Developing a Basic Logical Framework for your Concept Note

1. Introduction: What is a "Logical Framework"?

A **logical framework** ("logframe") can be thought of as the blueprint for your project. It clearly describes in table format what your project is going to do, the deliverables that it is going to produce, and the results that it is going to achieve. The logical framework describes a "chain of causality" linking specific activities to a desired change. Though it is not technically required at the concept note stage, developing a draft logframe will help you with several concept note preparation tasks, including:

» Ensuring that the proposed structure for your project is coherent and the that the approach you describe is clearly linked to the objectives you expect to achieve. This includes ensuring that the project's activities are linked to the project theory of change;

» Ensuring that gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) considerations are adequately incorporated into the project;

» Ensuring that the Green Climate Fund (GCF) investment criteria are mainstreamed into the project; and

» Estimating an overall budget for the project. Laying out all of the proposed activities will help you estimate the costs of inputs, which you can then add up and use as a cost estimate for your project. This will also help you to ensure that your concept note is not too ambitious in terms of scope.

Developing a logical framework is fairly straightforward if you have developed a good understanding of the problem you are seeking to address and if you have a good **theory of change**. The table below is a generic logframe table. It corresponds generally to the format that the GCF uses for logical frameworks in full proposals.

Project Objective: *A short statement of the goal of the project.*					
Project Impacts: *A description of the longer-term contribution your project will make to improve livelihoods/community wellbeing.*					
	Baseline	Indicator	Target	Risk	Assumptions
Outcome 1: *The change your project creates*					
Output 1.1: *The goods and services your project produces to achieve outcome 1*					
Activity 1.1.1: *The actions your project takes to produce outcome 1*					
Activity 1.1.2					
Output 1.2					
Activity 1.2.1					
Activity 1.2.2					
Outcome 2:					
Output 2.1					
Activity 2.1.1					

Figure 1: Generalized format for a logical framework.

Note that the full logical framework includes information on risks and monitoring (the "baseline," "indicator," "target," "risks," and "assumptions" columns). These are not required at the concept note stage and so they will not be discussed in this exercise. Most logframe formats have similar characteristics which are described below, though they may use different terminology. Additionally, notice how the outcomes, outputs, and activities are numbered and how they relate to one another.

2. Logframe Language

Logical frameworks have their own special language that can sometimes be tricky to master. The different parts of the logframe have very specific meanings, and while some of the terms like **output** and **outcome** have similar meanings in everyday language, for project developers the terms are different and distinct. The subsections below explain the terms that are used in GCF logframes.[1]

Objective. The **objective** of the project, sometimes called the "goal" or "project development objective", is a short, clear description of what the project intends to achieve. The objective should be a simple statement, and generally does not include "through" or "by" language, as in the following examples.

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[1] These terms are also used by some other financiers and organizations as well, but sometimes you may find yourself working with an organization that uses different terms for similar concepts (e.g., "intermediate result" or "purpose" instead of outcome). In all cases, you should use the terminology that your funder prefers.

» The objective of this project is to improve the resilience of traditional taro cultivation systems to the impacts of climate change.

» The objective of this project is to enhance the preparedness of coastal communities to extreme events driven by climate change.

» The objective of this project is to improve community water security against more frequent droughts.

Impact. **Impact** describes the broader contribution that your project will have on livelihoods for the target area and for the beneficiaries. These are generally medium- to long-term changes in the community that your project will contribute to (e.g., poverty reduction.) For non-GCF projects, if you are using the problem tree/objective tree methodology, the impacts will come from the "branches" of your objective tree. However, for GCF projects, you should highlight the relevant GCF impact areas that apply to your project in addition to any impacts that you identify.

Impacts are different from **outcomes** (see below) because they are generally outside the scope and control of the project. In other words, your project will *contribute to* an impact, but the project will not make the impact happen all by itself. For example, one impact of a climate-smart agriculture project might be that it contributes to reduced poverty in rural areas. The agriculture project by itself cannot be expected to create a measurable change in rural poverty since poverty reduction takes more time than the project has and requires other factors to be in place. However, the project *can* contribute to poverty reduction by creating conditions that contribute to a reduction in poverty.

Outcome. The **outcome** of the project is a description of what the project intends to accomplish by the end of the implementation period, and unlike impacts, the outcomes are a direct result of the project. The project management team will be accountable for the project outcomes. Outcome statements can describe a change in behavior of the beneficiaries of the project, or performance changes in a system, organization, or institution. You may think of project outcomes as a capability that an organization will have after the project that it did not have before the project, or a new, more sustainable way of managing resources that is adopted by the community as a result of the project. Some examples of project outcomes include:

» Agricultural production in rural communities is increased through the adoption of climate smart practices;

» Marine resource management practices made responsive to changes in climate conditions; and

» Access to water in the community increased.

Output. **Outputs** are the goods and services that your project creates to achieve its outcome(s). This includes facilities, assets, skills, abilities, methodologies, and other "things" that enable the change to happen. Often there is confusion between outputs and outcomes; even experienced project developers can get confused as to the difference between them. However, over time and as you gain experience, the distinction will become clearer to you. In general, outputs refer to goods and services that are produced, whereas outcomes refer to the benefits that the goods and services provide (how the outputs are used). Outcomes

may have several outputs; you may think about all of the conditions that need to be in place for the desired change to occur as outputs. For example, let us think about our outcome of "agricultural production in rural communities increased." To make this change happen, we will likely have to provide several "goods and services" or outputs, like the following:

» Rural farmers gain skills in climate-resilient cultivation techniques. In this case, the skills can be considered a "good" which will help them to improve production;

» Rural farmers' cooperative established. Here, the cooperative is also a "good" that can help the farmers market their produce; and

» Agricultural extension program for climate smart production established. In this case, the establishment of the extension program could be considered a "good." Another way to phrase this might be "rural extension services improved."

Activity. **Activities** are the specific tasks that produce the outputs. Activities are the things that you do. Outputs may have several activities. For example, the output "rural farmers gain skills in climate resilient cultivation techniques" may include several or all of the following activities:

» Develop and distribute guidebook in local language of climate resilient cultivation techniques;

» Conduct workshops for rural farmers on climate resilient cultivation techniques;

» Establish demonstration plot for climate resilient cultivation techniques;

» Develop extension materials for local agriculture agency for climate resilient cultivation techniques;

» Conduct training-of-trainers for local extension officers and heads of farmers associations on climate resilient cultivation techniques.

Input. **Inputs** are the resources that are required to implement the activities and produce the outputs. Each activity will have inputs, including money, expertise, facilities, labor, and equipment. The concept note template will not ask you for inputs because the inputs are described in the budget and procurement section of your full proposal. However, it is important to have an idea of the inputs you will need because they will help you estimate the budget.

To simplify, you can think of the "chain of causality" described in your logframe in this way:

» If we have these inputs, then we will be able to do these activities;

» If we do these activities, then we will produce these goods/services (outputs);

» If we produce these goods/services, then we can expect this change to occur (outcome);

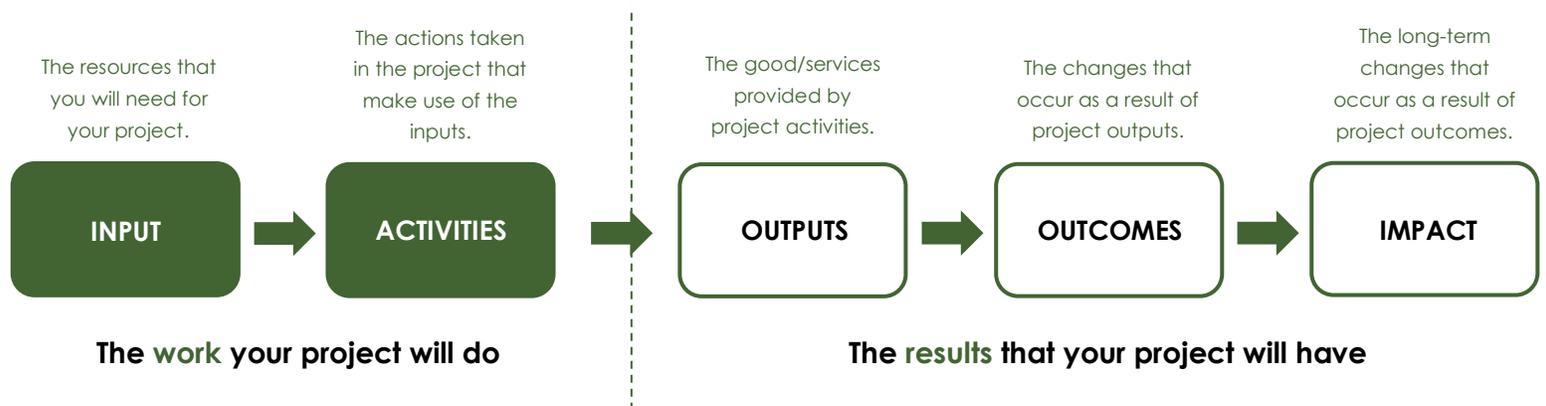» If this outcome happens, it will contribute to a broader improvement in our community (impact).

The resources that you will need for your project.

The actions taken in the project that make use of the inputs.

The good/services provided by project activities.

The changes that occur as a result of project outputs.

The long-term changes that occur as a result of project outcomes.

INPUT → **ACTIVITIES** ┊ **OUTPUTS** → **OUTCOMES** → **IMPACT**

The work your project will do   **The results that your project will have**

Figure 2: Key components of the logical framework.

3. Structuring your Logical Framework

Now that you understand the basics of the logical framework, let us walk through the steps of building your own logframe. The activities, outputs, and outcomes that you design for your project should be aligned with your **theory of change**. If you have used the problem tree and objective tree tools, you may take your outcomes and outputs (and in some cases your activities) from the "roots" of your objective tree, while the project objective can be taken from the core problem/ solution.[2] Where you begin is a matter of preference, but many project developers will describe the project objective first, and then formulate the outcome(s).

Outcomes. As noted above, the outcome should be a clear description of the change that the project will cause to happen. In most cases, the outcome statement is written in the past tense. Choose an outcome that can be measured. Describe the change that you expect in your outcome statement compared to a baseline situation. Use words such as "improved" and "enhanced." As a rule of thumb, it is good to be ambitious with respect to your outcomes, but not unrealistic with respect to what you can reasonably expect to achieve. The number of outcomes a project has usually depends on the size of the project; SAP projects generally (but not always) have two to three outcomes.

Outputs. Once you have determined your outcome, refer to the objective tree to determine what goods or services need to be put in place to achieve the outcome. Good outputs are clear and generally easy to measure.

Activities. Once you have determined the outputs that you need to produce, it is a relatively simple task to design the activities needed to produce them. Make sure that your activities are locally appropriate and acceptable, as some approaches will work in some places but not in others. Additionally, you should make sure that your activities are accessible to all stakeholders and do not unnecessarily or unwittingly exclude any groups. Refer to the GEDSI analysis that you completed earlier to identify entry points for GEDSI-sensitive

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[2] Note that there may be some variations here depending on how you have structured your problem tree/objective tree.

activities. Consider the number, amount, frequency, and other characteristics of any activity you plan to undertake; this is generally identified as the deliverable. In some cases, you may only need to produce one deliverable (e.g., "Handbook for climate smart agriculture produced"), whereas in other cases you may need to produce several (e.g., "Four climate smart agriculture workshops").

Bear in mind that the outcome that is needed to achieve the project objective is usually specific to your community. In other words, the change that you need to bring about with your project depends on the local conditions and circumstances. However, once you have identified the change that you want to make happen, you can look at examples from other projects that worked to make a similar change to see what approaches were effective in similar circumstances. Depending on the type of project you are designing, there may be "best-practices" manuals that describe activities and outputs that have worked elsewhere; these can help you design your own outputs and activities.

Once you have your logical framework laid out, you should "test your logic" by talking through the chain of causality. Ask yourself the following questions, and, if possible, ask other stakeholders to review the design:

» If we conduct these activities, is it reasonable to expect that we will be able to produce these outputs?

» If we produce these outputs, will it be sufficient to lead to the desired change (outcome) within the specified project period?

» Have we forgotten anything?

» Are the activities, outputs, and outcomes realistic?

It should be clear to a reasonably well-informed non-expert how your project is going to work from the logframe.

4. Estimating the Budget for your Project

The next step is to develop a simple budget estimate for your project. The SAP concept note template requires you to provide budget estimates at the output level, and not at the activity level. This means that you do not have to describe every activity in your project (this will happen at the funding proposal stage). However, you have to have an idea of what activities your project will implement so that you can develop a reasonable budget estimate.

To do this, consider the draft logical framework you identified in the previous step. Try to estimate what you will need to do to produce your outputs (e.g., conduct workshops, hire technical experts to conduct analyses, etc.). Make a list of all of the things you may need for each output and attach a cost estimate to each. At the concept note stage, approximate values are sufficient. You should use costs that are typical in your country. Try to estimate costs for travel and related expenses, as well as for services like printing. Once you have your list, simply add up all the estimated costs to arrive at output-level estimates. Each output needs an estimate; if your first component has three outputs, it will need three estimates.

Lastly, if you choose you can add an additional line for project management costs, but this is not necessary; if you do not GCF will assume that project management costs and the accredited entity fee are integrated into your outcome costs. Keep your project management costs reasonable; it is probably best to keep it to 10% of the combined output costs or less.

5. Conclusion

The logical framework is the backbone and blueprint for your project proposal. A good logical framework includes well-described activities, outputs, and outcomes that provide a clear picture of how the project will be implemented. You should also remember that a successful logical framework is rooted in a solid understanding of the problem (defined through a well thought through problem/objective tree) that the project seeks to address, and that it has an inclusive design that ensures that the benefits of the project are enjoyed by a wide range of stakeholders in the community.

You've probably noticed that the logical framework is the last exercise in this training course. This is so we avoid the temptation of rushing to design the project before fully understanding the problem. Designing the logframe should be among the last steps along your concept note design process.