in the North increasingly saw capacity building and social development – rather than direct engagement in poverty alleviation – as their central task.

Hence the problem that the causal chain between the performance of actors from the North (capacity building and social development) and the impact in alleviating poverty and combating its causes (effects resulting from the achievements of partners) has become longer. It becomes increasingly difficult to establish a plausible and direct cause-effect relationship between the use of donor resources and poverty alleviation in the South.

From direct implementation to a multi-stakeholder approach: Initially, development organizations in the North implemented projects themselves, often alone. Increasingly, however – and not least as the result of pressure from partner countries – partnership approaches and eventually multi-stakeholder approaches are implemented. Partners increasingly claimed and were conceded responsibility for implementing development projects and programmes, while development organizations from the North tend to limit themselves to a subsidiary supporting role.

In this modality of shared responsibility for implementation, where a number of different actors fulfil different roles in a joint implementation, it becomes increasingly difficult to establish a causal relation between the contribution of each individual actor and the overall effects of the project or programme.

From direct cooperation with beneficiaries to "vertical integration": This trend also correlates with the same developmental considerations as the two previously mentioned

changes. Awareness of the danger of so-called “insular solutions” in a purely micro-level approach (positive impacts on the situation of the target public in the immediate project area but little resonance and multiplier effect beyond) inspired development organizations in the North to strengthen the capacity of partner organizations through capacity building at meso-level, and also to exert greater influence on shaping the policy framework through policy dialogue at macro-level.

This vertical integration of levels of intervention (micro- meso- and macro-levels) led to growing complexity in projects, where it became increasingly difficult to establish clear causal relations between the performance of individual actors and overall impacts. At the policymaking level in particular, changes can rarely be clearly traced to the performance of a single actor. Rather, an outcome is usually the result of networks in which different actors combine their strengths to make their influence felt.

From implementing donor-driven projects to supporting partner programmes: This trend describes yet another facet of the changed perception of roles in international development cooperation. As time goes on, development organisations in the North see their role less in terms of implementing projects of their own than in supporting programmes of governmental and non-governmental partners in partner countries. This includes financial support as well as technical advice (capacity building). Influencing at the policy level in order to optimise the impact of the partners’ programmes by contributing to shaping the policy framework is an important component of this so-called programme-based approach.

Here again it is apparent that this programme-based approach, although well-founded from the perspective of development policy, makes it difficult to clearly identify the effects of the contributions of donors. The more responsibility is handed over to partners, the more difficult it becomes for donors to determine a causal relationship between their contributions and the impacts at the level of poverty alleviation.

Dilemma: Seen from the perspective of development organizations from the North we can conclude that the focus on partners and partner programmes has led to a dilemma that is difficult to resolve. From a development policy point of view it is necessary and justified that donors withdraw from direct project implementation in order to focus on policymaking, capacity building and programme assistance, even if this makes it increasingly difficult to establish direct causal links between the contributions of development organisations from the North in terms of financial and human resources, and progress in the South in terms of poverty alleviation. Simultaneously, however, there is growing political pressure in donor countries on governmental and non-governmental development organisations to show evidence of the impact of the money spent on reducing poverty and improving the conditions of life of the poor.

This dilemma, that obviously has a political background, for the most part has nothing to do with methodological questions of project and programme management. Nevertheless, it may be useful to give further consideration to the following questions:

- Which methods for which types of development projects or programmes are best able to meet the demand for results-based management?
- How must these methods be employed in order to defuse the dilemma between partner and programme-based approach on one side and results-based management of donor-financed programmes on the other?

2.3. Linear Causality, Cause-Effect Thinking

The basic principle of the LFA, a linear causality model based on cause-effect logic, is disputed among practitioners. Some praise its logical rigorousness and emphasise that it helps and even forces analysis of the relations between project outputs and desired effects at all stages of the project or programme cycle. This allows the development hypotheses underlying project design to be visible and knowable.

Others – and there are many of them – voice concern about the limitations of this linear causality. Critical voices can be heard in the above-mentioned paper by Bakewell and Garbutt on the use and abuse of the logframe: *"The positive aspects (of the LFA) are offset by the almost universal complaint that the LFA rests on a very linear logic – if we do this, this will happen, and then this, and so on (given that our various assumptions hold). It is a mechanistic idea of cause and effect as if we can turn the key in the engine of development and the wheels start turning. Unfortunately (for the Logical Framework Approach at least) we are not working with such a self-contained system and there are so many factors involved which lie beyond the scope of the planned initiative that will change the way things work. Although the LFA makes some attempt to capture these through the consideration of the risks and assumptions, these are limited by the imagination and experience of those involved. As a result the LFA tends to be one-dimensional and fails to reflect the messy realities facing development actors"* [6].

Also William Easterly in his well-known book "The White Man's Burden" is deploring a "planning mentality" in development cooperation that ignores the circumstances and needs of the people concerned.[7] He further argues that rather than "planners" there is a need for "seekers" of the type who have proven themselves in well-functioning markets, where suppliers continually look for solutions in the interest of meeting demand. Easterly adds that in the final analysis development must start with the beneficiaries, and neither Western results-based planning nor attempts to establish simple cause-effect chains in a complex environment have been able to shape international development cooperation efficiently.

Another critical aspect that is frequently mentioned is the neglect of external risks. As Bakewell and Grabutt note, *"the management of risk and coping with the unexpected is critical for the success (or failure) of most development initiatives, and the risks and assumptions column is therefore an important part of the logical framework matrix. However, it is usually the part taken the least seriously as it is the last column – more time is spent on outcomes and indicators. Risks are almost always poorly analysed and just put in for completeness' sake"'* [8]

2.4. The Logframe as a Logic Model and a Management Instrument

Development projects are interventions that attempt to bring about changes in complex social systems. Simultaneously, they are also part of these systems and are continually influenced by them. Simplified models that describe planned interventions and changes are required in order to plan and manage development projects. For the purpose of simplicity the LFA logic model is based on simple, linear causality excluding explicitly elements of systemic approaches such as feedback loops. The prerequisite for the successful use of such models, however, is the clear awareness of actors that they are managing complex projects that intervene in complex social systems on the basis of simplified logic models.

Critics of the LFA emphasise that many users forget that the logframe matrix is a summary rather than a detailed project description. "*A major advantage of the logical framework is that it provides a simple summary of the key elements of a development initiative in a consistent and coherent way. This enables rapid understanding of the broad outline of a project – what it is trying to do and how – and facilitates comparisons between different proposals. It is not surprising that managers in donor agencies find it very useful. However, this introduces its own dangers when people forget, as they often do, that they are dealing with a summary. The logical framework is a simplification and 'dangerous when not seen as such' (Gasper 2000: 17). Most supporters of the LFA would agree that the matrix can only reflect a small part of the underlying process through which it was produced. Whether it was prepared through reaching consensus in participatory stakeholder workshops or simply consultants in the office, the logical framework necessarily leaves many things out – therein lies its usefulness. At the same time therein also lies its danger, as the things which do not appear in the*

[6] Bakewell and Garbutt, 2005, p. 19

[7] Easterly, The White Man's Burden, 2006

[8] Bakewell and Garbutt, 2005, p. 16

summary that goes to decision makers tend to be forgotten… This would be fine if everyone held to the view of the logical framework as a convenient summary.[9]

Using the LFA in project management may lead to a dilemma that gives rise to often-heard criticism. The considerable effort associated with elaborating a project using the logframe approach, as well as the fact that financing and implementation agreements are made on the basis of this project design, lead to a situation in which all key stakeholders (implementer and donor) have an interest in not altering the logframe matrix if it is not absolutely necessary, at least not during an on-going project phase. At the same time, learning-oriented management demands flexibility and hence a willingness to make ongoing adaptations in project design on the basis of experience in project implementation. In reality, it is often the case that no change is made in the basic impact model for a project throughout an entire project phase, even though concrete experience would demand modification.

An additional point of criticism is the fact that the logframe focuses the attention of those responsible for managing the project solely on the planned results while blocking the perception of unplanned and unexpected results. The same is true for risk management, which takes account only of identified risk factors while excluding unexpected risk factors.

2.5. 'The best we have got'

Bakewell and Garbutt touch one of the key points of the debate on LFA when they write that discontent with the dominance of LFA as an international standard is virtually as great as discontent with the perspective that this standard must be abandoned in favour of an alternative that may have all the virtues but none of the weaknesses of the LFA: *"Development organisations are torn between increasing levels of stakeholder participation and accountability and ever greater requirements to demonstrate that they have performed according to expectations and to provide evidence of impact. The LFA, while deeply flawed, seems to provide some middle ground, as it is both a component of results based management and also allows scope for intensive stakeholder participation, at least at the planning stage."*[10]

An additional fundamental aspect in the debate over the strengths and weaknesses of LFA concerns the distinction between structure and process in the application of a method. Frequently, it is difficult to determine whether certain shortcomings observed in the use of LFA can be traced to weaknesses inherent in the method – i.e. whether the weaknesses concern what could be called the structural parts of the methodology – or whether problems result from flawed or inadequate application of the logframe methodology that is concerned with processes: "*... the blame is often placed on those who use the LFA, rather than the approach itself. A support NGO described the LFA as 'a tool that has potential but is constantly misused resulting in organisations filling in the boxes to receive funding'. Respondents described logframes as 'a necessary evil', 'the best we have got'. As Gasper (2000: 18) observed, 'logframes are inherently easy to misuse'. Often people are forewarned that it is easy to misuse and yet they still fall into the same traps. Using the LFA involves many compromises, and inevitably the most significant compromises seem to be made on the part of the less powerful actors. The LFA continues to serve the interests of donors and many INGOs, making their project management tasks easier, while failing to adapt to the troublesome and messy realities of development practice."*[11]

[9] Bakewell and Grabutt, 2005, p. 13
[10] ibid, p. 18
[11] ibid, p. 19

3. Outcome Mapping (OM)[12]

Background and Terminology: The above-mentioned criticisms of existing project cycle management tools and - more specifically - their weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of development effects, have motivated IDRC (International Development Research Centre, Canada) to develop a different approach. IDRC's practical and conceptual work with donors, research institutions, programme staff and evaluation experts has brought to the fore a fundamental problem with existing approaches to reporting on development impacts. Their current response, published as "Outcome Mapping: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs"[13], includes the following assertions: (p. 2) "*As development is essentially about people relating to each other and their environments, the focus of Outcome Mapping is on people. The originality of the methodology is its shift away from assessing the development impact from a programme (defined as changes in state: for example policy relevance, poverty alleviation, or reduced conflict) towards a change in behaviours, relationships, networks, actions or activities of people, groups and organisations with which a development programme works directly. This shift significantly alters the way a programme understand its goals and assesses its performance and results. OM establishes a vision of the human, social and environmental betterment to which the programme hopes to contribute and then focuses M&E within that programme's direct sphere of influence. The programme's contributions to development are planned and assessed based on its influence on partners with whom it is working to effect change. (…) OM does not belittle the importance of change in state (such as cleaner water or a stronger economy) but instead argues that for each change in state there are correlating changes in behaviour. By using outcome mapping, a programme is not claiming the achievement of development impact; rather the focus is on its contributions to outcomes*."

Outcome Mapping Approach and Methodology: Outcome Mapping (OM) focuses on one particular category of results: changes in the behaviour of people, groups, and organisations with whom a programme works directly. These changes are called "outcomes". Through the OM method, development programmes can claim contributions to the achievement of outcomes rather than claiming the achievement (attribution) of development impacts. OM helps to analyse complex changes, especially those relating to behaviour and knowledge. The underlying principles are that (1) changes are complex and do not move in a linear way, (2) development is done by and for people, and finally (3) although a programme can influence the achievement of outcomes, it cannot control them because ultimate responsibility rests with the people affected.

Non-causality: Outcomes (changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, or actions of people, groups, and organizations) "*can be logically linked to a programme's activities, although they are not necessarily directly caused by them. These changes are aimed at contributing to specific aspects of human and ecological well-being by providing partners with new tools, techniques, and resources to contribute to the development process" (OM, p. 1).*

Contribution instead of attribution: (OM p. 1) "*By using Outcome Mapping, a programme is not claiming the achievement of development impacts; rather, the focus is on its contributions to outcomes. These outcomes, in turn, enhance the possibility of development impacts — but the relationship is not necessarily a direct one of cause and effect. Ultimately, all organizations engaged in international development want their work to contribute to long-term development impacts. However, this is rarely accomplished by the work of a single actor (especially an external donor agency). The complexity of the development process makes it extremely difficult to assess impact (especially for an external donor agency seeking attribution)".*

[12] Based on the publication by IDRC (2001); p. 1 – 10.

[13] OM uses the expression "Programme" to refer to the external Change Agent who supports partners (boundary partners) from the outside for a limited period. In this paper we use the terms "project" and "change agent" as well.

Control of change / development: (OM, p. 1 & 2) "*Outcome Mapping assumes that the boundary partners control change and that, as external agents, development programmes only facilitate the process by providing access to new resources, ideas, or opportunities for a certain period of time. A focus on the behaviour of the boundary partners does not mean that the programme decides how, when, and why those partners will change. In fact, by focusing on changes in behaviour, Outcome Mapping makes explicit something that has been accepted by development practitioners for a long time: the most successful programmes are those that devolve power and responsibility to endogenous actors".*

Outcome Mapping is divided into three stages. (OM, p. 3) "*The first stage, Intentional Design, helps a programme establish consensus on the macro level changes it will help to bring about and plan the strategies it will use. It helps answer four questions:*

- *Why? (What is the vision to which the programme aims to contribute?);*
- *Who? (Who are the programmeme's boundary partners?);*
- *What?(What are the changes being sought?); and*
- *How? (How will the programmeme contribute to the change process?).*

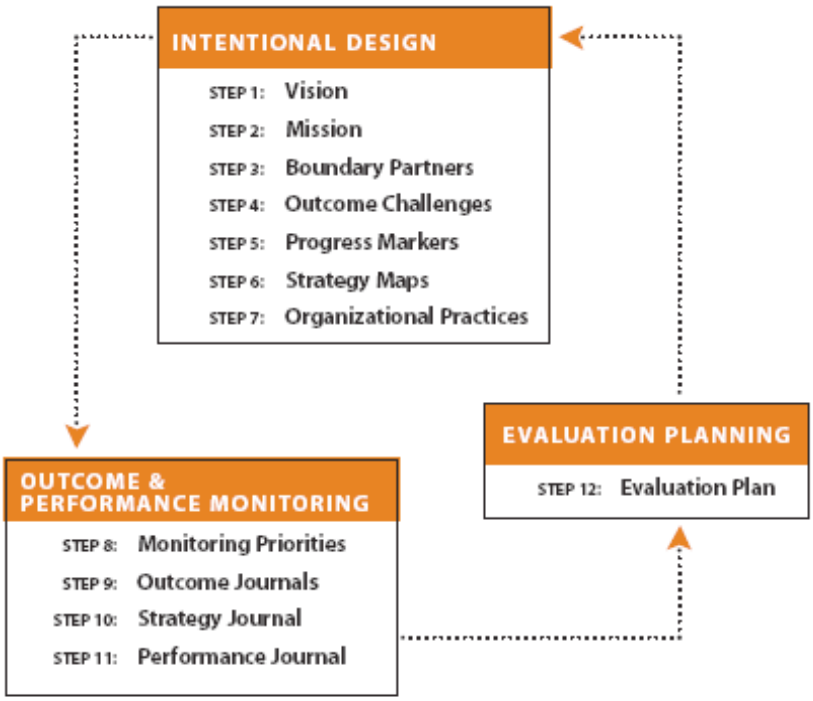


Figure 1. Three Stages of Outcome Mapping

The second stage, Outcome and Performance Monitoring, provides a framework for the ongoing monitoring of the programmeme's actions and boundary partners' progress toward the achievement of outcomes. It is based largely on systematized self-assessment. It provides the following data collection tools for elements identified in the Intentional Design stage: an "Outcome Journal" (progress markers); a "Strategy Journal" (strategy maps); and a "Performance Journal" (organizational practices). (…) The third stage, Evaluation Planning, helps the programme identify evaluation priorities and develop an evaluation plan. Figure 1 illustrates the three stages of Outcome Mapping".

Methodological Structure:

The compulsory interactive and iterative planning process with OM takes into account existing local organisations, institutions and structures. The pre-planning phase is used to get to know the 'big picture' –systemic analysis of what kind of relationships exist, who interacts with whom, and why (i.e. a historical scan looks at the organisational processes of the potential stakeholders).

Obviously, system borders must be drawn, while recognising that the 'defined system' is interacting with a wider world. While the wider world and its interaction with the project system can be observed, it is very unlikely that the project will be influencing it in a meaningful way. The system border is reflected in the vision, where a description of the changed behaviour of key stakeholders (change agents, decision-makers, policy-makers, etc.) and the expected change for the ultimate beneficiaries are related (impact hypotheses).

The project defines its mission by reflecting on its interests, motivations and means for influencing / supporting the key stakeholders in the process of moving towards the stated vision. The concrete counterparts of the mission statement are the 'outcome challenges'; these describe the roles, responsibilities and aims of each project partner. The project will not be held responsible for these changes, as the ultimate decision stays with the partners.

3.1 The OM Framework

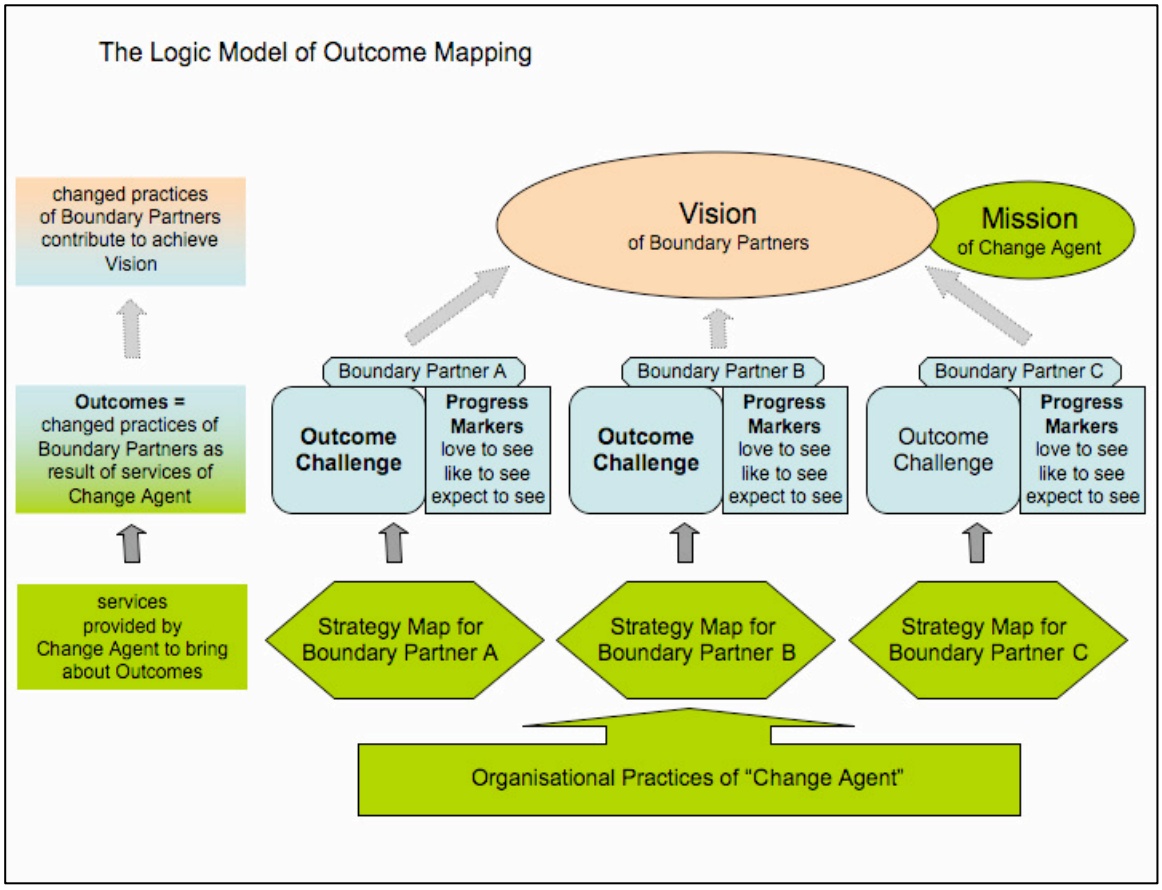
<table>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>The vision</u> reflects the broad human, social & environmental betterment in which the programme is engaged and to which it is contributing.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>The mission statement</u> describes in a broad way the contribution of the donor programme to the vision. It describes how the programme intends to operationalise its role in support of the vision and support the achievement of outcomes by its partners, and how it will remain effective, efficient, relevant and sustainable.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Outcome Challenge: Boundary Partner A
The outcome challenges describe the changed behaviours (relationships, activities, and/or actions) of a partner; and how they would be behaving if they were contributing ideally to the vision.
Set of progress markers: Progress Markers are a gradual set of statements (milestones) describing a progression of changed behaviour in a partner. They describe changes in actions, activities & relationships leading up to the ideal outcome challenge statement.</td><td>Outcome Challenge: Boundary Partner B
Set of progress markers</td><td>Outcome Challenge: Boundary Partner C
Set of progress markers</td></tr>
<tr><td>Support strategies from the programme / project:
The strategies outline the approaches of the project team in working with the partners. They indicate the relative influence the programme is likely to have on a project partner. An overview of the strategies helps to pinpoint strategic gaps in the approach or determine whether the programme is overextended; it also suggests the type of evaluation method appropriate to track and assess the performance of the project.</td><td>Support strategies for Partner B</td><td>Support strategies for Partner C</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Organisational practices describe the efforts of the project team in order to remain innovative, efficient and relevant for the programme purpose.</td></tr>
</table>

The progress markers are a set of milestones that indicate the expected changes in a project partner. These milestones indicate possible ways to achieve change on a bigger map; they are not used for assessing failure or success, but for learning and reflection.

- Many progress markers can / should be changed
- Progress markers link the boundary partners with their partners
- Progress markers indicate changes beyond the programme's own practices, i.e. interaction with beneficiaries, etc.

Support strategies are the basis for elaborating working plans and assessing the performance of the project. Activities are planned and can be monitored (if needed the same way as activities within a LFA model).

Organisational practices help to build 'organisational development' matters into the project team. Projects allocate resources (time and money) for remaining relevant and innovative. The project team has to be able to adapt its strategies, competencies and approaches in accordance with the (non-) intended changes in the practice of partners.



(Logic Model of Outcome Mapping as interpreted by the authors of the present paper)

Practical experience in working with OM indicates three main distinctive features that add value to existing / other PCM tools:

- Clear definition of system borders, roles and responsibilities; a process that supports the partners in assuming responsibility and clarifies the end of project status at the very beginning (i.e. includes the exit strategy during the planning phase).
- Milestones that indicate a possible process, not final indicators; these indicate a path of change that makes it possible to assess development in short time periods and therefore to assess / change / adapt strategies within a short time.
- Concentration on learning and accountability (as opposed to 'accountability only'); learning from experiences and coping with change are the key elements of OM. Accountability issues (in all directions) and learning purposes are held in a balance.

Outcome Mapping and Results-based Project and Programme Cycle Management (PCM): PCM defines the key documents, decision-making processes and management tasks

for the stages in the project cycle: planning, monitoring, implementation and reporting, evaluation, and redesign. In our view the use of Outcome Mapping as a methodological approach has proven to be an effective basis for results-based project or programme management:

- **Focus on measurable outcomes:** Clear formulation of responsibilities, roles and measurable milestones. Each partner (boundary partner and the project team) develops a set of activities (i.e. milestones or strategies) that allow for results-based project and programme management (i.e. outcome based = behavioural change based).
- **Focus on learning and participation:** The iterative and participative planning is the basis for the key documents and their systematic linkage throughout all stages of the project cycle allows for learning-based management and effective, comprehensive information management involving all stakeholders.
- **Transparency, ownership and accountability:** The use of Outcome Mapping assures the clear formulation of responsibilities, roles and progress markers for each project partner. Clear outcomes and milestones (i.e. observable and measurable qualitative changes) enhance ownership, clear responsibilities, transparency and accountability between implementers, beneficiaries and donors.

3.2. Outcome Mapping in practice

Outcome Mapping is a recent method and there are no systematic studies of its effectiveness and efficiency to date. Existing reports and articles are based on observations, and the accompanying examples or empirical evidence is often criticised as not well founded.

Outcome Mapping makes use of new terminology. As many terms are already used in other areas (for example, “vision” and “mission” in organisational development), misunderstandings readily occur.

Not only terminology, however, but also understanding of Outcome Mapping is criticised as being “out of the box.” While “harmonisation” was a cornerstone of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, some critics also insist on harmonisation of PCM methods. For many project managers the logframe represents such a harmonised framework.

In our view there is no question that the focus on “changes in behaviour” of partners is fundamental to sustainable development. Changes in behaviour means strengthening the capacity of “local systems” (or their actors), which includes the capacity to continuously adapt and respond to a changing world. Nevertheless, if poverty alleviation is our utmost concern (and the reason why donors spend tax payers’ money in development cooperation) these “changes” cannot be an objective or an end in itself. That means that behaviour changes should induce or support changes or improvements in situations at a higher level. Therefore a one-dimensional focus on changes in the behaviour of partners is not sufficient. What are needed are clear impact hypotheses and indicators at the level of development results (i.e. MDGs). Our proposal for a synthesis model combining LFA and OM aims at bringing together the strengths of OM as an approach focusing on capacity building and LFA with its focus on development results.

Outcome Mapping explicitly requires that project structures and activities constantly adapt to changing context. Accordingly the course of a project will be less predictable, obliging the project team to engage in reflection and learning. Therefore it can be argued that standardised planning tools such as milestones and outcome challenges may not make much sense. This creates new challenges for programme or portfolio managers: it becomes more difficult to compare project progress reports, while the planning horizon is narrowed as project plans are monitored and adapted by phase; regional or international comparisons are more difficult because project indicators are highly dependent on the context.

4. The Synthesis Model

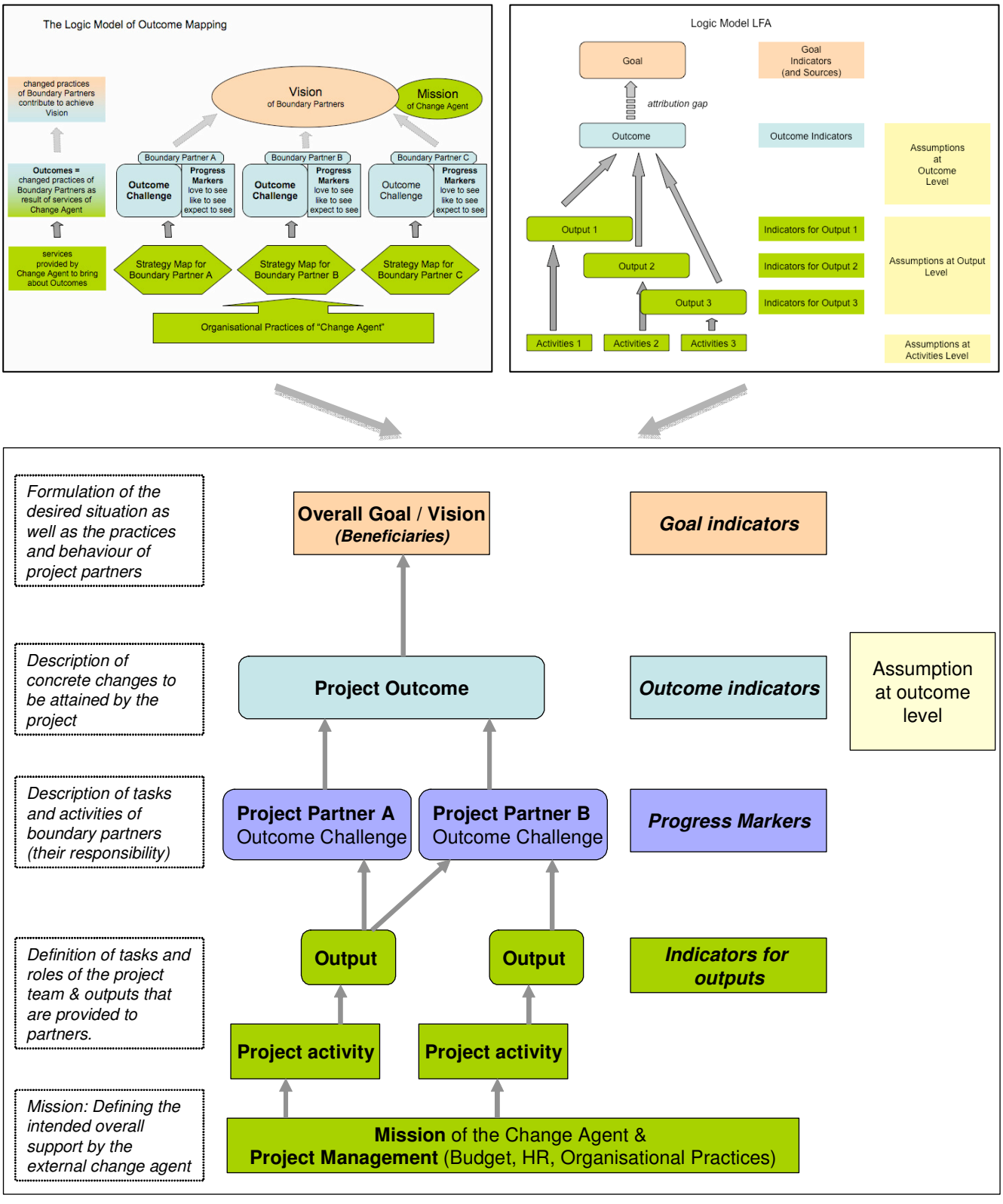
4.1. Introduction

In this chapter we will attempt to outline a synthesis between LFA and OM, based on the following considerations.

- **Focus on results and capacity building:** We assume that the focus on results is necessary in every project or programme. The recipients or beneficiaries of development efforts, as well as the donors, have a legitimate right (and duty) to get as clear a picture as possible about the effectiveness of development projects or programmes. This means that the implementers of development projects must give an accounting, whenever possible in close cooperation with recipients and beneficiaries, of the outputs they provide and of the effects and impact these outputs have. Service providers in development using donor money must be able to show in a plausible way that the resources they spend contribute to measurable and durable improvements in the living conditions of poor people (impact). In our understanding impact is not an end state, but an intermediate result of a limited (in time and scope) external intervention. Ideally, improvements at this impact level become a continuous process as the result of durable improvements in the capacity of key actors. This implies that we recognise the paramount importance of capacity building as a strategy that aims at strengthening the performance and adaptiveness of local actors and systems. Capacity building is the groundwork of sustainable development. Our idea of a synthesis between LFA and OM is based on our conviction that results-orientedness and capacity building must not be mutually exclusive options but complementary approaches.
- **Looking for the common denominator:** In our view there are several significant differences between LFA and OM, but they also have numerous things in common. Rather than directly comparing the strengths and weakness of both approaches, we believe it is more productive to engage in discussion of a synthesis model, which will make it possible to adopt the most convincing and effective elements of each approach.
- **Capacity building:** A fundamental difference between the two models lies in the possible ways in which they can be applied. The OM approach was conceived for a very particular type of project, namely projects in which capacity building for partners is the main strategy. The LFA as a model, on the other hand, is independent of project content in that it exclusively represents relations between (any particular) outputs and their effects. Our synthesis model is only applicable for projects in which capacity building plays a major role. We can add that in current development cooperation, capacity building is in fact always an important – if not the most important – externally financed intervention strategy in which external change agents are involved (whether organizations from the North or from partner countries).
- **Synthesis = LFA+ or OM+:** We deliberately wish to leave open the possibility of shaping the synthesis model according to each specific case, its context, and the inclinations and preferences of the responsible practitioners and stakeholders, either by enhancing the Logical Framework Approach or by enhancing Outcome Mapping. This should also make it possible to reduce the importance of the issue of "branding" (using the approaches as a brand), which we consider as being highly counterproductive. The goal of the synthesis model is to combine the advantages and strengths of both approaches so that it is applicable in different institutional contexts in the most multifaceted way. A specific goal is to make it possible to use the synthesis model in institutional setups where a focus on results is required. This means that the synthesis model must be so conceived that it can be designed in a way that meets the demand for focusing on results – as currently discussed in international debates on results-based management – and that also meets the inherent demands of OM.

- **The synthesis model as a proposal:** Our proposed synthesis model is based primarily on theoretical considerations (supported by the authors' practical experiences with LFA and OM). We are interested in seeing this synthesis model used and tested in practice in order to discover whether our deliberations prove to be of value in practice.

4.2. The Synthesis Model at a Glance



4.3. Design of the Synthesis Model

Important requirements and demands from both approaches, related to core elements of the synthesis model, will be presented in the following summary. The focus consists of orientation towards an overall goal (which in turn should allow establishing links with country strategies, PRSP, or MDGs) and explicit consideration of changes in behaviour of project partners. The synthesis model should make it possible to determine and display the distribution of roles and responsibilities directly in the logic model.

When we speak of a synthesis model, we mean the logic model that underlies a project. So far as it is reasonable and possible, this logic model can be presented in synoptic form (e.g. as a table or matrix). As this is also the case with the LFA, which consists explicitly of a matrix, we are concerned only with a summary of the core elements of the project. The complete project document containing detailed descriptions of all elements of a project (initial situation, development hypotheses, interventions strategies, beneficiaries, project organisation, project management, monitoring and evaluation, etc.) is needed for understanding the entire project.

In the following paragraphs we define the key elements of the project design following our proposal of a synthesis model.

Overall Goal / **Vision**: There is a need for clear and concrete formulation of the desired situation as well as the practices and behaviour that are supposed to be realised by project partners. Description of the overall goal should be limited to the core elements, which in turn should provide a clear expression of what project partners perceive for the future.

Mission: This element of OM is extremely useful for defining the intended overall support provided by the external change agent (the programme in OM terminology) to the partners. This mission statement helps to clarify the role of the change agent (external, limited in time and scope).

Project Outcomes : Project outcomes describe the concrete changes that are to be attained by the project. These changes may refer to a system, to the behaviour of organisations or people, or be manifested as changed conditions for beneficiaries. Project outcomes reflect the concrete and verifiable objective of the project that has been agreed between all stakeholders. Indicators help to measure the achievement of project outcomes; impact hypotheses link outcomes with the overall goal / vision. Following the logic of Outcome Mapping the interest and responsibility for verifying whether the project outcomes are achieved rests primarily with the boundary partners, since project outcomes are defined (in our synthesis model) as results of the behaviour changes of the partners. Achievement of project outcomes thus becomes the purpose of the behaviour changes of the boundary partners.

Outcome Challenges of project (boundary) partners in achieving project outcomes: An external change agent alone can achieve neither project outcomes nor the overall goal. Project success depends on the need to improve and effect changes and on the willingness to cooperate of local organisations, groups and people. Outcome challenges describe the tasks and activities that boundary partners within their system

a) must carry out in order to contribute to achieve project outcomes and the overall goal

b) have been unable to carry out so far

c) can or must continue to carry out beyond project support.

Outcome challenges are formulated for each partner. In addition, qualitative and quantitative indicators in the form of gradual progress markers are defined for each partner to enable monitoring of changes in practice or behaviour. Progress markers may also be defined for several partners at once. These progress markers need to be monitored at specific stages or times so that monitoring results can be included in work planning.

Activities and outputs: The project team (external change agent as defined by Outcome Mapping) gives a clear and concrete description of the tasks, roles and responsibilities that can be assumed by the project. This includes definitions of the outputs that the project (or programme or external change agent) can provide to partners.

For each partner the supporting activities, which are needed so that each partner can achieve expected changes in practice or behaviour, are defined and negotiated separately. These partner-specific forms of support can be expanded by transversal themes or contributions.

Including an element of the LFA we propose to define indicators at the level of project outputs that can be used to verify the services provided by the project team.

A definition of project strategies (activities and outputs) that is as precise as possible facilitates annual operational planning. Strategies should be examined yearly in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency. Outputs must have a plausible relation to outcome challenges and progress markers. When expected effects are not achieved among project partners, it is advisable to modify project strategies.

Assumptions: Assumptions in the synthesis model must only be taken into account at the level of project outcomes. Additional assumptions or external factors in regard to project partners and project activities can be identified, provided that they do not relate to behavioural issues of project partners (as these are integrated in the outcome challenges).

Organisational practices of the change agent: This element of OM defines, in standardised form, the internal strategies of the donor agency or NGO for remaining innovative, creative, efficient and relevant. These issues of organisational development should definitely be integrated.

5. Example: Potable Water and Sanitation Project in a Rural Community

The present example is fictional. The purpose is to show a possibility of using the synthesis model for defining a project design. This project idea is also presented by means of a conventional logframe matrix.

Initial Situation

The situation of sanitation in the community x is unsatisfactory. There is no potable water available; people use contaminated water from a nearby small stream. Because of lack of knowledge and because firewood is scarce the water used for drinking is seldom boiled. Most households do not have latrines. As a consequence the incidence of water-born diseases – especially among children - is very high.

Village authorities have requested support from an international NGO (INGO). The INGO agrees to provide support for

- a participatory planning process for a sanitation project (construction of a gravity potable water system, construction/rehabilitation of latrines, capacity building)
- support for finding financial support with the national social investment fund
- support for implementation of the project.

For project planning the synthesis model is used.

Vision or Goal (the long-term benefit of the project for the target population):

The health situation of the villagers, particularly of children, is improved.

Indicator: reduction of gastro-intestinal diseases among children under 5 of at least 30%

Mission (the intended overall support provided by the external change agent to the partners):

The INGO will support the key actors of the village in achieving the capacities needed for building and managing an adequate potable water and sanitation system

Project Outcomes (the immediate change caused by the project):

1. All the villagers have access to sufficient and clean potable water.

Indicators: a) each tap delivers at least 40 l of clean water per head per day; b) at least 95 % of all households are within 300 m of nearest tap

B. The village water system is managed by a technical team

Indicators: a) A clear and democratically approved management & user manual exists; b) the water quality reaches 100 % of international standards at any inspection.

Key Actors or Boundary Partners (persons, groups or organisations with whom the projects interacts directly):

- **Village Authorities**

- **Technical team for potable water and sanitation** (to be established through the project)
- **Health Commission** (existing commission at village level composed of village health worker and teachers)

Outcome Challenges for Boundary Partners (changes in the behaviour of boundary partners that will allow the project outcome and vision (goal) to be achieved):

- **The Village Authorities:**
  request actively financial support of the Social Investment Fund
  supervise the technical team
  assure that the villagers fulfil their duties concerning the use and maintenance of the potable water and sanitation system.
- **The Technical Team for Potable Water and Sanitation:**
  organises the construction of the potable water system
  assures the construction/rehabilitation of latrines
  regularly collects the user fees
  assures the maintenance of the potable water and sanitation system
  checks – on behalf of the Village Authorities – that the rules for potable water and sanitation are respected
- **The Health Commission:**
  carries out regularly information sessions in the schools
  carries out sensitising campaigns with the villagers in general on questions of use of potable water and hygiene
  coordinates its activities with the Village Authorities and the Technical Team

The progress towards these outcome challenges is monitored by means of progress markers.

Project Strategies – Activities and Outputs (services provided by the INGO that enables the boundary partners to gradually achieve the expected changes in their behaviour)

For each boundary partner the services to be provided and the activities needed to produce these services are defined in terms of outputs and corresponding activities: training, coaching, preparing manuals, networking, organisational development, etc..

Output indicators help to monitor the provision of services.

Organisational Practices (internal strategies of the change agent for remaining innovative, creative, efficient and relevant)

The INGO defines its internal strategies for innovation, organisational learning, quality management, networking, etc.

Example of a project matrix (summary)

		Hierarchy of objectives Summary of Project Strategy	Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions (External factors, risks)
Effects of Project	Effects by the Boundary Partners (indirect effects)	**Goal** *Formulation of the desired situation as well as the practices and behaviour of project partners*	Indicate whether improvements have been achieved		
		Project Outcome(s) *Description of concrete changes to be attained by the project*	Indicate whether the intended changes have been achieved		External risk assessment and framework conditions necessary to achieve the goal
	Direct effects	**Boundary Partner(s)** *Description of tasks and activities of boundary partner (changes in behaviour and capacities)*	Progress markers indicate the degree of achievement of the intended changes in behaviour and capacities		
Operational domain		**Outputs** *Products and services provided by the external change agent*	Indicate whether project outputs have been provided adequate and efficient quality and quantity		
		***Mission**: Definition of intended overall support by the external change agent* ***Project Management:** Budget, HR, Organisational practices*			

7. Conclusions and Recommendations by the Authors

Outcome Mapping has brought fresh ideas to ongoing discussions about the usefulness of different approaches to planning and project/programme management. Its authors present Outcome Mapping as an alternative to the Logical Framework Approach. However, debates about whether one approach is better than the other have not proved to be productive. We have tried to show that results-orientation as defined by the current mainstream debate in development cooperation (results-based management or managing for development results) is a standard used by most multilateral and bilateral agencies that cannot easily be replaced by any other approach to project or programme management. However, Outcome Mapping introduces some extremely valuable notions into the methodological debate on aid effectiveness such as focusing on capacity building of partners and defining the behaviour changes of partners as key elements for social change.

With our synthesis model we acknowledge the factual weight of the LFA as an international standard but at the same time try to show a way of combining the two approaches and thus introducing the strengths of Outcome Mapping in mainstream project and programme management.

The synthesis model integrates valuable aspects of both approaches and promotes the use of practically oriented and strategically coherent planning, monitoring and evaluation tools for projects and programmes. The relation between strategic planning (at the programme or country level) and operational implementation is straightforward, and the roles and responsibilities of all actors are transparent and can consequently be assessed and evaluated.

We therefore recommend applying the proposed synthesis model in various programmes, projects and initiatives around the world. This theoretical model needs to be tested, and comments on its applicability and usefulness are crucial in order to further improve the model and promote it in other programmes and agencies. Furthermore, we encourage donor and implementing agencies to set up (and finance) a program for applying and improving the proposed synthesis model.

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