Wasini community, Kenya, Credit L King

Information Note: Logical Frameworks

This information note is intended to help Darwin projects and applicants to understand Logical Frameworks (logframes) and their use. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a requirement of all Darwin Projects. The Logframe is the key tool used in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of Darwin projects. This information note covers:

• Why should Darwin Applicants use a logframe?

• What is a logframe and what are its key components?

• How to develop a logframe.

• How to develop good indicators to measure project success.

It has been observed that Darwin applicants are often intimidated by logframes and struggle with their different components. This note has been developed to help applicants better understand the concept of the logframe and how to develop effective logframes for Darwin applications. It aims to demystify the logframe and provide simple, easy to understand guidance.

The Darwin Initiative supports developing countries to conserve biodiversity and reduce poverty. Funded by the UK Government, the Darwin Initiative provides grants for projects working in developing countries and UK Overseas Territories (OTs).

Projects support:
• the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
• the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)
• the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)
• the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

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Logframes and Darwin

All Main, Post and Darwin Plus projects must have a logframe

All Darwin Initiative Main, Post and Darwin Plus projects must include a logframe for measuring the success of their projects. The process of preparing a logframe leads to a structured and disciplined process of describing how the project will achieve its objectives, how this achievement may be measured and what the risks and assumptions to that achievement are. It should not be seen as just a tick box exercise, but as an opportunity to clearly and concisely present the project's design.

The information included in the logframe should provide a succinct summary of what the project is trying to achieve, how and what will be monitored and the project's key risks and assumptions.

Logframes also provide an opportunity for the project to describe how it will contribute to the Darwin Initiative's higher-level objective: "supporting developing countries to conserve biodiversity and reduce poverty."

Monitoring and evaluation and logframes

A briefing paper on the general application of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) has been developed already and can be accessed at: http://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/assets/uploads/2014/05/What-is-ME-FINAL-24th-September2.pdf.

Effective M&E is a vital component of Darwin projects both for project design and planning as well as management. It enables projects to map out their activities in a rational manner in an effort to meet their overall impact. It can also be used as a lesson learning tool to identify what works or doesn't work. Logframes are a key part of the M&E frameworks of all Darwin projects.

A logical framework is a systemic, visual tool to assist applicants in designing, planning and managing projects. Logframes enable the relationships between inputs/resources, planned activities and the expected and desired changes and results, to be established. They are useful for analysing whether particular activities will aid in addressing the biodiversity/developmental problem identified. The logframe is therefore a useful management tool that encourages structured thinking about what the project aims to do and how.

The main questions that the logframe seeks to answer are:

• What is the project aiming to achieve?

• Which specific activities will be undertaken?

• How will the changes resulting from the project be measured?

• What challenges could affect the success of the project?

Never design a logframe alone

The development of logframes at the project design stage should be a participatory process which includes the project team, stakeholders and, if possible, beneficiaries. Using a participatory approach allows for risks and local factors critical to project success to be identified. It gives the chance for all the project stakeholders:

- To reach consensus on the programme of work and the project activities.

- To seek ownership of the project.

- To provide for a bottom-up approach to project design and planning.

The use of participatory approaches in logframe development represents an investment of both time and money. Initially this may seem to be a hindrance to Darwin applicants, however this investment invariably pays off. During project start up, for example, the team will be well versed in the project's objectives and activities, and will be capable of beginning implementation immediately.

Choices and decision-making for marine management, Credit ZSL

The different levels of a logframe

An M&E framework outlines the different levels of results expected from a project whilst ensuring that key assumptions are identified. From short to medium and long term results, common terminology is used.

Logframes do not have a standardised template, however the 4x4 matrix used by the Darwin Initiative is the most commonly used template. This matrix is then filled with the 4 central components of a log frame i.e. Impact, Outcome, Outputs and Activities on the left-hand column. To support these components additional information is required i.e. indicators, means of verification and assumptions. See table 1 over the page.

Project Summary A meaningful, easily understood summary of what the project is about	Indicator A specific and measurable characteristic that can be used to gauge project progress towards the impact/outcome/output	Means of Verification The expected source(s) of information that can help answer the performance question or indicators	Assumptions External factors that the project believes will positively or negatively influence the events of the project
Impact Higher level objective that the project will contribute towards achieving			
Outcome Changes expected from the project and who is expected to benefit	If the outcome is achieved and the assumptions hold...	...then the project should contribute to its impact	
Output Specific, direct deliverables of the project	If the outputs are achieved and the assumptions hold...	...then the project should achieve its outcome	
Activities The main, planned tasks that the project will carry out	If the activities are completed and the assumptions hold...	...then the output should be achieved ...	

Table 1: Logframe template

Logical frameworks should be logical

It is important to check the logic of the logframe. This entails examining if the activities are implemented and assumptions hold true, will the outputs be achieved? If we deliver outputs and the assumptions hold true will the outcomes be achieved? If assumptions hold true and project outcomes are achieved, will the project contribute to the impact?

Many Darwin projects operate in developing countries where systems are complex and context can change at any given moment. Hence during project design it is crucial to identify assumptions that may affect the success of the project. Assumptions are external factors that can positively or negatively influence the project's achievements. These should be identified together with key stakeholders who may better understand local factors. Assumptions should be monitored frequently.

Using indicators

When developing an indicator, it is important to be very specific. It is commonplace to see phrases such as "**stronger**", "**enhanced**" and "**better**" when describing an indicator. However this is subjective and does not identify the expected amount of change.

A good example of this is a project that includes an indicator such as "**Enhanced capacity for marine spatial planning via Darwin Marine Atlas for Congo with 10 biodiversity/fisheries professionals trained in its use.**" This indicator is not specific and could be improved by rewording it this way, "**Number of biodiversity/fisheries professionals trained to x professional standard on marine spatial planning via the Darwin Marine Atlas for Congo.**"

Another key issue with indicator development is setting indicators that are essentially **targets**. For example a project sets an indicator such as "**4 Field assistants trained in pollinator surveys and basic data entry.**" This indicator can be improved by rewording it this way "**Number of field assistants trained in pollinator surveys and basic data entry.**" This specifies what needs to be measured.

An additional common problem is using the word "**increased**" when defining an indicators. Although using the word increased implies there is a greater change it is not specific enough. An example of such an indicator is "**Increased knowledge and awareness of marine biodiversity and artisanal fisheries.**" This could be improved by rewording it "**Number of stakeholder and practitioners trained on marine biodiversity and artisanal fisheries**."

Good indicators help you measure change

To be able to measure if a project is contributing to its short, medium or long term results, it is key to develop indicators at each level of results. Indicators will enable the projects to answer the question **"how will you know that the expected results of your project have been achieved."**

In order to measure key changes and overall project success, indicators are needed at the output and outcome levels for Darwin Initiative applications.

Setting targets and measuring progress

Indicators are used to monitor the performance of projects in relation to pre-determined targets, and to measure project impact. Indicators can be qualitative or quantitative. Quantitative indicators focus on numbers/percentages and provide a clear measure of things. Qualitative indicators define characteristics and are more descriptive. An example of a quantitative indicator is "Number of capacity building trainings held," a qualitative indicator is "Awareness of Ecosystem based adaptation within target Ministries of Environment."

For further advice on developing indicators, refer to the Darwin Briefing Paper on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) (http://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/assets/uploads/2014/05/What-is-ME-FINAL-24th-September2.pdf)

The table overleaf outlines some examples of indicators, some derived from real Darwin Initiative projects.

Examples of strong and weak indicators

	Output indicator	Outcome indicator
Good	At least 90% of fisher folk (n=600) are using recommended fishing equipment and respecting local fishing regulations by 2016.	Six community associations are active (as demonstrated by meeting minutes) across the entire catchment and are working together to address catchment scale issues by year 3.
Less good	Increased use of recommended fishing equipment, and adherence to regulations amongst local fisher folk.	Community associations are established and strengthened.
Good	By end year 3, at least 30 investigations into traders or trade routes of CITES-listed sharks and rays species have been undertaken by the marine wildlife conservation unit (baseline = 2).	By 2018 at least 100 specialised shark and manta fishers have transitioned to alternative sustainable fishing or non-fishing practices (baseline = 0), that increase incomes by >25% (from $1 a day to $1.25) and offer long term livelihood security.
Less good	A greater number of investigations carried out into those involved in the illegal wildlife trade.	Number of specialised shark and manta fishers is reduced and incomes of non-fishers increased.
Good	433 households in 38 communities have received at least $100 in sales from handicrafts per year by year 3, over baseline of 315 households in 35 communities.	By 2018, number of communities engaged in multiple conservation programmes increased from 13 to >20 as demonstrated by household surveys.
Less good	A greater number of households within the project area are engaged in alternative livelihoods activities.	An increase in the number of project beneficiaries engaged in more than one conservation programme.
Good	10 reserve staff and 40 community members trained in grassland management techniques by the end of year 2.	At least 50% of households (disaggregated by gender i.e. Female-headed vs Male headed) report average improvement in wellbeing scores by year 3 compared to year 1 baseline.
Less good	Training provided in grassland management techniques for reserve staff and local communities.	Household experience improved wellbeing by the end of the project.
Good	By October 2015 workshops held in each of the 6 host countries with attendance of at least 4 government departments, to scope development planning processes and identify entry points.	By the end of the project, the provision for biodiversity is improved in at least one national or sectoral development policy/process in each of at least four countries.
Less good	A number of workshops held in the host countries.	Biodiversity issues are better integrated into development policies.

Table 2: Example indicators taken from successful Darwin Initiative projects

Logframes and Evaluation

Using logframes as an external evaluator

Logframes prove to be extremely useful when assessing impacts or at the evaluation stage of the project. During Darwin project reviews, project logframes provide a strong framework for measuring what the project has actually delivered.

The logframes assist the evaluator with answering the following questions:

- What lessons were learned, what worked and what did not work?
- What were the benefits of the project to the stakeholders?
- Did the project achieve what was planned?
- Did the assumptions underpinning the project's design hold?

Limitations to using logframes progress

Logframes are used widely in different contexts, they do however have their limitations. These include:

- The language used during the development of a logical framework can be intimidating to stakeholders who are not familiar with logframes.
- Logframes illustrate the solution to a developmental/biodiversity problem in a linear way. They describe that if "A" and "B" are completed then "C" will be achieved. In real life situations, this may not always be the case due to the complex nature of systems.
- The inability of the logframe to capture all qualitative changes that may occur from the project. Due to the limited space within a log frame, it can be difficult to include all anticipated changes.
- Due to the matrix structure of the logframe it is often viewed as being very rigid. As a result of this perceived rigidity, project teams are often afraid to make changes to it during the life of the project.

Tips and recommendations

Tips on what to remember when developing logframes

- Use the logframe as the basis of the funding application and throughout the project lifecycle, to track progress and adapt to changing situations.

- Ensure your logframe is concise, uses simple language and is easily understandable by any stakeholder.

- Use a participatory process to develop project logframes, if possible include some of the beneficiaries from the project.

Recommendations

- Always check the logic of the logframe.

- Use your logframe as a tool to review assumptions and implications, and to keep donors and other stakeholders informed of significant changes.

- Make sure that you frequently revisit and review your logframe, it should not be a tick box exercise to produce a document that just sits on a shelf.