Annex 5: The Programming Manual Toolbox

This annex provides practical tools to support project proposal design, development, implementation, monitoring, and completion. Consider this a short course on project proposal development and project work plan development for ASEAN cooperation projects. Several tools are included, covering every stage of a project's lifecycle (see Figure 1).
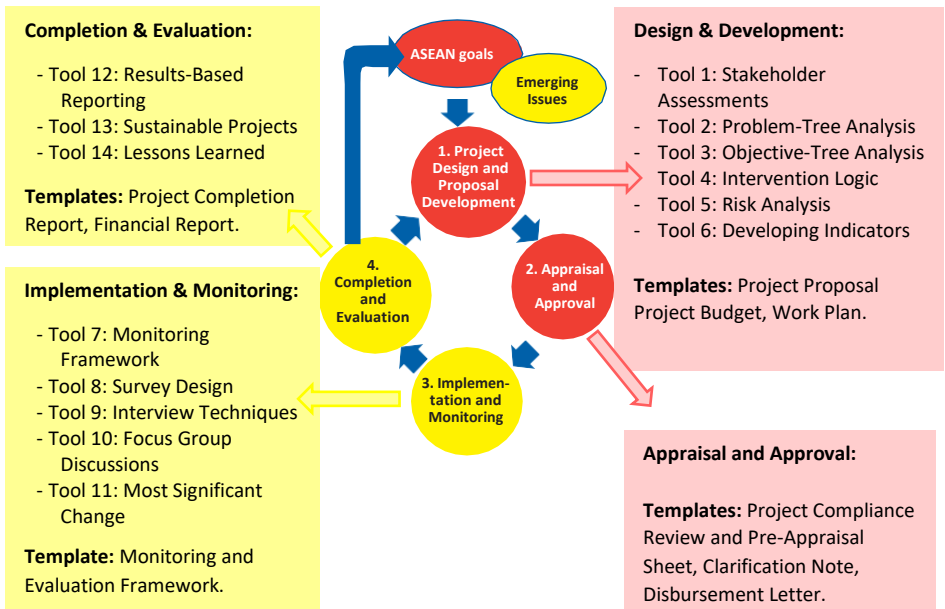

Completion & Evaluation:

- Tool 12: Results-Based Reporting
- Tool 13: Sustainable Projects
- Tool 14: Lessons Learned

Templates: Project Completion Report, Financial Report.

Implementation & Monitoring:

- Tool 7: Monitoring Framework
- Tool 8: Survey Design
- Tool 9: Interview Techniques
- Tool 10: Focus Group Discussions
- Tool 11: Most Significant Change

Template: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

ASEAN goals

Emerging Issues

1. Project Design and Proposal Development

2. Appraisal and Approval

3. Implementation and Monitoring

4. Completion and Evaluation

Design & Development:

- Tool 1: Stakeholder Assessments
- Tool 2: Problem-Tree Analysis
- Tool 3: Objective-Tree Analysis
- Tool 4: Intervention Logic
- Tool 5: Risk Analysis
- Tool 6: Developing Indicators

Templates: Project Proposal Project Budget, Work Plan.

Appraisal and Approval:

Templates: Project Compliance Review and Pre-Appraisal Sheet, Clarification Note, Disbursement Letter.

Figure 1. Overview of The Toolbox (Annex 5).

Detailed descriptions have been provided on how to use each tool, as well as recommendations on what to keep in mind while implementing, or facilitating, a project. When relevant, descriptions include why the tool has been recommended, as well as how it can be used in the context of ASEAN cooperation project proposal development and project implementation.

Tool 1: Stakeholder Assessments

Introduction

Project proposals are neither developed nor implemented in a vacuum. Many actors and stakeholders play different roles, or might influence a project and its results, at every stage of a project's lifecycle. Those people planning a project must have a broad understanding of its context, to aid development of a comprehensive proposal and a work plan. Conducting a stakeholder assessment, as early as possible in the project design stage, is recommended.

Stakeholder assessments are critical, since a key element of results-based management is looking at results from the perspective of a project's main targets and beneficiaries. Results-based management answers the question what do project results mean for beneficiaries.

Assessments should include input from key stakeholders, such as representatives of the target group and the endorsing Sectoral Body, among other people. The project team will need to engage with some or all of these stakeholders at various stages of a project's lifecycle. The more complex a project is, the more stakeholders will be generally involved.

Using the Tool

A stakeholder assessment is conducted to learn how different stakeholders might potentially influence a project and how a project can best engage with them. Two variables are accounted for in this assessment methodology:

Potential Stakeholder Checklist:
• Government departments, ministries
• Private sector companies
• NGOs
• International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs)
• Universities and Research Organisations
• Civil Society Organisations
• Target Groups, Beneficiaries
• Community Organisations

- **Interests.** To what extent will stakeholder needs and interests be impacted– whether positively or negatively–by the planning, implementation, or outcomes of the proposed project?
- **Influence.** What power do stakeholders have over planning and implementation, e.g., over decisions to be made, or over project

implementation.

Follow these two steps when conducting a stakeholder assessment:

First, **start brainstorming**. List all the potential stakeholders in your project's context. It helps to do this exercise with staff members who will be involved in project design and implementation.

Write each stakeholder's name on a Post-It note, one stakeholder per note. While there will likely be many stakeholders, it is best to be inclusive and have too many notes, rather than omit a stakeholder who might later turn out to be important.

Second, **determine interests and influence**. Discuss and decide for each stakeholder what their interests are and how influential might they be during project planning and implementation.

As the discussion proceeds, attach the Post-Its to an interest/influence matrix, as per the example in Figure 2. Make this matrix on a large sheet of paper, so that the notes can be moved from one quadrant to the next, depending on the discussion. As seen in Figure 2, the notes can be placed anywhere in the matrix. Even a note's relative positioning in a quadrant might be meaningful.
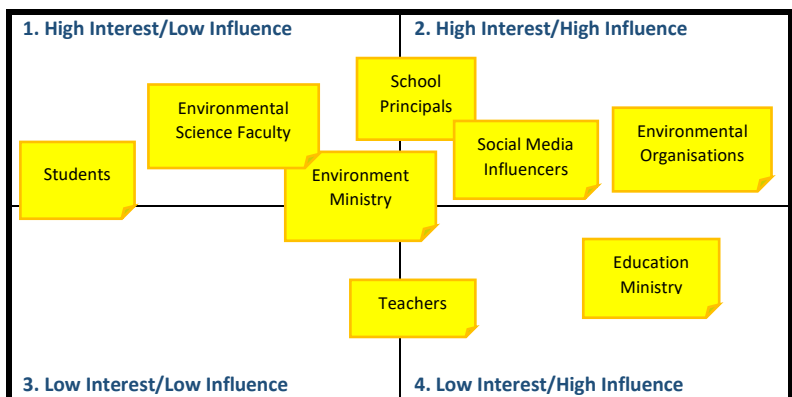

Figure 2. Sample interest/influence matrix for a project aiming to increase green economy awareness and engagement among schoolchildren.

Third, **formulate engagement strategies**, based on the deeper explanation of the interest/influence matrix in Figure 3.

1. **High Interest/Low Influence** **Beneficiaries:** Empower, make capable.	**2.** **High Interest/High Influence** **Potential allies:** Partner, leverage, funding sources.
3. **Low interest/Low Influence** **Inactive stakeholders:** Raise awareness, inform, or ignore.	**4.** **Low Interest/High Influence** **Advocacy targets:** Lobby, raise awareness, advocacy.

Figure 3. Description of interest/influence matrix.

In Figure 3, Quadrant 1, stakeholders have high interest and low influence. These stakeholders might see the need for a project, and stand to benefit from it, but they do not (yet) have much power to influence it. Often these are project beneficiaries, or those close to beneficiaries. These people are best engaged by building their capacities, strengthening their connections, and otherwise empowering them.

In Figure 3, Quadrant 2, stakeholders have high interest and high influence. These are stakeholders who might be potential allies, or people with who an Implementing Agency may wish to partner. They might include organisations with similar ideas and aims. A good engagement strategy is to get to know these stakeholders better, learn how to work with them to avoid repetitive effort, and discover potential synergies. It may be possible to engage with them to raise additional project funding.

In Figure 3, Quadrant 3, stakeholders have low interest and low influence. While these stakeholders might seem unimportant, they may become critical to a project as work progresses. The goal should be to raise their awareness of the project's importance. In future, such stakeholders may become a necessary link to others.

Using the previous example, a journalist might not be interested in a project aiming to influence youngsters on the green economy. However, a journalist who becomes enthusiastic about the green economy might start influencing the Education Ministry more constructively.

In Figure 3, Quadrant 4, stakeholders have low interest and high influence. These are powerful people who are not (as yet) interested in a proposal, or who might potentially oppose it. Positive engagement with these stakeholders requires energy and effort, meaning it may be best to delay making immediate contact. A better

strategy would be to start work with stakeholders from Quadrants 1 and 2 and engage with stakeholders from Quadrant 4 at a later point, to ensure policy support and strengthen long-term project sustainability.

Stakeholder Assessment Tips

- Be specific when writing the stakeholders names on Post-Its, e.g., instead of writing 'government', write the specific department or ministry. It might be helpful to write the names of specific people in these departments.

- Invite a wide group of relevant team members to join the exercise and encourage free brainstorming and discussions. It may be useful to invite members of close partner organisations. Discussion is as important as placement of the Post-Its.

- Remember: The stakeholder assessment is a living document. Regularly review and update the matrix during project implementation, especially when faced with challenges involving complex stakeholder relations.

Tool 2: Problem-Tree Analysis

Introduction

A thorough knowledge of a project's context is needed to achieve meaningful and sustainable project results. However, before deciding on a project's design or direction, there must be an understanding of the nature of the problem to be solved. An analysis of the existing situation or the context surrounding the problem is needed.

As with the stakeholder assessment, a problem-tree analysis exercise is best done with key stakeholders and potential project partners. The stakeholder assessment may also offer clues as to which stakeholders to invite to the problem-tree exercise.

Using the Tool

Problem-tree analysis is an exercise that identifies major issues related to specific problems and constraints associated with the **problem's context**. The analysis yields a visualization of **cause and effect relationships** (see Figure 4) that aids the identification of the main problem. After brainstorming and inventorying all the issues, problems, and constraints that affect the project environment, an understanding will emerge on the connections between smaller problems and the main problem.

Figure 4. Problem-tree matrix.
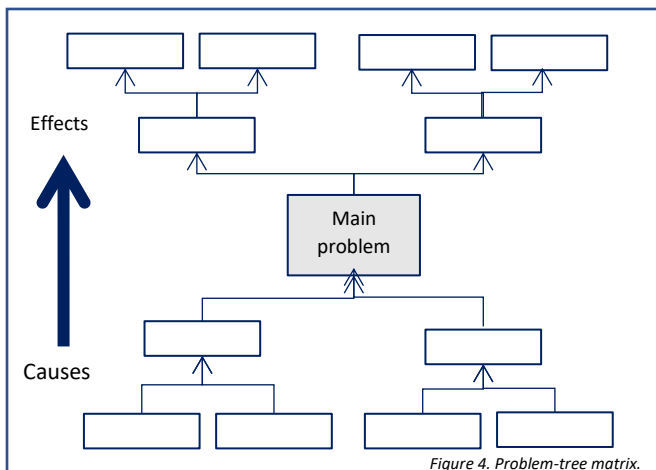
The problem-tree exercise includes the following steps:

- Brainstorming and inventory of all issues, problems, and constraints that group members think are linked to the project context. Write all issues and sub-problems on cards, one per card. Limit discussion and criticism at this point and be inclusive. It's best to write too much when brainstorming than to omit anything that might later prove important.

- Once most issues have been identified and written down–this can take between 30 minutes to several hours–the group may start ordering cards logically, placing causes below and effects above. Participants should ask which card comes first, and which card comes after? Which cards are causes and which cards are consequences? This is not always a question of true or false; there may be different opinions. Allow this.

- Cluster cards in logical groupings, such as everything to do with government policy, or teacher capacity, or student awareness. Analyse what comes first and what comes next. What causes what?

- Fix the cards to a large sheet of paper draw arrows to indicate the logic. Figure 5 depicts a sample completed problem-tree matrix.
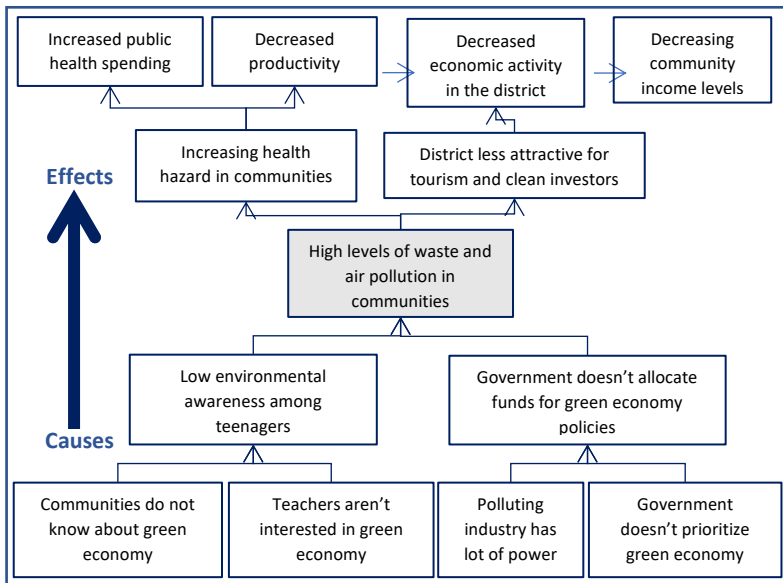

Figure 5. Example completed problem-tree analysis.

Tips for Problem-Tree Analysis

- This exercise is best conducted with the participation of a group of relevant people, such as project team members and close stakeholders.

- Think out of the box, not just 'on your own street'. Actively invite stakeholders outside the project team to contribute on their issues so that tunnel vision from the perspective of the project team is avoided.

- Work with cards and place those on a large sheet of paper. Do not write directly on the paper sheet, or fix the cards to the sheet too quickly, as you will not be able to move the problem statements relative to each other anymore. Encourage group members to move the cards in line with the discussion, without fixing them to the paper.

- The discussion is as important as the final results of the exercise.

- Use sentences with verbs for each problem. People will have a tendency to write single or just a few words on cards to represent problems, like 'communications' or 'lack of awareness'. Ask them to be specific and write the problem in a full sentence so that meaning becomes clear. Make sure they indicate a verb, and an actor (e.g. 'There is little communication between Department X and Department Y').

Tool 3: Objective-Tree Analysis

Introduction

This tool is directly derived from the problem-tree analysis. This flow ensures that projects are designed with a problem's context in mind. The people and stakeholders from the problem-tree exercise should join the objective-tree analysis.

Using the Tool

Now that we know what the problems are that surround the project context and how these problems are interlinked with the main problem and with each other, it becomes easier to start designing the project. This can be done by reformulating the problems from the problem tree into an objective tree. Each sub-problem must be reformulated into a positive and realistic objective. See example of an objective tree from Figure 6, directly derived from the problem tree-analysis.

The objective tree can be seen as the start of project design. It gives a good idea of which short-term results, mid-term results and long-term results to aim for.

Tips for Conducting an Objective-Tree Analysis:

- This exercise is best conducted with the participation of relevant people, such as project team members and close stakeholders.
- Think out of the box, not just 'on your own street'. Actively invite stakeholders outside the project team to contribute on their issues so that tunnel vision from the perspective of the project team is avoided.
- Work with cards and place those on a large sheet of paper. Do not write directly on the paper sheet, or fix the cards to the sheet too quickly, as you will not be able to move the problem statements relative to each other anymore. Encourage group members to move the cards in line with the discussion, without fixing them to the paper.
- Use sentences with verbs for each problem. People will have a tendency to write single or just a few words on cards to represent problems, like 'communications' or 'lack of awareness'. Ask them to be specific and write the problem in a full sentence so that meaning becomes clear. Make sure they indicate a verb, and an actor (e.g. 'There is little communication between Department X and Department Y').

However, the project may have neither the capacity nor the mandate to cover all these objectives. For instance, it may want to focus particularly on interventions with schools and students, but not with governments. This is fine as long–as it is clear that higher-level objectives might not be fully achieved without engaging stakeholders from governments, civil society, or the private sector. It will at least be necessary for the project team to find out if other organisations cover these areas, and if possible, to network or partner with them. This could also be an area for follow up after the first project phase has been completed.

Steps in conducting the objective-tree analysis:

- The objective tree is directly derived from the problem tree. For each of the cards in the problem tree, discuss what would be a realistic, positive result if the problem would no longer exist. Write this on new cards.
- It may not make sense to directly rewrite the problem card into an objective card, e.g., it is not realistic to change 'polluting industry has a lot of power' into 'polluting industry does not have a lot of power'. A more realistic objective would be countering industry power with advocacy power from civil society, so to formulate this objective statement as 'civil society advocates for green economy'.
- Place the cards on a new sheet of paper and review whether the order of the problem tree still makes logical sense (see Figure 6).
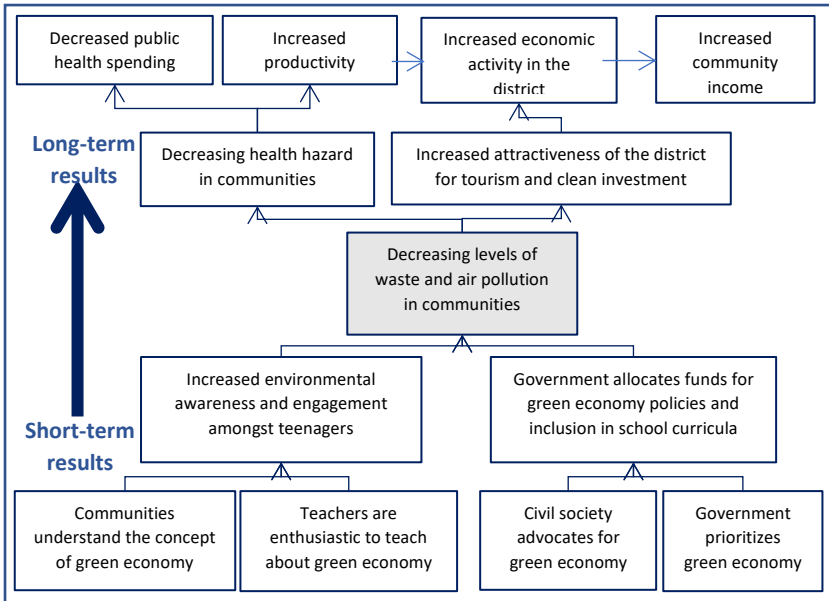
Figure 6. Example of an initial objective-tree analysis, before a proposal focus is chosen.

Tool 4: Intervention Logic

Introduction

A completed objective-tree analysis offers an indication of the potential direction and goals for a proposed project. However, a broad analysis of a problem typically yields objectives that are too broad for a single project to address. Thus, establishing a project's intervention logic can guide the identification of the relevant parts of the objective-tree analysis that might realistically be incorporated into a project's design.

The intervention-logic exercise, which determines an organisation's mandate for developing a problem intervention, may be conducted with a smaller, primarily internal group than the objective-tree or problem-tree exercises.

Using the Tool

Intervention logic requires that an organisation look at the objective-tree analysis of a problem and decide which parts of the analysis should be included in a proposed project design. It answers the following questions:

- What fits with the organisation's mandate?
- What fits with the priorities of targeted cooperation partners?
- What fits with the organisation's skills, knowledge, and expertise?
- What hasn't been addressed sufficiently by other organisations or project interventions?
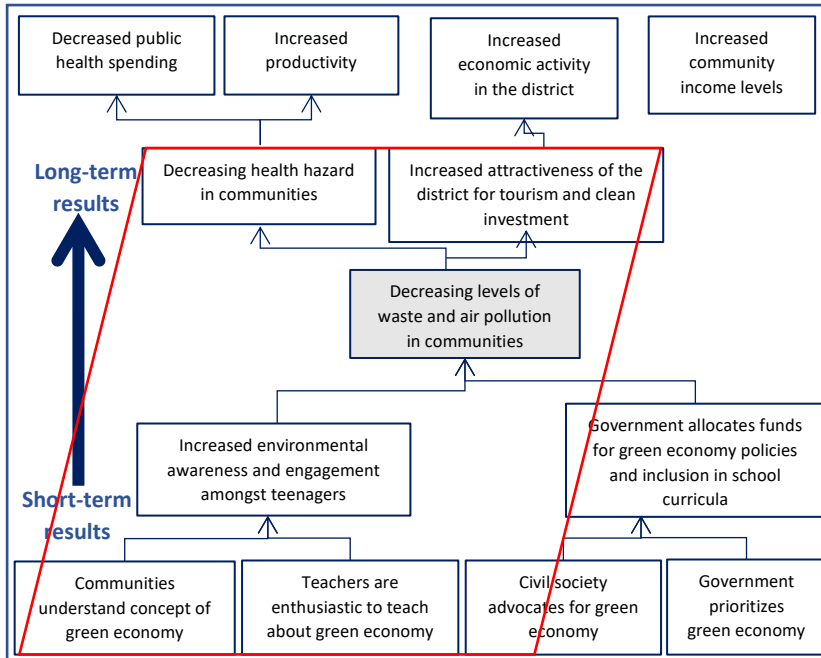- Where can the organisation make the greatest difference?

Figure 7. Example of developing an intervention logic, based on an objective-tree exercise, with the area of focus for the proposal in red.

In the green economy education programme example, the organisation decided to work with schools and communities, and not with governments or civil society organisations (see Figure 7). However, the problem-tree and objective-tree analyses indicated that that civil society and government engagement was important for influencing policy and allocating funding to solve the problem. Therefore, it is important to know if other entities are working to influence the same areas, so that the organisation's project results may deliver sufficient results. The organisation might network or partner with these other organisations, to align approaches and achieve project synergy.

Start developing the intervention logic by determining the level of control that an organisation has over the individual elements of the objective tree. Organisations control elements in three ways. First, there are factors that an organisation **fully controls**. Second, there are factors that an organisation **influences**, where it can

boost its control through implementation of high-quality projects. Third, there are factors beyond its control, where an organisation has little influence and is **interested in making a contributing** in the future.

Outputs are results that an organisation **fully controls**, and comprise the direct results or deliverables of a project's activities or interventions. Results often include services or goods delivered or accessed by target groups, knowledge, skills, attitudes, or awareness raised.

Outcomes are results that an organisation **can influence**. Outcomes stem from outputs, and comprise changes to a target group's behaviour or practices.

Impacts are long-term results to which an organisation may contribute. Organisations can influence, as opposed to control, impacts, since many other actors and factors influence such long-term results.

Intervention Logic	How to Formulate
Impact Statement Ultimate benefits for target population, long-term results.	Needs a clear link to ASEAN's strategic objectives, and regional social, economic, environmental, and political conditions. Formulated in perfect tense, e.g., '*improved*', '*strengthened*', '*increased*' or '*reduced*'.
Outcome Statement Short-to-medium term changes in project context. Not what a project does or delivers, but how target groups utilise its outputs.	Typically, one or two outcome statements per project, in 'perfect tense': • *Increase* volume of regional trade • *Reduced* level of domestic violence • *Increased* number of students
Outputs Delivered or provided products and services, whether tangible or intangible, or access created.	Typically, two or more outputs will generate one outcome, formulated in 'perfect tense': • Study *completed/published* • Journalist *trained/skilled* in • Report *produced/presented* • Skills *built/improved* • Access to finance *created* • Draft legislation *prepared*
Activities Tasks undertaken to produce outputs.	Typically, two or more activities will produce one output, formulated as things done, in 'present tense': • *Provide* technical assistance • *Develop* training • *Organise* workshops • *Publish* newsletters on… • *Procure* equipment for… • *Engage* consultants to…

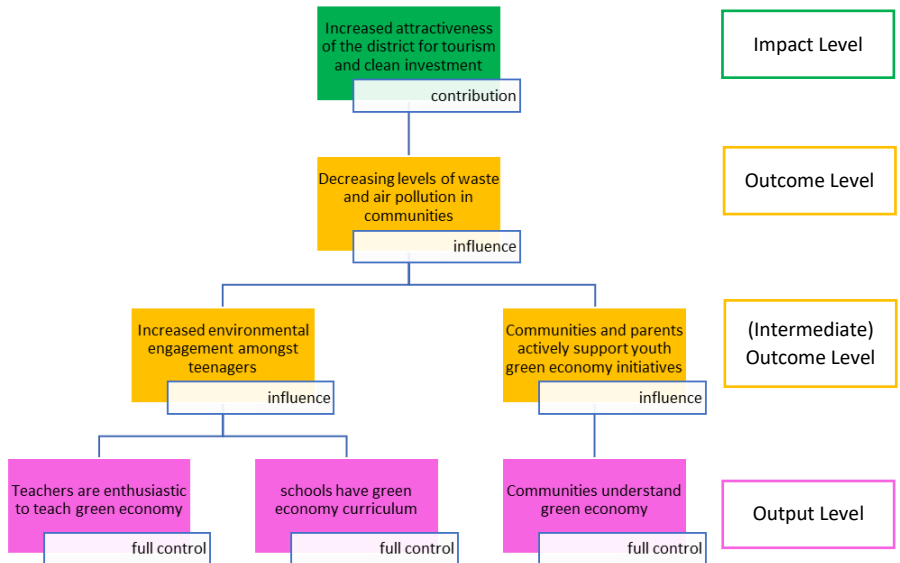*Figure 8. Examples of how to develop intervention logic.*

Figure 9. Examples of intervention logic with levels of control.

Based on the colour codings in Figure 10, a project-results hierarchy can be developed (Fig. 9). This is the intervention logic, which is the foundation of a project's logical framework.
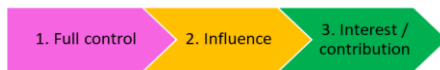

Figure 10. Colour-coded hierarchy for developing an intervention logic.

The other elements of the logical framework will be discussed in the next section.

Tool 5: Risk Analysis

Introduction

Often projects fail or do not achieve intended results because potential risks were not accounted for initially. If risks are analysed during the project design stage, a project plan can make plans to mitigate risks before or during implementation. Risk analysis involves predicting or anticipating what might happen during project implementation, as well as determining factors that might interfere with achieving a project's results or which might reduce the uptake of deliverables by target groups.

This tool takes you through conducting a simple risk analysis and provides a guide for formulating mitigation strategies.

Using the tool

Risks are external factors that might negatively affect the achievement of results or the successful implementation of a project. While designing a project, it is important to anticipate potential risks so

	PESTLE Category	Examples
P	Political	• Government Policy • Political Stability • Corruption • Foreign Trade Policy • Tax Policy • Labour Law • Trade Restrictions
E	Economic	• Economic Growth • Exchange Rates • Interest Rates • Inflation Rates • Disposable Income • Unemployment Rates
S	Socio-Cultural	• Population Growth Rate • Age Distribution • Career Attitudes • Health Consciousness • Lifestyle Attitudes • Cultural Barriers
T	Technological	• Technology Incentives • Level of Innovation • Automation • R&D Activity • Technological Awareness And Change
L	Legal	• Discrimination Laws • Employment Laws • Consumer Protection Laws • Copyright and Patent Laws • Health And Safety Laws
E	Environmental	• Weather

Figure 11. PESTLE categories.

that (i) a project's design can be adapted, e.g., by developing additional activities and outputs to reduce the chance of risks occurring, and (ii) a project may include contingency plans to mitigate the effects of risks that emerge during implementation.

There are three steps for conducting a risk analysis:

1. Look at the project context to determine where risks might occur. Let discussions be guided by the PESTLE checklist (Figure 11), noting that some categories may not apply, depending on the project.

2. Brainstorm and inventory potential risks. Write risks on individual Post-Its. Be specific and avoid overly simple statements, such as 'corruption' or 'natural disaster'. Brief descriptions are too broad and will cause confusion when assessing risks.

3. Assess risks in terms of:

   - **Probability.** How likely is it (high/medium/low) that this risk will happen in the project context?

   - **Potential Harm.** If the risk occurs, how much harm (high/medium/low) will be done to project implementation and results?

4. Copy the risk matrix (Figure 12) below on a large sheet of paper. Place Post-its according to the group's assessment of the risk.:

Figure 12. Risk matrix.

5. Consider the risk colour-coding schema in Figure 13 and the risk management strategies in Figure 14:

Figure 13. Colour-coded risk matrix.

Risk Category	Risk Management Strategy
Negligible Risk	Ignore, no measures necessary if risk does not become more serious.
Low Risk	Monitor risk to ensure it does not become more serious, add its non-occurrence as an assumption in the logframe, or consider adding mitigating activities to the project plan.
Moderate Risk	Mitigate risk: Make adaptations to the project plan by adding activities, and add assumptions to the logframe.
High Risk	Mitigate risk: Redesign project plan by adapting or adding outputs, create a contingency plan to deal with the risk should it occur.
Killer Risk	Do not continue before rethinking project, including whether it is wise to start work at this stage.

Figure 14. Risk-management strategies.

Using the previous green economy project example might result in the risk analysis in Figure 15.

Risk	Probability	Potential Harm	Risk Category
1. School principals do not prioritise the green economy curriculum.	Medium	High	High
2. High-polluting industry starts near the village.	Low	High	Moderate
3. Students not interested in organising green economy events.	Low	High	Moderate
4. Political unrest in the country prevents economic and tourism growth.	Low	Medium	Small

Figure 15. Example of a completed risk analysis.

Activities can be added to the intervention logic to decrease risks. For example, in the example for Risk 1, school principals may not prioritise the green economy curriculum, is a high-risk category, which has been assigned a high potential harm and a medium probability of occurrence. Accordingly, a project team might add outputs to mitigate the risk, decreasing it from a medium probability to a low probability, such as an activity to build awareness among the principals.

While Risk 2 (appearance of a new industrial site) and Risk 4 (political unrest) are almost impossible to predict or influence, risk management dictates that an organisation continue to monitor these risks during programme planning and implementation, refining the project work plan and adding outputs and activities, as needed.

Tool 6: Developing Indicators

Introduction

While the results statements in Tool 4 (intervention Logic) tell us what we want to achieve through projects, indicators are the first step in operationalising how these results can be monitored. Results often cannot give a clear indication of how progress or achievement can be measured, which is why indicators must be developed.

This step is generally done by the project team, with support from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialists, if possible. It may be helpful to involve target groups in this step to formulate realistic indicators, which would also enhance their commitment and ownership.

How to Develop Indicators

Indicators can be developed by answering the following questions:

- What will increase or decrease due to the project intervention?
- How will the project ascertain differences or changes before and after the intervention? How can this be measured?

Traits of Well-defined, Objectively Verifiable Indicators		
Variable	Element measured (*what*?)	No. of articles on circular economy
Quantity	Actual situation vs. situation to be reached (*how much*?)	Increased by 25%
Target Group	People affected by the project (*who*?)	No. of articles published by mainstream media journalists, trained by the project
Place	Location concerned (*where*?)	In a specific province
Period	Timeframe. When should target be reached (*when*?)	In 2021

Figure 16. Traits of well-defined, objectively verifiable indicators.

Examples of complete indicators can be formulated as follows:

'Number of articles (or percent increase in articles, compared to the baseline) published on the circular economy in the mainstream media by journalists trained in our workshops in English and in City A in the year 2020.'

'Number of awareness raising events on the circular economy organised independently by the student clubs in City B by 2020.'

Once potential indicators are identified, establish where information on the indicators be found:

Means of Verification (Primary Data Collection)
- Ways of collecting evidence to support indicator measurement.
- Examples: Surveys, interviews, interviews, observations, photo evidence.

Sources of Verification (Secondary Data Collection)
- Location of evidence to support indicator measurement.
- Examples: Project reports, meeting minutes, national census, statistical data, etc.

- Does an indicator comprise secondary information that can be obtained from other sources or organisations?
- Does an indicator comprise primary information that must be collected by the organisation itself? Where and how will the information be collected?
- Is measuring the indicator feasible? Does the organisation have the right tools, equipment, and resources (time, staff, finances)? Can data be collected in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner?

During implementation and monitoring, indicators are used to measure project progress against the approved work plan to see if a project is on track or needs redirection. The project team may conclude, based on monitoring indicators, that it will not be possible to achieve project results as intended. In that case, the work plan must be updated and the Proponent or Implementing Agency must inform key project stakeholders, including the ASEAN Secretariat, relevant Desk Officer, or Sectoral Body.

At the completion stage, project performance is assessed by comparing achieved indicators in the project completion report against planned indicators in the approved project proposal. Please the table of Project Result Achievements below.

Results	Indicators	Reasons for Deviations

	Planned	**Achieved**	
Objective:			
Output:			
Output:			
Output:			

Tool 7: Monitoring Framework

Introduction

After developing a project's intervention logic; finalising indicators, and sources and means of verification; and completing the risk analysis; it is time to develop a project's results framework, or logframe. The results framework is the basic tool of project management, and its elements has been integrated into the ASEAN Cooperation Project Proposal Template, in Section 3: Project Results.

However, the results framework does not provide sufficient guidance on project monitoring. It does not, for instance, indicate the baseline levels for indicators at a project's start. Lacking baseline information, measuring indicators during implementation will not capture needed information. A results framework also does not detail any data collection methodologies, nor does it specify who will measure indicators, or the frequency of measurement. This level of detail is often not available during project proposal development.

However, once a project proposal is approved, this information must be included in the monitoring framework. An organisation's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) Officer or M&E team, if present, will develop the monitoring framework. In their absence, developing a monitoring framework is the job of project management.

The monitoring framework (see Figure 17) has nine columns and must include the following information from the results framework.

1. *Results Logic*. List all planned project results, as in Section 3 of the ASEAN Cooperation Project Proposal Template. If the results framework is adapted or further detailed during the inception of a project, update the monitoring framework as well. Results logic is sometimes called intervention logic (Tool 4).

   Example: 'Increased environmental engagement among teenagers'.

2. **Indicator**. Tool 6 explained how to develop indicators, which are the measurements that show if project is achieving its intended results, outcomes, or outputs. Indicators are the backbone of the monitoring framework and guide monitoring work.
   Example 1: 'Increase in number of awareness-raising events organised by youth groups in project areas between January 2020 and December 2021.'

Example 2: 'Percent increase in blogs on the circular economy published on social media by youth influencers trained in project workshops in a specific language in 2020.'

3. **Baseline**. How can an indicator be measured accurately at the start of a project? Sometimes this is easy, if the indicator is something that starts with the project, as in the example. In this case, the baseline measurement would be zero. If we are measuring something that already exists, or is already happening and is hoped to increase due to the project, like the number of articles published on the circular economy, we need to measure this indicator at the start of the project. Without measurement, it will be difficult to know the actual increase during project implementation.
Example 1: Baseline 0.
Example 2: Baseline average two blogs per targeted youth influencer per month.

4. **Target**. How much change is targeted during the duration of the project? A multi-year project might target change on a longer timeline, measuring results annually or quarterly.
Example 1: Target for two events in Year 1, eight events in Year 2.
Example 2: Target 10 blogs per trained youth influencer per month.

5. **Data Sources**. Where can information be found? It is important to ask this question when developing indicators. All too often, interesting indicators are formulated during the project design phase, but turn out to be difficult, costly, or unreliable to collect in practice. Take, for example, an awareness-raising event run by youth groups. Is the organisation in contact with these groups? Is the organisation involved in the events? Does the organisation also need to do a survey of the blogs run by the youth groups? Can the organisation find another way if this is too complicated?
Example 1: Youth group project progress reports.
Example 2: Facebook and Instagram metrics.

6. **Methodology**. Data sourcing and methodology are closely connected. Some information is readily available and can be reviewed or consulted with ease. However, sometimes project managers will need to develop a methodology to extract data from a given source.
Example 1: Reviewing youth group project progress reports.
Example 2: Facebook and Instagram matrix study or an online survey among trained youth influencers.

7. **Frequency**. How often will data be collected? Monitoring of data collection should be done more frequently at the output level (e.g., quarterly) than at the outcome level (e.g., annually or at project completion). Impact indicators are generally not monitored during a project, and are instead evaluated after project completion.
Example 1: Annually.
Example 2: Twice a year.

8. **Responsible**. Who is responsible for collecting data? While this might be a dedicated M&E Officer or project manager, often the project team has responsibility for collecting data, as they are present in the field and have easy access to target groups.
Example 1: Project Officer.
Example 2: M&E Officer.

9. **Reporting**. Where and how is monitoring data reported? This is an important question, as the right people must receive the right information to make appropriate decisions at their level, without the burden of information overload. For example, a project manager primarily needs monitoring information on the output level, to assess if activities led to the intended direct results, or whether changes need to be made in the implementation of activities to improve results. While information on outcome-level indicators is also valuable to project management, it is even more valuable to higher-level management, who must assess if a project's design is still relevant, or if design modifications can still be made during project implementation or for a next-phase project.
Example 1: Mid-Term and Closing Reports.

An example monitoring framework is presented in Figure 17.

Figure 17. The Monitoring Framework

1. Results Logic	2. Indicator	3. Baseline	4. Target	5. Data Source	6. Methodology	7. Frequency	8. Responsible	9. Reporting
Overall Objective (Impact) …								
Project Objective (Outcome) …								
Immediate Outcome 1 …								
Output 1.1 …								
Output 1.2 …								
Immediate Outcome 2 …								
O… …								
O… …								

0

Youth Group Project Progress

Annually

Increase in Awareness-Raising Events Organised by Youth Groups in Project Areas from Jan 2020 To Dec. 2021

2020: 4
2021: 8

Project Officer

Review Of Youth Group Progress Report

Mid-Term and Completion

Increased Environmental Engagement among Teenagers

Tool 8: Data Collection Methodology-Survey Design

Introduction

In project design, indicators are used to establish what will be measured for monitoring, and to establish means and sources of verification for measurement. Data for indicators may be available in an organisation, outside the organisation, or from project documentation, like training implementation reports. However, project managers often must do additional work to collect data to monitor indicators, such as by designing a survey for workshop participants. Accordingly, this tool provides practical guidelines for survey design.

Surveys done for monitoring may be conducted by project or field staff or outsourced to external consultants or enumerators. Surveys are often compiled by monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officers or external consultants.

Using the Tool

A survey is a set of questions administered to a group of respondents, who are taken as a sample from a population, to get data about a number of questions or indicators. In the context of ASEAN cooperation projects, survey answers are used by project managers to monitor and evaluate progress. Therefore, a survey's questionnaire must capture the needed information to measure progress in achieving indicators and also be relevant to the survey's objectives.

Follow these steps when creating a questionnaire:

1. Write a list of objectives for the survey, based on the indicators from the logical framework or monitoring framework. These objectives must illustrate the big picture for data collection and will be the basis for selecting questions.
2. Determine the type of questions to be used. There are two main types of questions.
   - **Structured questions, with closed or fixed responses.** Respondents are given selection of answers from which to choose. This type of question is used when there is a certainty about expected responses, definitions, or categories, and if it is not essential to record an original answer. Examples of structured question formats include multiple choice, rankings, yes/no, and rating scales.

- **Open-ended or unstructured questions.** These questions are useful for gathering new or original answers, or individual answers from respondents. Results are difficult to organise, group, or analyse systematically. Any question that does not limit the scope of answers is an open question.

3. Determine a survey method, e.g., direct interview, telephone interview, web-based survey or application, or a written questionnaire.

4. Ensure that questions are:
   - **Comprehensible.** Use simple language and keep questions clear and concise. Be sure to ask who, what, where, when, and why, as needed, so respondents have every option when providing answers.
   - **Answerable.** Respondents must be able to answer accurately, without having to do research. For example, people might not be able to answer exactly how much money they spent dining outside the home last year, but they might be able to estimate how much they spent last week.
   - **Focused.** Avoid double-barreled questions. Make sure that each survey question has only one query to answer. For example, instead of asking if a respondent likes to exercise in the afternoon or after eating, break the question into two: One question related to afternoon exercise and another about exercising after eating.
   - **Not overlapping.** Ensure that answer choices do not overlap. For example, multiple choice questions should not use the same number for choices related to two answer ranges, for example between 10 and 30 or between 20 and 40.

5. Arrange survey questions in a logical sequence.
   - If your questionnaire covers diverse topics, group questions by subject or theme.
   - Equate sensitive questions by grouping them with neutral questions, and putting them at the end of the survey, after a sense of closeness or rapport is obtained.

6. Design the questionnaire so that it is easy to read or easy to scroll through.
   - Use large font sizes and clear fonts.
   - Leave a gap between questions, so it's easy to see where one question ends and the next begins. Make sure there is enough space to write longer answers, if you use open-ended questions.

- The space for answers must be placed immediately after or under the question. Avoid putting questions on one page and asking the respondent to turn the page to answer.
- Use page numbers.

7. Give respondents information that is clear and sufficient so surveys can be completed according to the rules. To ensure superior results, a questionnaire should prepare respondents to answer by adhering to the following precepts.

- Explain the survey's purpose. When respondents understand the reasons behind a question, they are more likely to provide accurate personal information.
- Give clear guidance for completing questions. Explain the format of the question (e.g., multiple choice, rating scale, etc...). Give examples of how to answer the question correctly. Offer clear instructions, such as to read all questions before answering, or to try guessing an answer rather than leaving a question blank.
- Tell respondents how many questions are in the questionnaire, and provide an estimated completion time.

8. Make improvements to the questionnaire as needed. Whenever a survey is administered, analyse its results with an eye toward making changes that will increase its effectiveness in the future.

9. Test questionnaires on co-workers or target groups before use. If certain questions are consistently skipped, those questions may need to be revised to make them clearer

- If the respondent cannot give a full answer due to space restraints, you can change the layout.
- If a simple yes/no answer does not give you the range of data you want, then you might want to change to a multiple-choice format.

Surveys are especially useful in capturing information related to trends, and can offer quantifiable information on qualitative indicators. However, surveys generally cannot ascertain why trends are occurring. That is something more easily done through interviews, focus group discussions and analyzing the most significant change–the subject of the next sections of this Annex.

Tool 9: Data Collection Methodology-Interviewing Techniques

Introduction

Interviews are a commonly used methodology to collect the data and information needed to measure the indicators devised for a project's logframe. The main advantage of interviews, as compared to other methodologies, is the collection of qualitative information on why certain trends or behavioral changes have emerged. In a monitoring context, interviews can be done by project or field staff, or by monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officers, to create distance between those who implement a project and those who measure its progress and results. Interviews can also be outsourced to trained interviewers.

Interviews can be used to collect data on qualitative and quantitative indicators. A well-prepared and well-done interview delivers valuable information. There are simple techniques can make any interview more effective: active listening, proper question techniques, and monitoring content, structure and process. These are briefly discussed below.

Using the Tool

An interview is a specific situation where an interviewer obtains relevant and reliable information from an interviewee. The interviewer has no intention to share information: their only task is to get the person interviewed to provide needed information.

Interviewers must focus their attention on several aspects of the interview at the same time, namely:

- the contents of information delivered by the interviewee,
- the structure of the interview and directing the interviewee, and
- on motivating the interviewee to provide information by ensuring that the process goes well.

The interviewer must constantly ask themselves during an interview if this is the information that is really needed. Do I understand what is being said? Did I get sufficient details? In this way, the interviewer judges answer as they are provided. Interviewers must also ask themselves additional questions: What is the value of what is has been said? How does this information relate to what is already known? Can this answer be true?

Structuring the interview, e.g., determining how questions are asked or answered, is the explicit task of the interviewer. When an interviewee starts talking and keeps jumping between subjects, the interviewer must bring the subject back on the track. An interviewee will only feel motivated to provide the right information if they feel it is the right thing to do, if the atmosphere is conducive, and if the interviewer is trusted.

Interviewers must ask themselves the following questions during an interview:

- How do I introduce the subject?
- How can I get more than superficial answers?
- How do I stop the interviewee from talking too much?
- How do I stimulate an interviewee to talk more?
- Is the interviewee committed to the interview?
- Is the interviewee withholding information?
- How can I create trust with the interviewee?
- How does the interviewer/interviewee relationship feel?
- How is the relationship affecting the content and procedure of the interview?

Active Listening
In an interview context, active listening is a skill that helps interviewees answer questions themselves. Efficient interviewers, as active listeners, understand both the content of what an interviewee says and the feelings that go with it. Active and attentive listening means that the interviewer empties their mind to make room for the interviewee's perspective, and is receptive to the ideas and experience of others.

Active listening involves the following steps:

- **Listening attentively.** Listening is one of the best ways to communicate, improve relationships, and develop understanding. Listen with an open mind and an open heart. This will take practice if it does not already come naturally.
- **Checking your understanding.** Repeat or summarise an interviewee's answers, so they know that they have been heard and give them the opportunity to correct any misunderstandings.
- **Proceeding with the interview**. Let the other person continue to answer or ask another question.

During an interview, active listening works on several levels. Content, or answers, are verified with the interviewee to ensure their message has been understood and that the interviewer and interviewee share a similar understanding of the answers.

Structurally, active listening allows an interviewer to lead the interviewee back to the point if they lose track, stopping them politely if answers are too long and summarising their main points. At the level of process, active listening makes the interviewee feel that the interviewer is seriously engaged with them and is aware of their point of view. This has an enormous positive effect.

Asking Questions
The only way to get information during an interview is to ask questions. However, the way questions are phrased influences the answers received. Interview questions are either open-ended or closed.

- **Open-ended questions** (e.g., 'Tell me about your experience.') invite an interviewee to answer in their own words, as briefly or as long as desired.
- **Closed questions** are structured to limit responses to yes, no, or simple data. (e.g., 'Do you run your own business?' 'When were you born?').

Open questions are so-called accelerators, stimulating a response. Closed questions are so-called brakemen, discouraging lengthy replies. An open question can provide an interviewer with information on something that they do not know much about, while a closed question offers specific information on something already known or something to be checked.

Structurally, using closed questions makes it easier for an interviewer to control a conversation. Closed questions also need less time to be answered. On the level of process, use both open and closed questions. Asking too many closed questions irritates an interviewee and offers no chance for them to discuss information that they deem important. On the other hand, too many open questions might confuse the interviewee, making them suspicious: Why does the interviewer want to know this? What do they want from me?

A good balance between open and closed questions is important. Striking that balance depends on the time available, purpose of the interview, and the information needed.

Tool 10: Data Collection Methodology: Focus Group Discussions

Introduction

The focus group discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method that collects data and is used to gain a level of understanding that may not sufficiently be obtained from a survey. It is used to validate outcomes–such as changes in behaviour, actions, relationships, or policies–that have been reported by project implementers, and to understand why certain trends in results have been observed. FGDs are a powerful tool for engaging with target groups and stakeholders, so as to enhance their commitment to and ownership of project results.

FGDs are implemented by trained facilitators, who typically have some distance from the project team. Facilitators might be monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officers, or outsourced consultants or facilitators, to ensure a professional and objective approach.

What Is an FGD?

A focus group is a semi-structured interview of small groups of 6 to 10, maximum 12, led through an open discussion by a skilled facilitator. They run from 45 to 90 minutes. The moderator nurtures disclosure in an open and spontaneous format to generate a maximum amount of discussion and opinion sharing. Typically, an assistant moderator or facilitator will take notes, observe the process and the body language of the participants (especially for sensitive topics), and ensure that the atmosphere of the discussion is comfortable for everyone. An assistant moderator from the community who understands the local culture and issues is invaluable.

While free flowing, a FGD should have a maximum of 10 questions. To obtain valid results, more than one focus group is needed to discuss a topic. Typically, three or four are required. Sufficient FGDs have been held when it is found that new sessions do not generate new information.

Participants should be roughly homogenous in terms of age, gender, and power. This will allow participants to speak freely, without domination by one or a few participants. In some cases, it may be best if participants do not know each other, in order to reduce inhibitions when discussing sensitive topics. Participants can be selected randomly or by nomination.

The role of the moderator or facilitator is important, and that person must be carefully selected. Ideally, an FGD moderator has adequate knowledge of the topic,

is able to stay neutral, and refrains from volunteering their opinion. Likewise, a moderator should be able to listen and think at the same time, and able to listen attentively, with sensitivity and empathy. Moderators must believe that every participant has something valuable to say about the topic of discussion and will be given the opportunity to offer their input, regardless of education, experience, or background.

There are three types of FGD questions:

- **Engagement questions.** Designed to introduce participants, make them comfortable with the topic of discussion, and explain the use of information collected during the FGD.
- **Exploratory questions.** The main questions that lead participants to the core of the discussion.
- **Exit questions.** Reiterating and verifying the points generated in the discussion, while checking to see if anything was missed.

The typical flow of an FGD is:

- Welcome and introduction of the facilitation team.
- Explanation of the process and the main reason for the FGD.
- Ground rules.
- Consent for recording and clarification.
- Introduction of participants.
- Discussions (use the type of questions above).
- Summarising findings and identify what is missing.
- Closing: Thanking the participants.

Compile and Analyse

Notes of the results of the FGD should be processed immediately. They can be compiled in many ways, such as in Figure 18.

CODING OF OUTCOME	FGD CODE	PARTICIPANT ID	PARTICIPANT TYPES	RESPONSES (one idea for each row)

Figure 18. Sample table for processing FGD results.

The team can process this information and draw conclusions as to whether there is enough credible evidence to validate an outcome, and give weight or importance to the intervention's contributions to observed changes.

Tool 11: Data Collection Methodology-Most Significant Change

Introduction

The data collection tools presented so far in Annex 5 have focused on collecting data to measure indicators for the results framework. It is essential for project managers to have a vision of their intended achievements before implementation begins, so results can be measured.

However, project activities, whether direct or indirect, can yield unintended changes that are also worth analysing. The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique was designed to measure intended and unintended changes, as it is less dependent on pre-formulated results and indicators. MSC is generally facilitated externally, while engaging a wide range of project staff and stakeholders to ensure project learning.

Origins

The Most Significant Change Technique was developed by Rick Davies in 1996 for monitoring and evaluating complex participatory rural development programmes in Bangladesh. The technique was refined by Jessica Dart in Australia, and she and Davies developed a clear and useful guide to MSC that is available for free download: www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.htm

Summary

The MSC Technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation that does not use indicators. Instead, the MSC Technique collects stories of significant change (SC) at the field level. Panels of stakeholders or staff then systematically select the most significant stories. This method, also known as the 'story approach' or 'evolutionary monitoring', is flexible and has several advantages over indicator-based monitoring:

- Suitable for identifying unexpected changes.
- Identifies prevailing values.
- Easy to use, does not require special professional skills.
- Encourages analysis and data collection.
- Useful for conceptualising impact.
- Delivers a rich picture of what is happening.

- Monitors and evaluates bottom-up initiatives that were not foreseen in the programme or project design.

Implementing MSC is a ten-step process:

1. Generate Interest. Using the MSC Technique is recommended when the significance of outcomes is under discussion or there is a need to identify unexpected outcomes.

2. Define Domains of Change. Defining a domain (area) to be considered will focus the search for specific change stories. However, this may also exclude other relevant, but completely unexpected, changes.

3. Define the Reporting Period. Do this at the pace of monitoring, e.g., monthly, quarterly, etc…

4. Collect SC Stories. Most important. This can be done in many different ways. For example, fieldworkers may collect unsolicited stories that they have heard, systematic interviews with structured note taking may be conducted, group discussions may be organised, or beneficiaries may write down their stories directly, among other things.

Stories must be documented, including information on who collected the story, when the event occurred, a description of the story itself (what happened to whom, how, when, where), and, last but not least, an assessment of its significance to the storyteller.

On ethics, each storyteller owns their story. Organisers must obtain permission before using it. Storytellers must be informed about the organisers' intended use of their stories.

5. Select the Most Significant Stories. Another important step. The selection process is flexible, and may be done differently at different levels. It involves the participation of beneficiaries, whose availability depends on time, logistics, and the basic questions underlying the study, which sometimes may preclude their involvement.

How stories are selected depends on the unique perspective of a stakeholder, e.g., beneficiaries, community organisations, supporting organisations, governmental or

non-governmental organisations, regional or national authorities, and cooperation partners.

Different techniques are used in selecting stories, which should be done preferably by groups, whose members will discuss and select stories by consensus, e.g., through voting or scoring, etc…. Selection criteria may be predefined by the terms of reference of the process. However, it is best to have open selection criteria so that consensus can emerge though discussion.

6. Feedback. Stakeholders must be advised after the most significant stories have been selected. Feedback may be delivered in various ways, including verbally, by email, newsletters, or formal reports.

It is important that storytellers receive feedback, through whatever medium, about the outcome and the conclusions of the MSC process, as well as about how selection was conducted. This will complete the communication loop between different levels and may enhance cooperation.

Feedback motivates project beneficiaries. Reading success stories helps generate new ideas. However, feedback also risks generating frustration and neglect when storytellers learn that their stories were not deemed significant.

 7. Verifying Stories. Verification may not be necessary if proper selection occurred, meaning that stories that were unreliable or biased were excluded. However, it may be useful to return to the field and verify the MSC stories to exclude deliberately fictionalised accounts, misunderstandings, incorrect stories, and exaggerations.

8. Quantification. While the MSC Technique emphasises a qualitative approach, it may be applied quantitatively, as well, in these ways:

- Stories may include quantitative elements that may be analysed further.
- Elements of a selected story may be present in other stories, making this a subject of a quantitative review.
- A quantitative analysis may be made of all SC stories.

9. Secondary Analysis and Meta-Monitoring. While not mandatory, secondary analysis and meta-monitoring adds legitimacy and rigour to the MSC Technique by studying how the process was implemented, by classifying and analysing content

across a set of SC stories, as well as their attributes, such as who liked a story and who selected it.

10. Revising the System. The MSC Technique should be used as a continuous and flexible monitoring system. It should not be done in a ritualistic way or become a continuous reflection on the monitoring system. This will lead to frequent changes in the domains of change, frequency of reporting, types of participants, and the structure of meetings to select the most significant stories, etc.

Recommendations for Using MSC

The Most Significant Change Technique is an interesting approach for monitoring and evaluation, particularly in cases where the outcome of an intervention is not clear and the aim is to learn lessons from actual practice.

It cannot replace a monitoring and evaluation system linked to a logical framework with measurable indicators. Current trends are to focus on accountability, such as through measurable indicators that are established at a project's inception. However, accountability risks over-emphasising the relationship between planning and results, which may be full of uncertainties and surprises. Excess attention to paid measurable results might blind a project team to unexpected but valuable events that may occur. After all, the outcomes of a project depend, to a limited extent, on the results of the planned interventions, and are subject to many other influences that are beyond the scope of a particular intervention.

From this perspective, the MSC Technique is a simple and complementary instrument that may help a project team learn lessons from the daily practice of beneficiaries. While beneficiaries may not represent measurable indicators, they certainly have important stories to tell. In this way, the MSC Technique may keep development projects and programmes well-tuned to the reality of the target groups.

Tool 11: Tips for Results-Based Reporting

Introduction

Project reporting is often seen as a formality or something required by cooperation partners. Under a results-based approach, however, reporting reflects learning, which is essential for improving project execution and achieving more meaningful and sustainable results.

Using the Tool.

Results-based reporting can be visualised as a knowledge triangle (Figure 19) that illustrates how to process monitoring data into meaningful data for results-based reports.

Data collection for measuring indicators is the first step in understanding a project's progress toward achieving its intended results. This step typically involves **raw facts and figures**, especially for quantitative data, such as the number of workshop participants or articles published. Raw facts and figures are found in project documents and surveys, to an extent. However, raw data is not typically meaningful without analysis.

Data is only made meaningful through processing. Data must be organised and put in context, e.g., how many men and how many women? Which months had the best attendance? Do trends appear over time?

Subjecting raw data to simple analysis produces **information**. However, information often does not reveal why specific trends have emerged. For example, although assumptions can be
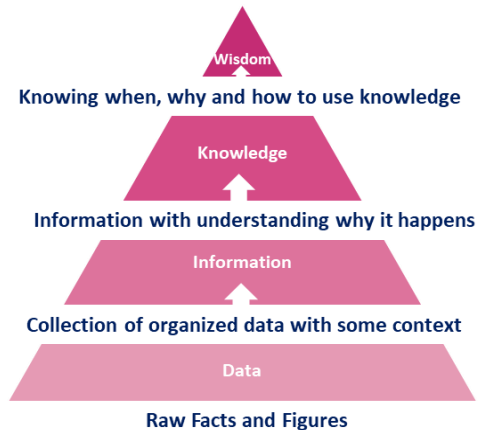
Figure 19. Knowledge triangle.

R.L. Ackoff (1989)

made on gender imbalances in workshops, there can be no determination as to why that is so without analysing data in an organised way. And yet, assumptions and raw data are typically highlighted in project reports: Raw data indicate trends, which are justified by assumptions, which have been in turn made without proper justification.

Qualitative tools, such as interviews or FGDs, can be helpful in analysing raw facts and figures. For example, participants might be asked why they attended a workshop, or why a certain approach was easier to apply. This results in **knowledge:** information, with the understanding of why things happened. This is the goal of project reporting: documenting trends and changes in the behaviour of target groups, with a justified understanding of why these changes have happened.

Ideally, there should be another level of understanding for project reporting, and for completion reports, specifically, when, why and how to use the knowledge we generated in the previous level. This final level in our knowledge triangle is **wisdom**.

While the jump from knowledge to wisdom comes partially from experience, it can be enhanced through facilitating learning sessions for the organisation and project team (See Tool 13: Lessons Learned).

For reporting, it is important to realise that it is not sufficient include raw data in project reports. Raw data offers an insufficient understanding as to why certain results have been achieved or not, and is of limited use for guiding decision making and future programming.

Tips for Report Writing

Readability
- Use active language.
- Write in the third person, e.g. 'our project will' becomes 'the project will'.
- Alternate long and short sentences.
- Avoid jargon and woolly language.
- Be clear and concise: delete unnecessary words.

Appearance
- Always follow formats.
- Check spelling and grammar.
- Be consistent in style, e.g., using British vs American English, in writing currencies, etc…

Tool 12: Developing and Implementing Sustainable Projects

Introduction

Results-based project management looks beyond the duration of a project. Results are not of value if the progress a project makes in solving a problem vanishes after implementation. Results must be sustained to be meaningful.

What Is a Sustainable Project?

A project is sustainable when it delivers an appropriate level of benefits for an extended period of time **after** major financial, managerial, and technical assistance from an external donor is terminated (DAC). The focus is on sustaining the flow of benefits. Figure 20 describes the factors that contribute to a project's sustainability and how those factors may be supported.

Sustainability Factor	Description	How to Support this Factor
Host Government Policies	Projects operate in the context of national policies. Government commitments and policies that support project objectives are critical for sustaining development activities.	Include project components at output level to influence policy formulation or implementation, e.g., advocacy or support mobilisation.
Management, Organisation, and Participation	Sustainability is enhanced when project objectives are well matched with the administrative and managerial capabilities of local partner organisations. For projects with benefits directly associated with local populations, participation is critical for sustainability. Local participation is an integral part of continuing the flow of benefits after termination of a donor's activity.	Ensure high levels of participation from relevant stakeholders. Include project components to strengthen managerial and organisational capacity of local partner organisations that will play roles in continued project interventions and results.
Finance	Sustainability requires a flow of funds to cover operations, maintenance, and depreciation of investments to continue the benefits generated by a project.	Facilitate connections between target groups and potential funding sources, including governments and private sector, or build their capacity to mobilise resources in other ways.
Technology	Technology chosen for the activity must be appropriate to the country's	Ensure that technology and equipment used by the project is

	financial and institutional capacities, and to the project's goals.	suitable for the country context and financial capacities of the target groups (maintenance).
Socio-Cultural	Integration of a programme with the socio-cultural setting of its beneficiaries and their operating circumstances is important if the activity is not to be rejected after assistance ends.	Ensure that project interventions are suitable for the target group's socio-cultural context. Include relevant awareness-raising and sensitization components in the work plan.
Environment and Ecology	Unplanned development can accelerate depletion of natural resources, threatening the ability of the environment to renew itself and thus threatening the sustainability of projects.	If necessary, include an environmental impact assessment at the start of the project and integrate recommendations in the project design.
External	Development projects operate within the context of existing political, economic, institutional, and cultural circumstances that are beyond a project's control and influence. Yet, the project and its intended results can be deeply affected by external factors, such as political and economic instability or natural disasters.	Conduct a risk assessment in the project design phase to analyse the relative potential impact on the project. Develop risk management and mitigation plans. Ensure risks are monitored continuously throughout the project and action is taken as necessary.

Figure 20. Factors contributing to project sustainability.

Strengthening Project Sustainability:

- Set out activities and results to be sustained after the project's end.
  - For example, student clubs continue to organise awareness raising events to train fellow students to understand and apply green-economy principles in their daily practices and future businesses.

- Formulate critical questions for each sustainability factor. Scrutinise the project purpose, results, activities, and assumptions in light of these questions, e.g.:

- Will schools allow the students to organise such events?
- Do student clubs have the needed organisational capacity?
- Will student clubs be able to raise the financial resources to organise activities?
- Do student clubs need specific equipment or technology to organise activities?
- Do project activities fit well with the culture of student clubs and the schools?
- Are activities organised in a green and environmentally friendly manner?
- What will happen if the school leadership changes?

- Based on the answers:
  - Rethink or add results, activities, assumptions, or preconditions, e.g.,
    - Consider including an output related to the level of school management buy-in, to ensure long-term support.
    - Consider including leadership training for the student clubs.
  - Commission further studies, e.g.,
    - An organisational capacity and development study with student clubs.
- Formulate recommendations for implementation.

Project sustainability is about making sure that the activities of a project can be carried on by an organisation, generally the project target group, after project's implementation has ended. Sustainability, of course, is also related to environmental and other governmental factors that can only be partly influenced by project design. Some sustainability factors can be strengthened at the project level; whereas others are limited to an assessment of organisational capacity or the continuous monitoring of contextual factors (e.g., political, environment).

Q: What is project sustainability?

A project is sustainable if the outputs of the project can continue after the project is completed.

Q: How can sustainability be strengthened?

- Including relevant follow-up activities to support implementation.
- Through national initiatives.
- Planning for next-phase, recurring projects.
- Establishing networks with other relevant institutions.
- Conducting a thorough risk assessment, including mitigation strategies.

Tool 13: Drawing Lessons Learned

Introduction

The results-based project approach emphasises learning. This is not a coincidence. Achieving meaningful and sustainable results through projects requires the integration of tools so project managers can learn from challenges and mistakes to achieve better results in the future. This also ensures project learning within the duration of the project itself. Those involved in drawing lessons learned include all project staff, as well as key stakeholders, such as target groups and project partners.

This toolbox offers two structured methods for drawing lessons learned: the after-action review (AAR) method and developing a programme of action.

After-Action Reviews

The after-action review process was developed by the military as way to learn from the experiences of troops under difficult conditions. An AAR is a structured debriefing that is used to analyse a project in order to determine what happened, why things happened, and how a project or activity might be better implemented in the future.
An AAR can be used to review an activity as well as a whole project, offering input for a progress or completion report, or as a basis for designing a next-phase project. After-action reviews, which can also be used as a guiding tool for project review meetings, will typically:

- focus on why things happened,
- compare intended results with realised results,
- encourage participation, and
- emphasize trust and value feedback.

AARs quickly transfer critical lessons and knowledge in order to maximise benefits. During the review, team members directly involved with implementing activities have an opportunity to share their experiences, which other members can use expeditiously to improve the performance of the whole organisation in a timely manner.

For an AAR process to be successful, a team must discover for itself the lessons to be learned from their experiences. The more honest and open the discussion, the better. Typically, the questions asked during an after-action review cover these themes:

- What was supposed to happen? What did happen? Why was there a difference?
- What worked? What didn't work? Why not?
- What would you do differently next time?

Organising Principles for AAR Meetings:

- Be inclusive. Invite all project staff and representatives of key stakeholders.
- Mistakes should be welcomed as important sources for learning and should not launch a blame game.
- Brainstorming is a useful methodology for AARs: All ideas are welcome, and criticism is banned–or at least temporarily suspended.

Developing a Programme of Action for Lessons Learned

This is approach is more analytical that the AAR process. While learning refers to increasing knowledge or skills, a **lesson** refers to an action programme based on the prior experiences of ourselves and others. A lesson comprises a concrete action plan for improving work in the future with the goal of producing better outcomes. The process of creating lesson involves several stages:

- **Searching** for previous experiences, whether positive or negative.
- **Analysing** cause-and-effect linkages from what was observed during the search.
- **Creating** a lesson, i.e., a new action programme (what is to be done differently) based on the lesson.
- **Evaluating** the lesson in the context of a completed project, or estimating the consequences of adopting the lesson and speculate about what might happen in the future if the lesson is applied. Also called **prospective evaluation.**

Creating a Lesson Learned

Lessons based on the experiences of others may be devised in several ways:

- **Adopting.** Copying processes that were implemented elsewhere. An organisation can also choose not to adopt such a process.
- **Adapting.** Adjusting processes that were implemented elsewhere to account for differences in context.
- **Hybridizing.** Combining elements of processes that were implemented at several different organisations.
- **Synthesizing**. Combining elements of programmes from various organisations to create new programmes.
- **Inspiration.** Using programmes elsewhere as an intellectual stimulus to develop a new programmes.

Evaluating a Lesson

The applicability of a lesson is dependent on many factors, as per Figure 21. What will work for one organisation or problem might not work in another context. A prospective evaluation means assessing the likelihood that a learned lesson will be effective if applied to a project's specific situation.

		Desirability	
		High	**Low**
Practicality	**High**	Doubly Desirable	Unwanted Technical Solution
	Low	Siren Call	Doubly Rejected

Figure 21. Applicability of lessons learned.

The **practicality** of a lesson refers to the technical feasibility of a programme, e.g., whether approaches employed elsewhere could be done at an organisation. **Desirability** refers to "political feasibility", e.g., consistency with the values and goals of those who are evaluating it. **Siren call** is cautionary. It is a warning not to wreck a programme by adopting a lesson based on its goals without regards to means.

Conclusion

The after-action review process and the action-programme development methods can be used for periodic monitoring or review during project implementation or evaluation. However, for either method to be effective, discussions must be open

and non-judgemental. All participants, e.g., project staff, partners, and key stakeholders, must feel there is a safe space to discuss challenges and areas for improvement without judgment or blame. Mistakes need to be viewed as opportunities for learning. It may be helpful to ask someone from outside the team, or an external facilitator, to facilitate such review.