

The logical framework: an easy escape, a straitjacket, or a useful planning tool?

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The 'logical framework' and 'logical framework approach' have become widespread planning tools, particularly in donor-assisted projects in developing countries. With its simple format and the clear relationship between variables, the logical framework is helpful for summarising main concerns relating to development schemes. At the same time, the author argues, current conventions limit the framework's usefulness; and he suggests modifications that should substantially enhance its applicability and information-carrying capacity. The logical framework approach seeks to address additional dimensions of planning. However, it is too circumscribed by standardised steps and procedures to be defended as the ubiquitous planning methodology it is commonly held out to be. The 'logical framework approach' is here juxtaposed with a broader and more flexible concept of 'development planning', with which it should not be confused.

Introduction

The logical framework has been a popular planning tool for many years. In the development field, the first version was developed for USAID in the late 1960s, and subsequent versions have become widely used by donor agencies and some other development organisations.

The logical framework is a table with three main parts: a means–ends structure converging on a 'development objective' or 'goal'; a set of indicators linked to the components of the means—ends structure; and assumptions under which conversion from one level of this structure to the next level is expected to occur.¹ The logical framework has also been made the centrepiece of a process of planning that addresses some additional dimensions of strategy, in a process that has come to be referred to as the 'logical framework approach'.

This article explores two main issues:

- the appropriateness and adequacy of the 'logical framework approach' for planning development programmes and projects; and
- the suitability of the 'logical framework' (the table) for specifying the main components of development plans, with emphasis on current conventions of analytical categories and terminology.

While the logical framework approach incorporates crucial planning concerns, I shall argue that the methodology, as currently understood and applied, reflects a conception of development planning that is too standardised and often simplistic. In particular, I would challenge the social engineering notion upon which the approach is usually based.

The logical framework as such is a good tool for examining and clarifying some of the main aspects of development planning and for summarising pertinent information in documents or plans. All the same, since I believe that present conventions restrict its usefulness, I shall suggest ways in which the framework could be modified in order to enhance its relevance and significance. I do not, however, suggest any changes be made to the framework's basic format.

Development planning and the logical framework

The logical framework has been applied primarily in the planning of development interventions, referred to here as *development planning*. In addition, it is viewed and has sometimes been used as a tool for monitoring and evaluation (Gasper 2000), though specific issues relating to the latter will not be addressed in this article.

While there is no widely accepted definition of 'development planning', analysts and planners would probably agree that it is characterised by a concern with societal features and processes of change, in relation to people's needs and priorities. Development planning is also action-centred, in that it emphasises systems and processes of planning rather than what has been referred to as substantive or subject matter (Faludi 1984, 1998; Dale 2002). According to Dale (2002), development planning involves direct attention to underlying principles, planning modes, stakeholders, the management of more or less complex relationships of many kinds, and numerous aspects of organisation. Figure 1 summarises the main categories and variables of development planning, distinguishing broadly between strategic and operational planning.

It is clear from the previous discussion that strategic dimensions and issues are crucial in development planning. While strategic aspects must always be addressed, implementation itself may be integrated into the process of formulating strategy or may be done separately, depending on the type of programme or project and other contextual factors.

Now, what relations exist between Figure 1 and planning within a logical framework context? To answer this, we need to distinguish clearly between the framework itself, as a table for summarising and connecting main elements of a planned development effort, and the currently popular 'logical framework approach', which revolves around and includes this framework. The *logical framework* clearly emphasises dimensions of strategy. It is objective-centred, it sketches out the resources required to attain the objectives and the main fields in which these will be used, and it seeks to clarify critical aspects of the interface between the development effort and its environment. Only certain parts of a development strategy analysis are explicitly addressed, however. The framework does not express or directly refer to underlying people-related problems, these being the very rationale for any planned development intervention. Second, the underlying analysis of opportunities and constraints may be limited to exploring envisaged or suspected constraints on (or threats to) intended achievements, since only such constraints are given explicit attention. Within the framework they are translated into conditions that must or should be met in order to generate outputs and meet the objectives. Third, the logical framework has nothing to say about certain aspects of organisation and management. Finally, the implication of these limitations is that stakeholders and stakeholder concerns are not clarified.

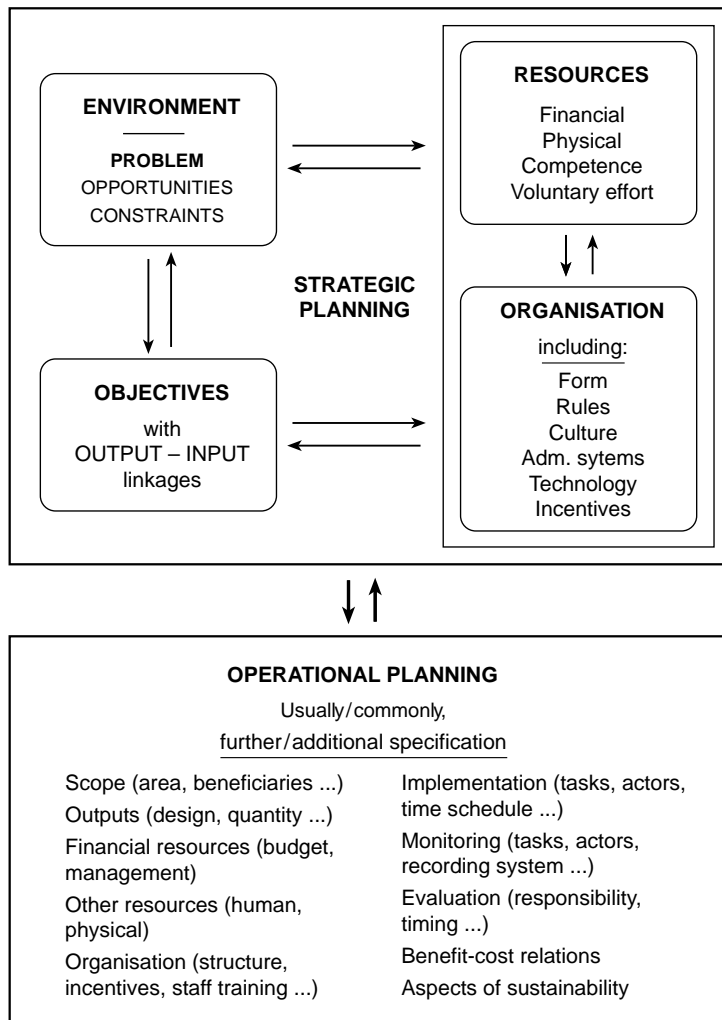


Figure 1: Main variables of strategic and operational planning

In recognition of such limitations, writers and trainers concerned with this methodology have broadened their perspective somewhat, under the heading *logical framework approach*. In addition to clarifying the objectives, the related components of the means–ends structure (or ‘project elements’), indicators, and main assumptions, the approach involves an initial exploration of participants and problems, and a so-called ‘alternatives analysis’ (NORAD 1996; Aune 2000; Oelofse 2000). The ZOPP (‘Ziel Orientierte Projekt Planung’) variant also emphasises iterative planning and relatively broad stakeholder participation (Cracknell 2000; Oelofse 2000; World Bank 2001), ideally done through some kind of workshop.

The variables and tasks addressed in the logical framework approach are all essential concerns of development planning. However, the focus on the logical framework and the workshop setting tend to circumscribe the planning process in unfortunate ways:

- the analysis of problems and participation tends to cover or relate only to parts of the range of opportunities, constraints, and threats that one should normally explore in planning;
- crucial aspects of organisation are usually missing from the list of planning concerns;
- although some argue for iterative workshops with broad participation, the effort required for managing such workshops and the intellectual challenges involved tend to preclude such comprehensive efforts;
- consequently, most ‘logical framework approach’ exercises amount to a single workshop at an early planning stage and are attended by a relatively narrow set of stakeholders;
- the implication of this ‘one-shot’ exercise is that the formulation of a meaningful and reliable plan will require a relatively firm initial image of the objectives as well as the corresponding resource inputs, tasks, and work processes; that is, it basically requires a blueprint notion of planning.

The simple format and the conceptual clarity of the logical framework have made it a favourite tool for donor agencies and other high-level decision makers for gathering what they consider to be the most essential information about the programmes or projects they support or for which they are ultimately responsible. If well presented, the information provided *is* useful (and might be still more so with modifications to the standard matrix, as will be discussed below). The preoccupation with the variables of the logical framework may, however, deflect attention from other aspects of or perspectives on planning and plans. Some of these (such as organisational issues) may be crucial for attaining goals in the short term, and even more so for ensuring that these achievements are sustainable.

It may therefore be argued that the logical framework tends to provide an easy escape for donor agencies and others in their assessment of what they are funding or in which they have some other stake. Organisations that are more directly involved in planning and managing programmes and projects (particularly donor-funded ones) may also be unduly constrained by the logical framework. They may even be constrained by the broader logical framework approach, though this is usually considered to be applicable irrespective of the nature of the development work being undertaken. On the other hand, planners may feel confident that they have done a good job once they have gone through the standard ritual in a reasonably orderly manner.

Our shared concern here is to conceptualise and design development programmes and projects in the best way possible—in other words, ‘development planning’. This is not to be confused with or substituted by the ‘logical framework approach’, with its specific limitations, rigidity, and biases, as many donor agencies and organisations influenced by them have tended to do. In development work, there are huge differences regarding the purpose of interventions, the scope of action, the set of variables and stakeholders that warrants attention, the relative importance of variables and stakeholders, etc. These matters ought to be explored in relation to requirements and possibilities in specific contexts. For instance, the planning process may be structured and pursued in many other ways than through standardised workshops. It may, for example, take the form of gradual conceptualisation of a scheme that evolves over a long period of time before it is finally formulated, or it may be an iterative process, involving gradual or step-wise conceptualisation and specification of activities linked to feedback from completed or ongoing work (often referred to as generative or process planning). Moreover, planning may be done through various arrangements of participation and forms of interaction. These various dimensions of planning may be clarified by using the concept of ‘planning modes’.²

To conclude, the logical framework may be an excellent tool for summing up certain features of development schemes and presenting that information in an internally consistent

and easily understandable form. It should, however, be kept as that, and not elevated to its current position as the centrepiece of a standardised development planning process. That said, I do believe that it is possible to modify the logical framework table in ways that would make it even more widely applicable and useful as a summarising tool. We shall now turn to that issue.

Means–ends relations

The flowchart depicted in Figure 2 shows main means–ends relations in an imaginary project designed to promote children’s health. Such a chart ought to be derived from a corresponding problem structure chart (expressing cause–effect relations of problems or problem components), which we must omit for reasons of space. A comparison between the two charts would illustrate a very important point. While the means–ends structure of a programme or project is an intended response to a formulated cause-and-effect structure of problems or problem components, the former will not simply replicate the latter in the form of a positive statement. Deviations will generally be necessary because it may not be possible to address certain parts of the problem structure, or some shifts may be desirable in response to new opportunities or perspectives that emerge during the planning process.

The comparison would also allow us to address another partly related issue. Due to feedback loops of various kinds, some problem structures tend to assume more of a circular than a linear form. Such structures may then be visually modified, to make them more readily comparable with the corresponding means–ends structures of programmes or projects. In addition, problem analysis and means–ends analysis are frequently intertwined, particularly in programmes that adopt process planning. In such programmes, the means–ends structures may be changing as well.³

In Figure 2, the means–ends components have been grouped into a set of general categories, organised by level in the means–ends structure. These levels have been clearly labelled, using fairly conventional terms. At the lower levels of the chart, in particular, the components might have been still further specified. For the sake of clarity, however, I have shown only the main implementation tasks and inputs, and have indicated only the set of inputs required for undertaking the various tasks, without linking each of the two sets. Further detail would be needed in operational planning.

Note the dotted lines without arrows coming from some entries. These indicate connected causes, which are assumed to have been stated in a corresponding problem structure chart, but which are not to be addressed in the project, perhaps due to a need to delimit its scope for some reason.

Our next question is how to convert information in this means–ends chart into a *logical framework* format. My suggested solution is presented in Figure 3, in the first column and the bottom cell of the second column, according to the conventions of the logical framework.

One feature is immediately obvious: while we have managed to incorporate into the framework all the entries at the upper levels of the flowchart, for reasons of space we have not been able to specify all the implementation tasks (although they are not stated in much detail in the flowchart either). For the sake of illustration, I have shown only the tasks relating to training. The alternative might have been to incorporate the top set of tasks across the flowchart (‘conduct the training’, etc.), but that would have rendered most entries in this cell very uninformative, as most tasks would have been direct equivalents of the respective outputs (‘information . . . given . . .’ etc.). ‘Implementation tasks’ modifies the more conventional term ‘activities’, a change made in order to avoid the notion of process that is embedded in the word ‘activities’, and which is not found elsewhere in the logical framework.

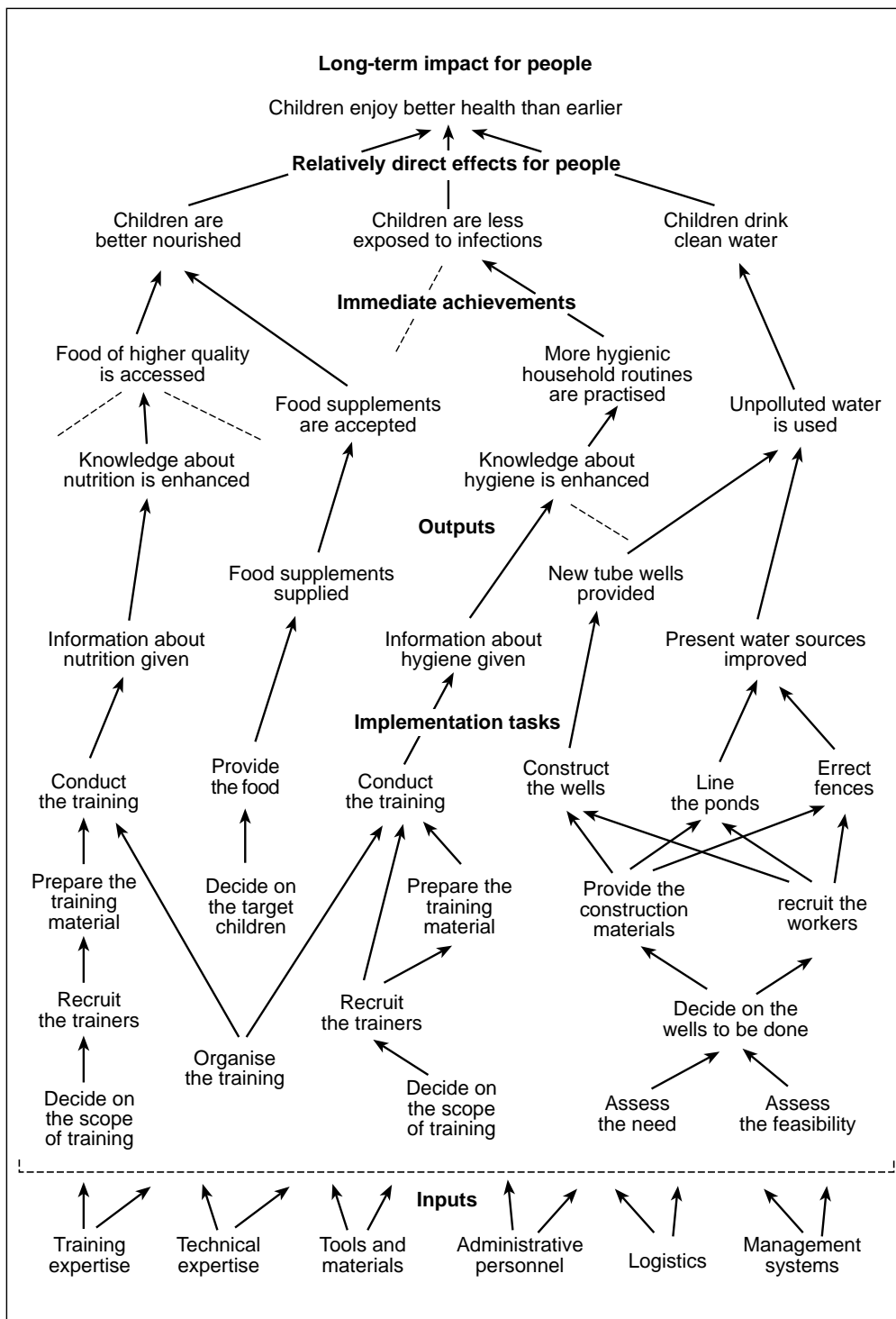


Figure 2: Means-ends structure of the health promotion project

<p style="text-align: center;">DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE</p> <p>Children of estate labourers in X district enjoy better health than earlier</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">INDICATORS</p> <p>Frequency of treatment of relevant diseases Health personnel's statements Mothers' statements</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ASSUMPTIONS</p> <p>No offsetting negative changes in related fields The improved practices are continued</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">EFFECT OBJECTIVES</p> <p>Children are better nourished Children are less exposed to infections from their physical environment Children drink clean water</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">INDICATORS</p> <p>Height, weight/age Frequency of diarrhoea Health personnel's statements Mothers' statements Observed practice</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ASSUMPTIONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>None</i></p> <p>(If the main causes of diseases have been addressed, improved health is virtually guaranteed in the short term)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES</p> <p>Food of higher quality is accessed The food supplements are accepted More hygienic household routines are practised Unpolluted water is used</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">INDICATORS</p> <p>Mothers' statements Money spending pattern Use of water-sealed toilets Quality of the well water Storage facilities of water in the households</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ASSUMPTIONS</p> <p>Children's total consumption of more nutritious food is increased Children drink unpolluted water Children drink no other water</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OUTPUTS</p> <p>Information about nutrition and hygiene given to mothers Food supplements supplied to schools New tube wells provided Present water sources improved</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">INDICATORS</p> <p>Recorded activities/items/facilities Trainees' statements Observed activities/items/facilities</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ASSUMPTIONS</p> <p>The trainees have got more knowledge The households can afford additional food items Household members accept changed composition of meals Household members accept to spend additional time absorbing the new information</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">IMPLEMENTATION TASKS</p> <p>For the nutrition/hygiene training</p> <p>Conduct the training Organise the training classes Prepare the training material Recruit the trainers Decide on the scope of the training</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">INPUTS</p> <p>Training expertise Technical expertise Administrative personnel Management systems Tools and materials Logistics</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ASSUMPTIONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>None</i></p> <p>(Under normal circumstances and if well planned and implemented)</p>

Figure 3: Logical framework of the health promotion project

Note that further specifications have been made to some entries in the framework to the statements in the flowchart. Note, too, that one element of the means–ends structure in the flowchart ('knowledge . . . enhanced') is expressed in the framework as an assumption.

The most innovative suggestions have been made at the three levels above the outputs. The logical framework is objective-centred and hence our main attention should be focused here. In my view, it is also here that the most substantial improvements could be made to the currently dominant version, in which the outputs are to be followed by one statement of 'purpose' and one statement of 'goal' (or 'development objective'). I believe that this convention has tremendously impoverished the logical framework as a planning tool. For the sake of a clear and unambiguous focus on the ultimate aim, there should be only one statement at the top level (i.e. of 'goal' or 'development objective'). However, by allowing only one purpose statement, a long conceptual distance is created between the set of outputs on the one hand and this highly general statement of 'purpose' on the other. This obscures the linkages between the outputs and the general impact they are intended to generate in people's lives. As Gasper (2000) observes, such 'jamming' may also easily cause illogic. Moreover, because the 'goal' and 'purpose' statements have to be expressed in such general terms, the two tend to become similar or only artificially different. And in any case, I regard the term 'purpose' as too vague and too broadly used to signify more specific intended achievements than are referred to in the term 'goal'.⁴

In our logical framework (Figure 3), I have directly transferred the statements at the upper three levels of the flowchart (Figure 2) into corresponding categories. By doing so, the 'steps' through which the various outputs should generate the intended overall impact are far clearer.⁵

It is important to understand the meaning of the three 'objectives' categories and the implications for the statement of objectives. Any development programme or project must be justified by some intended benefits for people, so the 'development objective' should clearly express these benefits in terms of some improvement in the quality of life. The overall intended impact of any planned development intervention is invariably linked to more specific intended benefits, which also ought to be stated and formulated as intended improvements for people. This is often what is referred to in the more general notion of 'purpose', which Eggers (2000) even makes the 'master principle' of what he calls 'project cycle management'.

In our version of the logical framework, direct and unambiguous emphasis on intended improvements for intended beneficiaries is ensured by focusing on them within the respective expressions ('children are ...' etc.). This perspective also complies with the common perception of 'effects' in development science.

The third level in our version is then reserved for expressions of relatively immediate intended results of the outputs. As objectives, they must also relate to the intended beneficiaries, but a broader repertoire of expressions of benefits may be used. These statements may help to clarify linkages between the project outputs and improvements in people's quality of life. The best example in our case is 'more hygienic household routines are practised', clarifying the mechanism through which it is expected that children will be less exposed to infections, which should, in turn, contribute to the children's improved health.

Of course, in operational planning, various components will have to be further specified. Space permitting, some further specifications of individual components may also be made in the logical framework than is the case in our illustration.

It is worth reflecting briefly on the applicability of the logical framework for more generative development initiatives than the one presented here—that is to say, for development programmes with more *process planning*. It is often argued that the logical framework can be applied only to relatively conventional projects in which all the components of the means–ends structure are pre-planned in substantial detail (Gasper 2000). It is true that the framework may be most readily applied to such projects. However, given the general nature of the logical framework, even more flexible programmes may be conceptualised in

sufficient detail for a means–ends structure to be presented within such a format, the more so as the logical framework structure may also be expanded and/or adjusted in the course of implementing the programme. For example, a programme for building community organisations using microfinance services as a core element (which requires generative planning) may be intended to create outputs such as ‘people’s understanding of social structures increased’, ‘people’s motivation for collaborative efforts enhanced’, ‘people’s organisations formed’, and ‘people’s organisations functioning as intended’. In this example, it should be noted that, in a means–ends perspective, the last of these is a higher-level achievement than the others in that it depends on them. It is still a statement of output, however, as it contains no notion of benefits for people. Immediate intended benefits of these outputs may then be, for instance, ‘reduced indebtedness’, ‘higher income from own production’, ‘increased social cohesion’, etc.

The above is based on the idea that means–ends relations of development work may be (and should be) clarified and formulated at some stage and somehow, even in programmes that are planned in a strongly process mode. Some analysts, emphasising processes of planning in the context of multi-stakeholder interests and broad participation (often referred to as ‘collaborative planning’), may disagree with this (see, for instance, Healey 1997; Innes and Booher 1999). In my view, however, unless objectives and related inputs, tasks, and outputs are clarified, ‘at some stage and somehow’, development interventions may be poorly justified (and hence may not receive the necessary funding). Furthermore, if the intervention involves participation by poor or otherwise deprived people, such an extreme ‘muddling through’ approach may even be ethically questionable (Dale 2002).

Indicators

In this section, I shall briefly address two problematic questions relating to indicators: their definition and corresponding formulation, and quantitative versus qualitative indicators. In general terms, an indicator is a brief, concise, and simplified statement relating to a more complex phenomenon. Complexity may have different connotations, such as the breadth or the number of sub-entities of the phenomenon; how difficult it is to specify or understand the phenomenon’s different parts and/or the relations between those parts; and the challenge involved in delimiting the phenomenon vis-à-vis its environment.⁶

In development work, indicators are specified during planning in order to help us assess, at later stages, the performance and achievements of the work we intend to undertake. The way in which ‘indicator’ has come to be understood and used in the logical framework is, therefore, somewhat idiosyncratic, since it tends to be given virtually the opposite meaning—that is to say, as an elaboration of a general statement of output or objective. The following example from a widely used training manual on the ‘logical framework approach’ (NORAD 1996) illustrates this well:

Objective: Increased agricultural production

Indicator: 500 male and female smallholders in Umbia district (cultivating 3 acres or less) increase their rice yield by 50% between October 1990 and October 1991, maintaining the same quality of harvest as 1989 crops.

The explanation for this strange usage is probably another consequence of viewing the logical framework as the centrepiece of development planning. Since, in the framework, the outputs and objectives are formulated in general terms, there is a perceived need to specify further, and the only place to do so is under ‘indicators’.

If our basic perspective on planning is accepted, this anomaly would be rectified. We would then use the second column of the logical framework for presenting the set of indicators (as normally understood) that have been selected, while the outputs and benefits that are to be substantiated by these indicators would be further specified in a corresponding plan document or documents.

Everybody agrees that indicators may be *quantitative*; that is, they may be statements in some numerical form. In the natural sciences, only quantitative measures are normally recognised. Even in the development field, most people will probably agree that quantitative indicators are preferable, to the extent that relevant and significant quantitative measures can be found. This is because such indicators are unambiguous and because they may be measured objectively, which usually makes the indicators relatively easy (convenient) to use and information based upon them highly reliable.⁷

For relatively technical projects, which lend themselves to detailed advanced planning, it may be possible to find appropriate quantitative indicators. These may even be largely sufficient, at least at the levels of outputs and immediate objectives. However, for most kinds of development work, it may be difficult or even impossible to find quantitative indicators of much relevance and/or significance. If we still want to formulate useful indicators, we have to resort entirely or primarily to *qualitative* ones. This has, of course, been recognised by many planners and writers on planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Rubin 1995; Mikkelsen 1995; Pratt and Loizos 1992). However, the operational implications of this recognition have not been much discussed. Consequently, there is much uncertainty and even confusion on this point, and the issue tends to be clouded within the logical framework. On the one hand is a broadly recognised need for qualitative indicators. On the other hand, the standard concept of ‘objectively verifiable indicators’—having survived an intense debate over many years about quantitative versus qualitative analysis—gives the message that qualitative indicators are not even considered as a possibility. Objective verification may be done only under specific circumstances, through quantification. Given this perspective, for most kinds of development work, indicators may be applicable only for some components, to a greater or lesser extent, or may hardly be applicable at all. Thus, for many development programmes, the formulation of indicators may not be an important part of planning.⁸

In our logical framework (Figure 3), I list a set of indicators I think would be appropriate to substantiate reasonably well the achievements of the main components of this project. (Space limitations prevent a more comprehensive list.) While some indicators are quantitative and objectively verifiable, most are qualitative and will have to be substantiated through judgements made by knowledgeable and reflective people.

In programmes that address issues such as human behaviour, social structures, and/or institutional qualities, the feasibility of identifying quantitative indicators may be even more limited than in this example. Let us cast our minds back to the community institution-building programme mentioned in the previous section. Intended achievements such as ‘enhanced motivation for collaborative efforts’ and ‘increased social cohesion’ may hardly be substantiated through any quantitative expressions, except, perhaps, through frequency distributions of very simple answers to very simple questions put to a sample of respondents.

Achievements will have to be substantiated through appropriate methods of analysis (means of substantiation). Depending on the type of indicator, some of the main such methods may be documentary review, direct measurement, observation of various kinds, questionnaire survey (with closed or more open questions), other interviews, and group discussion. This is a huge topic, and beyond the focus of this paper.⁹

Assumptions

The third column of the logical framework is intended to clarify conditions under which attainments at one level are expected to be converted into attainments at the next level. Here, I shall comment briefly on only a couple of points.

The conditions often tend to be perceived as entirely external to the respective programme or project, as reflected in the commonly used terms ‘external factors’ and ‘external conditions’. Of course, it is crucial to specify the relationship between an organised development scheme and its environment (see also Figure 1). At the same time, when the scheme or a part of it has already been planned, the interface between the scheme and its environment may well not be a clear-cut dividing line but a rather porous, even blurred, and sometimes also changing, boundary (Dale 2002). In other words, assumptions may relate to phenomena that are not intended to be (or may not be) influenced by the programme or project, but they may also be expressions of conditions that may be influenced to some degree. For instance, our project may not influence in any way the ability of households to buy additional food items, but it may influence people’s acceptance of new foods, by what is taught and how the issue is addressed.

This relates to and is further substantiated by our second point, namely, that the assumptions that are formulated depend on the extent to which our means–ends structure is elaborated (as manifested by the number of levels of that structure). This point can be readily demonstrated by converting the immediate objectives and effect objectives in our example into the conventional format of one general ‘purpose’. Obviously, we would then have to formulate much broader assumptions, incorporating elements of what are, in our case, specified as objectives. Clearly, the more we compress the means–ends structure, the more we blur the interface between our programme or project and its environment.

Conclusion

In order to discuss the logical framework as a tool for development planning, we need to distinguish between the framework as a table and the somewhat broader notion of the ‘logical framework approach’.

The table contains essential information about some core dimensions of development plans in an interconnected and easily understandable form, and is a useful tool for summarising such information for certain stakeholders. Although additional components of development planning might be added, this would be at the expense of the framework’s qualities of simplicity and easy conceptualisation.

The ‘logical framework approach’ is a related methodology of development planning, strongly promoted by donor agencies and the consultants they engage. Incorporating a broader range of planning concerns, the approach has now largely become a standardised workshop ritual. Development planning should not be tied to such a single approach with its specific limitations and biases. It ought to be viewed as a potentially wider, more flexible endeavour that is more centred on stakeholders and organisations. This is particularly important in the areas of participation and institution building, which usually require a generative (process) mode of planning.

Moreover, I have argued that parts of the logical framework (the table) ought to be changed, so that the framework can become a more appropriate and flexible tool for clarifying the main features of development schemes. For instance, the ‘objectives’ part of the framework should be developed in order to clarify better relations between intended outputs and the overall goal. A structure of ‘development objective’, ‘effect objectives’, and ‘immediate objectives’ is suggested to replace the overly simple ‘goal’–‘purpose’ constellation that currently predominates.

'Indicators' should be conceptualised and used in accordance with accepted scientific principles, i.e. as brief, concise, and simplified expressions of more comprehensive phenomena. The 'indicator' part of the logical framework is now commonly used to elaborate (although usually inadequately) entities of the means–ends structure. This practice is unfortunate: it is confusing to users and readers; it promotes the mistaken belief that the logical framework is a tool for operational planning, and in so doing may also blur essential distinctions between strategic and operational planning; and the formulations require considerable space in order to perform a clarifying function. In most development programmes and projects, qualitative indicators are needed to substantiate performance and achievements, although information on such indicators may not be generated through scientifically objective methods (means of substantiation).

'Assumptions' may often not be entirely external variables; they may also relate to phenomena that may be influenced to a greater or lesser extent. Moreover, the formulated assumptions depend on the means–ends structure, and they may better clarify the interface between the programme or project and its environment the more this structure is elaborated. This is a further argument for better specification of means–ends relations than tends to be undertaken in logical framework exercises.

Notes

- 1 Most readers will have at least a rudimentary knowledge of the logical framework, so I shall not elaborate on it further. For those who are not familiar with the basics of the framework, see NORAD (1996). Aspects of the framework are further clarified in the course of the discussion in this article.
- 2 Space does not allow for a full discussion of 'development planning'. Strategic planning is addressed in much of the business literature, and is of some relevance in the development sphere. Faludi (1984), in particular, conceptualises modes of action-centred planning, and a considerable body of writing exists on what is commonly referred to as participatory development planning. Dale (2000) discusses the main dimensions of strategy formulation in the development realm, while Dale (2002) undertakes a more comprehensive analysis of the various facets of development planning, including use of the logical framework and elaboration of 'planning modes'.
- 3 These issues are discussed comprehensively in Dale (2002, Chapters 5 and 6).
- 4 The extent to which this simple 'goal'–'purpose' constellation may impoverish means–ends analysis may be illustrated through an example from a planning workshop that I recently attended. After a lot of argument about semantics, the facilitators concluded with the following formulations:

Goal: Improvement of the social and economic status of people in [X] District

Purpose: Improvement of the living standards of poor people in coastal communes of [X] District

In this case, even the little difference between these statements was irrelevant. In a means–ends perspective, it would have been relevant only if the changes in the specified communes (in which the programme was to be concentrated) were anticipated to cause similar changes (through some kind of multiplier effect) in the district more widely. However, such an idea seemed to be alien and was not pursued. This set of objectives was then followed by a set of outputs whose links with the purpose could at best be conceptualised through only loose assumptions.

- 5 It should be noted that three levels of objectives have also been used in other versions of the logical framework, with the second and third levels mostly termed ‘intermediate objectives’ and ‘immediate objectives’, respectively.
- 6 This definition of an ‘indicator’ as a brief, concise, and simplified expression of a more or less complex phenomenon is shared by the natural and social sciences, and is in line with the more general idea of ‘indication’. Beyond that, there are some different perspectives and usages. For a further discussion, see Dale (2002, Chapter 7).
- 7 Dale (2002) considers *relevance*, *significance*, *reliability*, and *convenience* to be the four main quality criteria of indicators, and discusses to what extent different kinds of indicators meet these criteria.
- 8 Of course, information about performance and achievements (mostly of a qualitative nature) still needs to be gathered. The issue here is that the opportunity would then be lost to use the ‘indicator’ column of the logical framework for an informative overview of aspects to be explored.
- 9 There are further questions addressed in Dale (2002), such as how qualitative statements should be formulated in order to be considered as indicators, and the possibility of transforming certain qualitative information into numerical form (at a nominal or ordinal level of measurement).

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