The logical framework approach
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How To guide
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What is a logical framework approach?

A Logical Framework Approach (LFA)[1] is a project design methodology that provides a systematic structure for identifying, planning and managing projects.

It was developed in the United States for USAID and has been adopted and adapted for use by other major donors including DFID and the EC. As experience has grown on what makes development aid more effective and accountable, an increasing demand for greater rigour in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating has led to the introduction of the Logical Framework Approach.

The approach enables the main elements of a project to be concisely summarised and brings structure and logic to the relationship between project purpose and intended inputs, planned activities, and expected results. If used with flexibility this approach to planning encourages creative thinking and promotes participatory engagement between all parties throughout the project life-cycle.

A Logical Framework (or 'logframe' for short) is a simple 4 x 4 matrix. The word 'matrix' comes from 'mother' and means, 'a place in which a thing is developed' [Oxford Dictionary], ie, a place of formation. It should not therefore dictate the contents or be viewed as a 'straitjacket'.

The logframe is a tool for concisely describing the results of an LFA project design process, as it summarises in a standard format:

- What the project is going to achieve
- What activities will be carried out
- What means/resources/inputs (human, technical, infrastructural, etc.) are required
- What potential problems could affect the success of the project
- How the progress and ultimate success of the project will be measured and verified

A logframe has four basic levels and four columns, each of which relates to a specific crosscutting function. DFID and the EC describe the levels differently: in each row DFID is shown in red and the EC in blue.

1. Intervention Logic	2. Objectively Verifiable Indicators	3. Sources and Means of Verification	4. Assumptions
1. Overall Objectives/ Impact			
2. Specific Objective/ Outcome			
3. Expected Results/ Outputs			
4. Activities (and processes)	Means/inputs		

[1] LFA can also mean 'Logical Framework Analysis', but in this guide LFA specifically refers to the Logical Framework Approach.

What does the jargon mean?

The frameworks are all the same in principle. The terms at each of the four levels all refer to objectives, ranging from short term, which will be monitored, to medium term effects, which will be reviewed, and long term impacts, which will be evaluated.

This diagram illustrates the essential levels of a logframe. If you can retain this image in your mind it may help you not to confuse the different levels. The clouds symbolise the 'vision' that the project contributes to, that may be shared by others, and which cannot be wholly achieved by your project alone. The elements which fall within the pyramid must be achieved within the project envelope – ie they must fulfil set targets, within a time limit, in specific locations and for specified beneficiaries.

The 'grassroots' at the bottom of the pyramid denote that this is the level of the 'on the ground' practical tasks that are needed to complete the Activities. Note that the Activities are measured through monitoring, while the upper elements are measured primarily by evaluating the changes brought about by completing the Activities over a period of time.

Simple diagram of a project

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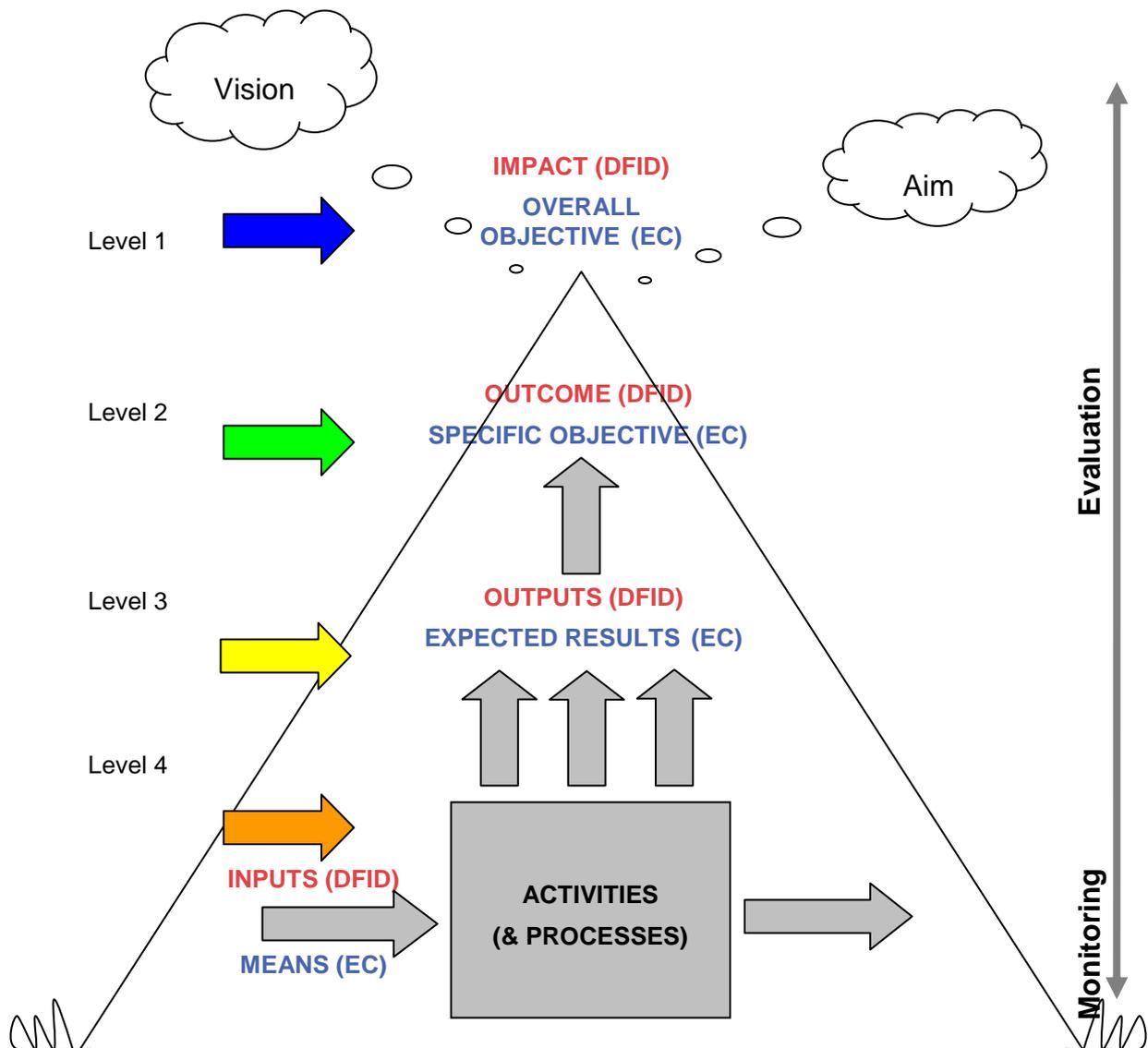
What does this mean in practice?

1. Project summary	2. Objectively Verifiable Indicators	3. Sources and Means of Verification	4. Assumptions
1. Overall Objectives/ Impact The shared vision that your project contributes to	The extent of your contribution (not always possible)	How you will measure your contribution (not always possible)	
2. Specific Objective/ Outcome What you intend to change during project period	How you will know the intended change has occurred and is sustainable	How you will measure change (the basis for evaluation)	**Assumptions** about *external factors* that need to be in place if project is to contribute to the overall objective/ impact
3. Expected Results/ Outputs Tangible results of each activity intended to bring about change	How you will know the expected results of your project have been achieved	How you will measure results (the basis for periodic review)	**Assumptions** about *external factors* that may affect whether the specific objective/ outcome is achieved
4. Activities (and processes) Groups of tasks needed to achieve each expected result	**The means, inputs and resources** needed to carry out the each task	Proof that each activity/task completed (what needs to be regularly monitored)	**Assumptions** about *external factors* that may affect activities achieving the expected results/ outputs **Preconditions** (that need to be fulfilled before the project can start)

Who should be involved?

A funding proposal should be developed first using a Logical Framework Approach.

The project detail can then be more easily developed from the logframe rather than, as often happens with funding proposals, by a desk officer in the UK trying to summarise an already existing project outline into a logframe. The logframe approach should assist project development 'in country' so that during the planning stage participatory 'bottom-up' approaches can be used to feed information into the logframe.

If a logframe is to work as a planning tool, there are several stages needed before drawing up the logframe itself. The input to a log frame should be a team effort, based on participatory work with the people who will be implementing the project, usually partners and beneficiaries (the primary stakeholders). This ensures that as many as possible of those who will be involved in and/or benefiting from the project are part of the design process.

Whilst project beneficiaries may not identify easily with the LFA terminology, they will certainly be able to identify the local factors that are critical to project success, as well as the most appropriate indicators of progress. As long as the process is skillfully facilitated, participatory techniques can be used to inform the logframe planning process and the resulting project proposal.

A participatory approach to project planning is emphasised by the EC, DFID and other major statutory funders.

Stages and involvement in project planning

Stage	Activities / Who's involved
1 **Project identification**	• Interview key stakeholders • Identify wider stakeholders • Start to analyse stakeholders
2 **Problem / Situation analysis**	• Interview focus groups • Facilitate participatory meetings • Analyse stakeholders, problems and objectives
3 **Visioning & participatory design**	• Facilitate the participatory development of a shared vision and mission amongst stakeholder groups
4 **Project planning**	• Compile Logical Framework to reflect the participatory process • Check logic • Work downwards – Think upwards!
5 **Project proposal writing**	• Draw from Problem Analysis and Logical Framework

Pros and cons

In practice, the Logical Framework Approach is used in widely different ways by various international NGOs and is loved and loathed in equal measure, usually dependent on how and why it is adopted by each organisation, and who has been involved in the LFA process when designing a project.

Why do people like the Logical Framework Approach?

An analytical approach to project planning enables you to

- Bring together and present all the key components of a project in a clear, concise, coherent and systematic way

- Ensure there is no confusion between the various components of a project, so that Activities are not confused with Results and results are not confused with Objectives

- Easily check the logic of a project and identify inconsistencies and omissions

- Provide a consistent context for measuring achievements against indicators

- Review project progress and make any adjustments

- Maintain accountability and transparency between all parties involved throughout the project life-cycle

LFA is a handy summary of the key factors of the project for staff, donors, beneficiaries and other stakeholders, which can be referred to throughout the lifecycle of the project. It is not the only planning tool, and should not be an end in itself. The logframe process can also provide a helpful guide to the information that needs to be gathered using participatory methods, and the outcomes of a variety of planning tools.

Why do people loathe the Logical Framework Approach?

Due to the complexity of development projects, we find it hard to believe that they can be reduced to one or two sides of paper.

People find the language intimidating, the process time-consuming and the structure inflexible.

Developing logframes in the UK has not been participatory, which has led to criticism of LFA as a 'top-down' planning tool.

Points to remember in practice

- The logframe isn't intended to show every detail of the project, nor to limit the scope of the project.

- Whilst the process may be time-consuming initially, a logframe saves time at all other stages of the project cycle.

- If a 'bottom-up' approach is used, the LFA is a tool which lends itself to flexibility, transparency and the building of responsive - and responsible relationships between all participants in a process where every participant has an opportunity to play an equal part. Sensitivity to group process coupled with an in-depth knowledge of planning practice is the key to success of this method.

- The logframe can be changed to reflect changes on the ground, in consultation with everyone involved.

Some basic principles

- **Make your Logical Framework concise, free-standing, and easily understandable by anyone seeing it for the first time.**

- **Include the people who will benefit from the project in the process of drawing up the Logical Framework.**

- **When working with Logical Frameworks:**

Think upwards –

Plan downwards!

References

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INTRAC *The Use and Abuse of the Logical Framework Approach*

www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/518/The-Use-and-Abuse-of-the-Logical-Framework-Approach.pdf

Bond quality group wiki

http://quality.bond.org.uk/index.php?title=Logframe_debate

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