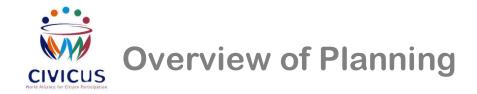## OVERVIEW

This toolkit is an overview of the different aspects involved in planning for an organisation or project. It should enable the user to make a clear distinction between strategic planning and action planning, both of which are dealt with in detail in separate toolkits. It also provides some ideas about techniques to use in planning. It should provide a fairly inexperienced planning team in any organisation with a clear picture of what planning should involve, and of how planning links to monitoring and evaluation. A further toolkit deals with monitoring and evaluation in detail.

The site map will guide you around this overview of planning.

Introduction

Why have a toolkit that gives an overview of planning?

Planning is a complex process that can take many forms. There are different kinds of planning and different ways of planning. There are many planning tools. Knowing what kind of planning is needed for what situation is a skill in itself. This toolkit is intended to help you sort out what kinds of planning you need when, and the tools that are appropriate to your needs. The toolkits that deal with strategic planning, action planning and monitoring and evaluation will give you more details of how to carry out the actual processes.
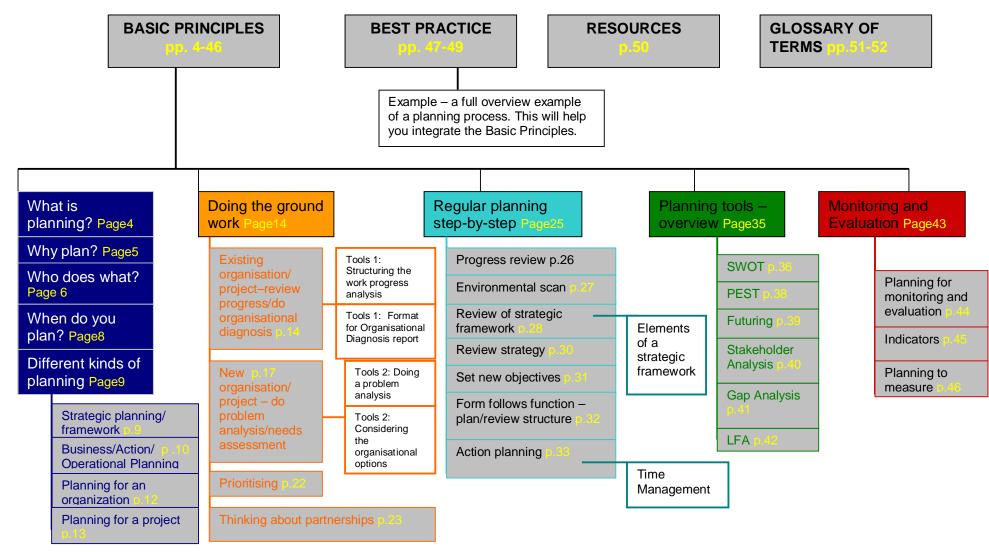
Who should use this toolkit?

This toolkit is aimed specifically at those who have had only limited experience in planning. Perhaps you have not been involved in running an organisation, project or department before. Or perhaps you have not been involved in the planning side of the work before. Now you are faced with the task of planning for your organisation, project or department, and you are not quite sure where to start. If you are in a situation like this, then this toolkit will be useful for you.

When will this toolkit be useful?

- When you need to plan strategically as well as operationally and to make a distinction between the two.
- When you need some ideas to help you plan a planning process.
- When you begin the planning for a new project or organisation.
- When you need some ideas about planning techniques.
- When you need to understand the relationship between planning, and monitoring and evaluation.
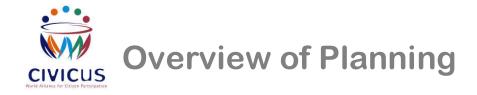
Overview of Planning

BASIC PRINCIPLES pp. 4-46	BEST PRACTICE pp. 47-49	RESOURCES p.50	GLOSSARY OF TERMS pp.51-52

Example – a full overview example of a planning process. This will help you integrate the Basic Principles.

What is planning? Page4

Why plan? Page5

Who does what? Page 6

When do you plan? Page8

Different kinds of planning Page9

- Strategic planning/ framework p.9
- Business/Action/ Operational Planning p .10
- Planning for an organization p.12
- Planning for a project p.13

Doing the ground work Page14

Existing organisation/ project–review progress/do organisational diagnosis p.14

Tools 1: Structuring the work progress analysis

Tools 1: Format for Organisational Diagnosis report

New p.17 organisation/ project – do problem analysis/needs assessment

Tools 2: Doing a problem analysis

Tools 2: Considering the organisational options

Prioritising p.22

Thinking about partnerships p.23

Regular planning step-by-step Page25

- Progress review p.26
- Environmental scan p.27
- Review of strategic framework p.28
- Review strategy p.30
- Set new objectives p.31
- Form follows function – plan/review structure p.32
- Action planning p.33

Elements of a strategic framework

Time Management

Planning tools – overview Page35

- SWOT p.36
- PEST p.38
- Futuring p.39
- Stakeholder Analysis p.40
- Gap Analysis p.41
- LFA p.42

Monitoring and Evaluation Page43

- Planning for monitoring and evaluation p.44
- Indicators p.45
- Planning to measure p.46

BASIC PRINCIPLES

WHAT IS PLANNING?

Planning is the systematic process of establishing a need and then working out the best way to meet the need, within a strategic framework that enables you to identify priorities and determines your operational principles. Planning means thinking about the future so that you can do something about it now. This doesn't necessarily mean that everything will go according to plan. It probably won't. But if you have planned properly, your ability to adjust, without compromising your overall purpose, will be that much greater.

WHY PLAN?

The combination of a good strategic framework (arrived at through strategic planning) and a good operational plan or action plan:

- Provides a clear understanding of what you need to do in order to achieve your development goals;
- Guides you in prioritising and making decisions;
- Allows you to focus possibly limited resources on the actions that will benefit your work the most;
- Keeps you in touch with your context – global, national and local;
- Provides a tool to help you communicate your intentions to others;
- Provides a coherent guide for day-to-day implementation.

It is important to think about the benefits of planning because there will be many excuses for not doing it and for just "getting on with the work". Sometimes it seems easier **not** to plan, because:

- Good planning takes time and money. But if you do it well, it is worth the investment.
- Sometimes "effective muddling" can see you through. That is true – if you are lucky. But muddling can be costly and confusing, as well as inefficient (poor use of resources) and ineffectual (not achieving desired results).
- You can't plan in the middle of a crisis. But if you plan well, you will avoid some crises, and while you may have to deal with your crises immediately, irrespective of your plans, once the crisis is over the plan will give you a way to engage with the work again.
- Planning is only useful if people are committed to implementation. True. But, don't use this as an excuse for not planning, along the lines of: "No-one ever follows the plan, so why bother?" It is the role of the leadership in the organisation to make sure that the planning is useful and gets implemented. People buy into a plan they have been part of developing, as long as it makes sense and is possible.

WHO DOES WHAT?

Who does what in an organisational planning process?

Different stakeholders are involved in different phases of planning. Look at the table below:

Phase of planning	Who is involved?
Planning to plan	Someone has to make sure that regular planning takes place and that it is the appropriate form of planning. It is usually the management team that puts planning on the agenda.
Understanding the context	This could be part of a planning workshop or take place separately. It is usually a good idea to get in an outside person with a broad understanding of the general context and of your sector, to do a presentation. You may have an internal person who is very good at this. The presentation should be for all Board and staff members. (See also the section on doing an environmental scan.)
Vision planning – developing an overall vision for the organisation.	Depending on the size of your organisation, you may decide to include everyone in this, or to set up a planning team. If you go for the planning team option, then the team must report back to staff and Board and get consensus on a final vision. Some organisations or projects like to have beneficiary input as well.
Mission formulation – turning the vision into a mission statement for the organisation – what it will do to achieve the mission and how it will do it.	As above.
Situational analysis – this involves analysing the current situation within the organisation and those things that are having an impact on, or are likely to have an impact on, the organisation from outside.	If it is manageable, you can do this with the whole staff, or get it done project-by-project or department-by-department. As part of this process it is useful to do a SWOT Analysis (see the section that explains how to do this). Organisations often ask whether or not administration staff should be included in these processes. It is useful to include administrative staff in these preliminary strategic steps. Thereafter, until you get to action planning, unless administrative staff show a clear interest, it is not so important.
Strategic options and completion of mission – here those involved in programme work look at the strategic options for the organisation (what is the best way to make an impact on the problem we are addressing, given our specific context, internally and externally?) and then revisit the mission statement to check that it makes sense.	All programme or professional staff and at least some Board members.
Goal setting and structure review (see also the section on Form follows Function). Goal setting involves setting broad overall goals or result areas for the organisation. This should give you some indication of how best to structure the work of the organisation.	This can be done by the planning team, or by senior staff, or, if manageable, by all programme or professional staff. Once the prioritised goals are clear, the structure of the organisation can be reviewed.
Objective setting (see also the section: Set new objectives). This is more specific than overall goal setting and requires a work unit to work out what objectives it needs to achieve in order for the overall goals of the organisation to be met.	This should be done by all professional staff, but preferably within units, departments, projects.
Action planning – this involves developing step-by-step activities necessary to achieve objectives. (There is a whole tool kit that deals with action planning.)	As above. At this point, administrative staff should be involved again.
Implementation	All staff.
Monitoring and Evaluation. There is a whole tool kit that deals with monitoring and evaluation.	All senior staff, reporting to the Board.

Note: Work done at the unit, departmental or project level must be approved by the staff management team of the organisation – the structure directly accountable to the Board.

Never be afraid to ask for outside input or technical input if you think it is necessary. Our experience is that it is often very useful to have an outside facilitator for the strategic part of the process. This helps to push the organisation or project out of the old ways of thinking and to get them to think about new ways of doing new things. Look for a facilitator who understands both your sector and how organisations work.

WHEN DO YOU PLAN?

There are no hard and fast rules about when planning takes place in an organisation or a project. Here are some guidelines:

- Before you begin something new, you need to do a full-scale planning process – this applies to a new organisation and to a new project.
- Implementation needs to be monitored constantly so that action planning can be reviewed and altered if necessary.
- Annual planning (review of strategy - every second year - and evaluation of activities as a basis for detailed planning of activities for the year) should usually take place towards the end of the previous year, with enough time to allow for plans to be implemented in the new year. A "year" is not necessarily a calendar year. Your year may be determined by your financial year or by a project cycle period.
- Full-scale strategic planning should probably take place every three to five years, unless the environment is changing rapidly and dramatically.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PLANNING

"Planning" is a big term that includes a number of different kinds of activities. It is possible to plan at the strategic level, at the activity or operation level, to plan for an organisation, or for a programme or for a project. The two main kinds of planning are:

- strategic planning (see the section on strategic planning/framework); and
- business/action/operational planning

On the next few pages we look, in summary, at what is involved in each kind of planning. For more detail, you need to go to the specific toolkits that take you through each process.

Strategic planning/strategic framework

Strategic planning, or developing a strategic framework, is about the bigger picture. Organisations often get so caught up in everyday problems that they do not think about the big picture. They are too busy planning "to do things", something that falls under business/action/operational planning.

It is through strategic planning that an organisation develops a strategic framework. This framework helps the organisation determine its priorities and the strategies that are likely to help it achieve its vision of the future.

A strategy is an overall approach, based on an understanding of the broader context in which you function, your own strengths and weaknesses, and the problem you are attempting to address. A strategy gives you a framework within which to work, it clarifies what you are trying to achieve and the approach you intend to use. It does not spell out specific activities.

Where do you go with strategic planning?

Strategic planning enables a development organisation to:
- analyse the situation or context in which it is operating (social, political and economic) so that it understands the context and is able to formulate a vision (see also Elements of a strategic framework);
- identify the problem or problems within the situation that the organisation believes it is well-placed to address (see also Elements of a strategic framework);
- reflect on its value system in order to create parameters (a frame) for its activities (see also Elements of a strategic framework);
- set goals for itself (see Review strategy);
- formulate a vision and mission statement based on its problem analysis and identification (see Elements of a strategic framework);
- analyse its strengths and weaknesses in addressing the identified problem (see the section on doing a SWOT analysis for a method to use here);
- identify opportunities and threats in the environment that may affect its work (both a SWOT Analysis and a PEST Analysis will help you do this – see appropriate sections);
- prioritise what it needs to do (see the section on Prioritising);
- review strategic options for achieving its goals and select the most appropriate (see the section: Review strategy);

- structure itself appropriately (See the section on Form follows function – plan/review structure).

Once this is done, the organisation is ready to move into the next phase of planning which is doing the business/action/operational planning. This turns a strategy into implementation.

Without the strategic planning phase, it is very likely that you will end up doing a range of activities that may not always add up to a co-ordinated effort. The strategic plan keeps you on track. It provides a touchstone against which to answer questions such as:

- Is this the sort of work we ought to be doing?
- Will this activity contribute to the achievement of our vision and goals?
- Given that we have scarce resources, is this the most strategic action for us to take? Will it have the maximum impact for the investment of resources made?
- Is this the most appropriate way for us to go about achieving our goals?

Any new organisation, project or programme needs to do strategic planning in order to develop a strategic framework in which to work. However, established or existing organisations, projects or programmes also need to revisit the strategic planning process from time-to-time. Situations change, strategies don't work, different opportunities become available. It is not recommended that you do strategic planning every year. This could well lead to you chopping and changing your strategic choices without giving them a real chance to work. However, a strategic review every two years, and a full-scale strategic planning process every three to five years, can work well.

Business/action/operational planning

What happens if you move directly into doing, without strategising first?

It is now that we get to the "doing". Most organisations find this much easier than "being strategic". A workshop to plan? A campaign to launch? Let's get on with it! But without the preliminary strategic work, you have no way of assessing whether the workshop or the campaign or the approach is what you really should be doing!

Take, for example, the organisation from the USA that had great success in its HIV/AIDS prevention work at home. It was funded to do the same work in a developing African country and sent out a very experienced programme director who had great success in his work in the USA. The organisation focused on homosexual sex and used a kind of "shock strategy" to get people in the developing African country to understand how to prevent the spread of the disease. But, in fact, in African countries the disease is mostly spread through heterosexual sex and people are much less open about homosexuality than they would be in San Francisco or New York. A different strategy was needed but, because the organisation went directly into action, without going through a strategic planning process first, it failed to impact on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the developing country.

What is business/action/operational planning?

These are different words for a very similar process. Each of them refers to a plan for implementation in order to achieve your broader goals and your objectives. For the sake of simplicity, we generally refer to the process as action planning and the plan as an action plan.

Once you have a strategic plan, the action plan answers the following questions:

- What needs to be done?
- How will it be done?
- Who will do it?
- By when must it be done?
- What resources are needed to do it?

Answering these questions will give you the basis on which to plan a budget and raise money or generate income. (Another toolkit deals specifically with the budgeting process).

So, for example, your vision may be that every child in the country has access to affordable early childhood education. Your goal becomes ensuring that there are enough trained teachers to make this possible. Your objective is to train a certain number of home-based educare teachers in every region of the country, through running a certain number of workshops in each region. Your action plan will answer the key questions by detailing the "what" as follows:

- The exact number of workshops and the targets for attendance at each (including a profile of the kind of participants you want).
- How participants will be recruited, who will be involved and by when this will take place.
- What curriculum will be used, who will develop it and by when.
- When the workshops will be held, where they will be held and who will be in charge of organising this.
- How, when and by whom the workshop strategy will be monitored and evaluated.
- What resources will be needed to implement each step.
- A detailed budget.

This can then be summarised in:
- an output plan for the project;
- a human resourcing plan for the project;
- a time plan for the project;
- a summarised budget or financial plan for the project.

The output plan summarises the "things" that will be produced e.g. 200 workshops, 4 000 trained educare teachers, a curriculum published in a format that can be replicated, 25 trained trainers, etc.

The human resourcing plan provides details of how the human resourcing needs of the project will be met e.g. two skilled trainers from current staff of organisation, 25 trainee trainers in whom capacity will be built to run training and who will be selected from community-based organisations in each region, management by the Head of the Training Department, an administrator to deal with logistics in each region, seconded from a local organisation, etc.

The time plan will show the time relationship between activities and what needs to be done first, etc. There are tools for doing this and these are dealt with in the toolkit on action planning.

The summarised budget will include your main line item categories and a cash flow plan. (The toolkit on budgeting explains how to do a cash flow plan).

For tools and techniques you can use for action planning, look also at the section on planning tools – overview. For a step-by-step action planning process and a more in-depth discussion go to the toolkit on action planning.

Once you have done your strategic planning and your action planning, you are well on the way to implementation.

Does it matter whether you are planning for an organisation or planning for a project?

The principles are the same, with some minor differences. On the next two pages we look at the different emphasis, depending on whether you are planning for an organisation or a project.

Planning for an organisation

Some of the things to take into account when you plan for an organisation as a whole include:

- When you set up a new organisation, pay particular attention to the strategic planning phase. The work you do on needs assessment/problem analysis at this stage is vitally important. (Both of these are dealt with in detail elsewhere in this toolkit).
- Do regular (two-yearly) strategic reviews and regular (three-to-five-yearly) strategic planning to make sure that your strategies are still sound and the best available.
- Base your strategic reviews and strategic planning processes on some form of evaluation. (See the section on planning for monitoring and evaluation in this toolkit and the separate toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation).
- Leave action planning to the responsible projects, units, etc.
- Don't assume that the division of work has to be the same as it has always been – if the work changes, the structure of the organisation may need to change too. (See the section on Form follows function).
- Involve all departments, units, projects and programmes in an organisational planning process, but follow the guidelines given in the section on Who plans?
- It is up to the management team to integrate plans so that the organisational plan is coherent, instead of a patchwork of different plans.
- It is up to the management team to ensure that resources are appropriately allocated according to the action plan.

Planning for a project

Some of the things to take into account when you plan for a project include:

- You need to be very clear about the relationship between the project and the organisation of which it is a part. There must be an organic relationship between them. You cannot just add a project to the work of an organisation because it seems like a good idea. It must fit with your vision, values and mission statement. (See the section on Elements of a strategic framework).
- You need to do careful initial strategic planning, and then, because you are working within a limited timeframe, regular strategic reviews (possibly six-monthly). This will enable you to make adjustments in good time.
- You need to plan the time carefully. A project usually has a limited time-span and you need to be able to produce the proposed outputs in the time specified.
- You need to plan for your resource requirements carefully. It is likely that you will try to raise money specifically for the project and so it is important to get this right.
- You need to draw up your human resourcing plan with reference to spare capacity already existing in the organisation.
- You need to plan your entry and exit points so that other stakeholders, and the organisation as a whole, understand the implications of the planned length of the project.
- You need to plan how you will link the work of the project to the ongoing work of the organisation. It is important not to let projects become separate "empires" that are not seen as part of the organisation.
- You need to be sure that your action plans do not interfere with the normal activities of the organisation, or clash with the activities of other projects and/or departments.

DOING THE GROUNDWORK

Some organisations announce that "we are going to do our planning on November 27 and 28" and then have a workshop where everyone looks at what needs to be done in the new year and agrees on times, areas of responsibility, etc. This is not what we have in mind when we talk about "doing the groundwork" for planning. Organisations that rely on this kind of planning are likely to come apart when anything in the environment changes or when anything inside the organisation goes wrong. Although the assignment of tasks is part of action planning, it is something that happens way down the road in any planning process. There is a great deal to do first.

The groundwork you need to do for planning will differ slightly depending on whether the organisation or project has been in existence for a while or is just starting up.

Existing Organisation/Project – Review Progress/Do Organisational Diagnosis

When an organisation or project has been in existence for some time, part of the groundwork for any planning process involves:

- Reviewing the work that has been done since the last major planning process, against the targets set.
- Doing an organisational diagnosis to determine the ongoing internal health of the organisation.

The **review of work done** is probably best done in projects, departments or units where the work was actually located. Ideally, after the previous planning process, each project, department or unit sets up a format for itself against which to measure progress and to report to the rest of the organisation on progress. Now what is required is to put this together and to analyse what helped and what hindered the work. Each project, department, unit could also do an overall SWOT Analysis (see the section that describes this.). In the section: Tools 1: Structuring the work progress analysis, a way of structuring the work review, is suggested. This sort of review should also be done by the directorate and the administration and finance sides of an organisation.

An **organisational diagnosis** is something that the leadership of an organisation should be doing on an ongoing basis. However, in preparing for a major planning exercise, the insights from this diagnosis need to be brought together, analysed and summarised to feed into the planning process. Tools 1: Format for Organisational Diagnosis Report suggests one way of doing this. Organisational diagnosis involves:

- Constantly scanning the organisation internally to explore issues and trends that are coming up.
- Identifying key problem issues.
- Analysing the apparent causes of the problems.
- Diagnosing the underlying causes and linking them.

What sorts of questions should an organisational diagnosis be able to answer?

The sorts of questions an organisational diagnosis is concerned with are:

- Why is the organisation as a whole or some part of it, consistently not meeting output targets?
- What sorts of crises do we deal with and could they have been avoided?
- How much conflict surfaces in the organisation and how does it impact on our work?
- Why has staff turnover been so high in the past year?
- Has there been some sort of trend in the complaints and grievances that have emerged?
- Are our administration and finance systems keeping up with the work? If not, why not?
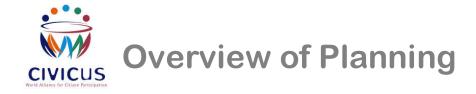- Are we prepared for likely challenges in the near future? If not, why not?

Tools 1: Structuring the work progress analysis

WORK REVIEW – ANALYSIS OF ACHIEVEMENTS OF _____
DEPARTMENT FOR THE PERIOD _____ **TO** _____

Targets set for period in terms of outputs:

Targets set for period in terms of efficiency:

Targets achieved:

Targets we failed to achieve:

Helping factors:

Hindering factors:

Tools 1: Format for Organisational Diagnosis Report

ORGANISATIONAL DIAGNOSIS: PERIOD _____ TO _____

What issues/trends have you identified internally in the past six months?

What have the points of conflict in the organisation been over the past six months?

What has the staff turnover been in the past year? What trends, if any, can we see in staff turnover?

What are the current weaknesses in our administration and finance systems?

What challenges are likely to face the organisation in the next year?

What concerns are there about the ability of the organisation to meet these challenges?

What are the apparent causes of current internal organisational problems and weaknesses?

What underlying causes can we identify? Look at:
Strategy:

Value system:

Structure:

Systems:

Staff:

Skills:

Management style:

New Organisation/Project – Do Problem Analysis/Needs Assessment

The groundwork involved in setting up a new organisation, and to develop a strategic and action plan for it, is challenging. It requires:

- A focus on what the problems are which the organisation wants to address.
- A preliminary assessment of what will be needed to address the problems.

New development organisations usually start with an idea that is meant to address a problem. Before planning, however, it is important to have a thorough understanding of the apparent problem, based on a baseline investigation (see Glossary of Terms). The baseline investigation will help you to understand the relationship between different problems, and where it is reasonable to make assumptions about cause and effect.

In Tools 2: Doing a problem analysis, there is a tool to help you analyse the problems you think exist in a rigorous (see Glossary of Terms) way. It is important to involve the communities you are hoping to help in the problem analysis. If you don't, you may end up with a project or organisation that no-one wants. A community can be all people in a broad geographical area (a region), all people in a defined geographical area (the community of Shacktown), a particular group of people in a geographical area (all teachers in Region A), a particular group of people nationally (the youth of our country), other organisations (all NGOs doing literacy work). You want to know as much as possible about the community you hope to benefit or assist. You do this by finding out the facts and investigating the actual situation. Then you involve the community in identifying the most important problems which they face. It is on this understanding that you then look at what is needed in an organisation that could be useful to the community. In the long run, the effectiveness of development work should be measured by its ability to address the underlying problems experienced by beneficiary communities.

Once you are clear about the problems of the community, you can begin to talk about the function of the organisation that should be built, and then the form or structure. In Tools 2: Considering the organisational options, you will find some questions that are appropriate to ask at this stage. It is important to be rigorous here too.

Say, for example, that you are a group of nurses with experience in the public health sector. You started out with an idea about a project or organisation that would train health care workers from disadvantaged areas with a poor health record. You thought you would train these people to provide a primary health care service, advising on such things as rehydration, caring for the elderly at home, or home-based care for people with HIV/AIDS. However, when you do the problem analysis, you find that the underlying cause of most of the illnesses in the areas you want to work in is poor sanitation, including drainage, sewage and rubbish collection. In fact, the areas have well-trained health workers who are doing a good job in providing support and care. What they are not skilled in is how to mobilise the communities to address the issues of bad services from local authorities. This is not your area of expertise either. What do you do? Do you go ahead and do what you had planned to do anyway? Or do you tell the communities: "Oh, well, now we see you don't need us. Thanks for your co-operation and goodbye"? Or do you look at ways of expanding your group to include the necessary campaigning skills, as well as using your health expertise?

Remember that a whole infrastructure will be built around a decision to go forward. It is important to consider the opportunity cost (see Glossary of Terms) involved.

If you decide, on the basis of your problem analysis and your needs assessment, that you should go ahead with your new organisation or project, then this will be done on the basis of a thorough understanding of the situation, and a rigorous assessment of the need for what you offer.

New Organisation/Project – Do Problem Analysis/Needs Assessment

Tools 2: Doing a problem analysis

When you do your problem analysis, it is a good idea to use a **problem** tree (see Glossary of Terms) as a tool to help you. The problem tree will help you to:
▪ understand the problems that face people in a particular context or community;
▪ understand the relationship between the problems;
▪ understand how cause and effect operate in relation to the problems.

We suggest you use the problem tree as a way of analysing your understanding of a community or context which you have already investigated thoroughly.

The steps involved in developing a problem tree are:

1. Write down about 10 problem statements. Write each on a separate card. Each card should describe one problem experienced by people in a particular context or community. Make each problem statement as specific as possible. e.g. "women walk 4 kms. for clean water" is better than "women have to travel far to get water"; "50% of school leavers do not find jobs" is better than "there is high unemployment". The more specific your problem statement, the easier it is to look at cause and effect, and at possible solutions.

2. Select one problem as a starting point. Write it on a different colour card. It may not be the most important problem but it provides a focus around which to build your understanding of cause and effect.

3. Organise your other problem statement cards (on a board, wall or table) into cause and effect relationships around the focal problem. They would look something like the diagram on the next page. Each level in the diagram, working from the bottom up, is both a cause and an effect, and the causes and effects are closely linked even when they are not directly joined. So, for example, the reduction in teaching staff lowers staff morale and makes it even less likely that they will be willing to run a winter school. In this diagram, the box with the final year failure rate is the focal problem. Any one of the boxes could have been your focal problem and you would still have produced a similar tree.

4. Add any cards you think are important, check the cause and effect logic, and take out repetitive cards.

5. Review the problem tree to reach agreement that the cause and effect relationships are valid.

Overview of Planning

There is a high rate of teenage pregnancy in the area.

Crime is a major problem in the area.

Our children have no hope for the future.

Fewer than 2% of school leavers qualify for tertiary education.

There is a 64% unemployment rate in the 18 to 24 age group.

There is a 74% failure rate in the final year for the schools in the area.

There is a poor culture of teaching and learning in the schools.

Teachers are unqualified

Frequent teacher boycotts occur.

Absenteeism among teachers and learners is high.

Teachers refuse to organise a winter study school for final year students.

Those parents who can afford it have sent their children to other schools.

Numbers have dropped dramatically and teaching staff have been cut.

Only very poor children attend the school, school fees are low and facilities are minimal.

Some points to remember about the problem tree:

- Include the people who are experiencing the problems when you do your problem tree.
- There is no perfect problem tree – the point is to get a comprehensive understanding of the problems and the relationship between causes and effects.
- To do a useful problem tree, you need to have the facts – real information about the community.

Thanks to Olive for this explanation of the problem tree. (See the section where we list Resources.)

Tools 2: Considering the organisational options

Once you have done a thorough problem analysis, you need to consider the organisational options. Useful questions to ask at this point are:

- How valid were our original assumptions about the problems facing the community?
- Which set of problems are we best qualified to address?
- Will addressing those problems make a significant development difference and change the overall situation?
- Do we have the expertise and resources to address these key problem areas and to have an impact on the problems?
- What sort of an organisation or project, with what sort of focus, could address the key problem areas?
- Should we go ahead and plan an organisation or project?
- If so, do we need to find partners?
- If not, how do we deal with the expectations that have been raised in the community so far?

So, for example, in the situation described in the problem tree example, the organisation planning the project specialised in teacher upgrading. After doing a problem tree with a group including teachers, principals, parents and people from the education department, the organisation decided that its original assumption that the real problem was that the teachers were unqualified was a small part of the whole. The organisation decided to go ahead but formed a partnership with an organisation that did organisational development work in schools and they worked together on a whole school development intervention. (See also the section on Thinking about partnerships.)

PRIORITISING

One of the important skills you need in both the groundwork phase and the actual planning phase, is the skill of prioritising. This applies to new organisations and projects, but also to existing organisations setting up new projects, or even reviewing their ongoing involvement in an area of work or in a community. **When you prioritise, you decide what is most important.**

Once you understand the development problems facing the community or communities, and you have decided that you have something to offer in the situation, you need to be able to prioritise what the most significant impacts are likely to be. Where can you make the impact that is most likely to change the situation overall?

In Tools 2: Doing a problem analysis, the organisation that was involved decided that if it improved the culture of learning and teaching in the schools, it could alter the whole situation in the area, improve final year results, enable more learners to go on to further education or to find employment or self-employment, raise the overall morale of the area, and impact on poverty alleviation. So, the overall goal of the organisation was to improve morale and quality of life in the area. Its next level goal was to improve the culture of learning and teaching in the schools, and its objectives included appropriate teacher upgrading and whole school development. Had the organisation specialised in small business development, it might have focused on developing entrepreneurial skills among unemployed youth. However, its expertise was in formal education and it believed it could make a difference to the situation by working in that area.

In order to clarify its priorities (prioritise), the organisation asked itself these questions:

- What are we best qualified to offer in order to address the problems identified?
- Is anyone else already doing what we can do? If so, do we have anything to add?
- In the areas where we are qualified, where can we make the most significant difference? Where will we have the most leverage (See Glossary of Terms)?
- What are the pros and cons of intervening in this way?
- Will this make the best use of the resources we have available? Is it worth the opportunity cost (see Glossary of Terms)?

In our example, the organisation was new, but the questions are just as valid for organisations with an established involvement. Often, asking these questions can get an organisation that has diverged (moved away) from its mission back on track so that it focuses on what it does best. When an organisation realises that it is getting involved in areas where it does not have the skills or expertise to address the problems, it may well be the time to start thinking about partnerships. This is dealt with on the next page.

THINKING ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS

A partnership involves the joint activity of more than one party, in some sort of collaborative, co-operative or joint effort. In development partnerships, the partners are linked by a common desire to make a difference in areas that ultimately improve the quality of life of ordinary people, especially those who are considered disadvantaged in some way. In an ideal development partnership, the partners learn from one another, and influence one another as part of the learning process. They also complement (fill gaps) and add value to one another's inputs in order to maximise the outputs and outcomes of a development intervention. A development partnership should be characterised by:

- mutual respect;
- mutual learning;
- shared purpose;
- shared values;
- collective responsibility for final outcomes.

Where do you look for partners?

Possible partners include:

- other civil society organisations;
- the state;
- donors;
- the private sector;
- individuals.

Possible partner relationships include:

- Sub-contracting work (this is a fee-for-service relationship);
- Getting work directly funded (this involves a donor investing in a project or organisation);
- Working together on a joint project (where those involved are full partners);
- Setting up a consortium (where several organisations contribute different skills and expertise in order to meet the requirements of the situation);
- Participating in a network (or informal affiliation designed to share information of common and/or collective interest).

While partnership relationships can be complicated, they do enable civil society organisations to meet the needs of situations where multiple problems and complex relationships of cause and effect are present. Some of the reasons for forming development partnerships are:

- The needs in the situation are greater than your organisation alone can meet.
- Other organisations or projects may already be active in the area and you want to avoid duplication and unhealthy competition.
- The client or donor may insist on it.

Overview of Planning

What difference does a partnership make to the planning process?

The impact of partnerships on the planning process depends on the kind of partner relationship it is:

Type of partnership	Impact on planning
Sub-contracting	The organisation which initiates the sub-contract plans what needs to be done and presents the "partner" with a scope of work.
Direct funding	Here, the main burden of the planning falls to the implementing agency, although some may invite donor partners to participate in certain stages of the planning process.
Joint ventures/ developmental partnerships	The planning should be done jointly and consensus should be reached. The detail of activity planning can be left to the appropriate partner. Control is shared.
Consortium	The planning should be done jointly and consensus should be reached. The detail of activity planning can be left to the appropriate partner. In principle, control is shared, even if one partner "manages" the consortium. However, this depends on the capacity of the partner organisations.
Network	Here planning is at a very broad level, largely involving the co-ordination of communication. Usually, some partners are more active than others, but not that much is at stake as long as activities remain at the information-sharing level. When some kind of joint action is envisaged, then networks usually appoint or elect a co-ordinating team, but agreement from all members is still required.

When you work in a partnership of any sort, you will need to invest time and energy in building a co-operative and constructive partnership.

(This section has taken many ideas *from Ideas for a Change: Part 7a: Beginning to work together*, Olive Publications, 2000)

Regular planning step-by-step

Once you have done the ground work, focusing on being thorough and rigorous (see Glossary of Terms), you are ready to move on in the planning process, based on a solid foundation. In this section, we go through the normal steps of planning to give you an overview of what needs to be included in a planning process. In the toolkits on strategic planning and action planning, these are discussed in more detail, and you are taken through the process as it would unfold in a workshop.

This section looks briefly at the following steps in a planning process:

Step 1: Progress review
Step 2: Environmental scan
Step 3: Review of the strategic framework
Step 4: Review strategy
Step 5: Set new objectives
Step 6: Plan/review structure
Step 7: Do action planning.

Although the section assumes an existing organisation or project, the steps are much the same for a new project or organisation.

In order to see how these steps would work in practice, go to the Example given at the end of the toolkit.

PROGRESS REVIEW

Step 1 of your planning process should involve a work progress review.

We have already discussed the progress review in the section on Doing the groundwork. For organisations and projects that have already been functioning for a while, the progress review, against targets set in the previous planning process, is the logical place to begin planning. Before you can move on, you need to know what you have achieved, what you have failed to achieve, and why you have or have not met the targets set. Under Tools 1: Structuring the work progress analysis you will find a structure you can use to report on your work review. You can also use the SWOT Analysis to help you understand your strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats in the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

What is an environmental scan?

An environmental scan (Step 2) is a way of assessing the context in which an organisation or project is functioning and will function. It recognises that no organisation is an island and that the social, economic, political, technological, ecological, and legislative contexts in which a project or organisation functions have a profound effect on the ability of the organisation or project to do their work. The PEST technique (see on the site map) will help you to do an environmental scan but it is also useful to have someone "paint" the broader picture for your project or organisation. This could be a well-informed person from within the project or organisation, or someone from the outside who understands both the bigger picture and the sector within which you function.

After the input, you should list the main trends or issues in the environmental context that are likely to affect your organisation over the next three to five years.

It is very useful to do your planning in the context of a background that raises questions about relevance, challenges and threats, and which enables you to question assumptions (beliefs) you may have had about the context in which you operate.

REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Step 3 is to review the strategic framework within which you have located your organisation or project. For a new project or organisation, this step would be to establish a strategic framework.

When you establish or review your strategic framework, you look at things like:
- vision;
- values;
- mission;
- overall goal or aim;
- development goal;
- project purpose.

The questions you are asking at this point are:
- What is our vision? Has it changed? Has any progress been made towards achieving it in the past five years?
- What are the values that underpin our work? Are we adhering to our values? Is there a clash between our values and what we do or how we do it?
- Does our mission statement still describe what we are, what we do and who we do it for, accurately?
- Are we clear about our overall goal? About what we want the overall outcome of our work to be?
- Are we clear about the broader goal towards which any particular specific goal, project or objective should be contributing?
- Is there a clear link between this development goal and the overall goal?
- Is there a clear link between our project purpose (the immediate goal of our work) and the development goal and overall goal?

REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Step 3 continued

Elements of a strategic framework

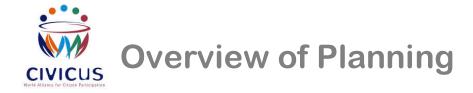#### *What are the elements of a strategic framework?*

Your **organisational vision** is your overall picture of how you would like things to be as a result of your efforts and those of others working in related fields. It is how your organisation sees the ideal society. For a way to arrive at, or clarify, your organisational vision, see the section on Futuring. It is important that you develop a vision together with Board and staff members. All your plans ought to be focused towards the eventual achievement of this vision. Your **overall goal** will focus on a specific aspect of your vision. So, while your vision might include human rights for all, your overall goal might be poverty alleviation. Your **development goal** might then be that all the economically active people in the areas where you work are either employed or self-employed. Your **project purpose** might be an increase of those employed or self-employed from 30% to 75% within five years. There needs to be a logical connection between these levels of goals, with each lower level contributing to the achievement of the next level up. What you do to achieve this will be the **strategic options** you have selected.

Your **organisational values** are the shared values that underpin your work as an organisation and your relationships with users and other stakeholders. They are what you believe is the right way to do things and to deal with people, and what you believe about the way that, ideally, the world ought to be organised. Your organisational values will determine your strategies and your operational principles. If, for example, you have an organisational value that emphasises doing things *with* rather than *for* people, then you are likely to involve beneficiaries, or potential beneficiaries, closely in your planning process.

Your **mission** is a description of the work the organisation or project does, and who it is aimed at. Typically, a mission statement includes a very brief summary of what you do, how you do it and for whom. An example of a mission statement in a development context might be:

> *We work to improve the conditions under which elderly people in our*
> *society live by providing people over the age of 65 who have limited*
> *resources with transport, meals and the opportunity to socialise.*

Note: Different people give different names to parts of the strategic framework. The important thing is to have a framework that is logical and coherent.

REVIEW STRATEGY

Step 4 is the review of, or the selection of, a strategy.

Your strategy is the approach, and within that, the projects and activities you choose to carry out in pursuit of your vision and goals, and in the context of your values and mission statement. The questions you are answering here are: What can we do that will help us achieve our project purpose? What activities will do this? Does what we are doing make sense in terms of our strategic framework? Are there other things we should be doing?

So, for example: An organisation that served the needs of the elderly did a survey of its beneficiaries as part of the groundwork for its planning process. It realised that the need to generate an income was more important to its target group than social gatherings to address loneliness, one of its activities in the past. It decided to focus on this aspect of the needs of elderly people and, therefore, to convert its recreation centre into an industrial park where elderly people would be encouraged and supported in setting up micro-businesses. It felt that this would be a more useful strategic choice in its efforts to improve the quality of life of elderly people, and the elderly people involved in its projects agreed. It formed a developmental partnership with an NGO that supported the development of micro and small businesses.

Another example: An organisation that had as its project purpose increased self-employment in a particular area had chosen the strategy of training people in production and entrepreneurial skills to achieve this purpose. Initially the organisation felt it was doing very well because it was meeting all its training targets. However, in monitoring and evaluating its work, it found that most of the people trained were still unemployed after a year. It decided to redirect some of its resources towards providing business support services for micro-enterprises. Within a year, 70% of the people being trained had set up in their own micro-businesses.

You need to be constantly reviewing your strategy on the basis of monitoring and evaluation (see the section dealing with this) so that you can change it if necessary. While your strategic framework (your vision and overall goal) is fairly fixed, your strategy is not – you can and should change it if it doesn't work.

SET NEW OBJECTIVES

Step 5 involves setting new objectives, based on the revised strategy, or adjusting the existing objectives where necessary, or setting objectives from scratch for a new organisation.

All objectives need to be SMART:

S   =   Specific
M   =   Measurable
A   =   Agreed upon (by everyone involved)
R   =   Realistic
T   =   Timebound

So, for example, a SMART objective might be:

> *Support the set- up four micro-businesses, functioning out of the newly established industrial park, and owned by people over the age of 65 who previously used the recreation centre, before the end of the year.*

or

> *Train a group of at least 20 elderly people (over 65) in production and entrepreneurial skills by the end of March next year.*

or

> *Set up a business support service able to offer bookkeeping, tool hire, and marketing advice services to micro-enterprises by the end of July next year.*

Once you have decided on your strategy or strategies, you need to formulate SMART objectives.

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION – PLAN/REVIEW STRUCTURE

Step 6 looks at how you need to organise yourselves, or re-organise yourselves, if the objectives are to be met.

Here the questions to ask are:

- How should we group ourselves? What units, departments, projects, teams are needed to achieve all our objectives for the next two years?
- What administrative and financial support will be needed?
- What policies do we need to have in place?
- Does it make sense to change any of the existing structures?
- Do we need any additional structures?
- Do we have the skills to do what needs to be done? If not, what additional skills do we need?
- What information systems will we need?

In the end, the form or structure of the organisation should follow its function – what it plans to do. Don't assume that the structure you have used before will fit, particularly if your strategy changes in some way. Be open to changes.

ACTION PLANNING

Step 7 involves business/action/operational planning. (See also the toolkit on action planning). This means identifying the tasks that need to be done in order to achieve the objectives. The action plan records what must be done, the date by which it will be done, who will be responsible for getting it done, and what resources will be needed to do it (money and people).

A good action plan:

- Forces the organisation or project to decide how it intends to reach an objective.
- Helps the organisation or project move beyond crisis management to sensible planning and use of resources.
- Helps to resolve issues of sequence or the order in which things should be done.
- Provides a basis for holding people accountable for what they do.
- Provides a basis for measuring progress and doing a work progress review.
- Provides a basis for job descriptions.
- Provides a basis for budgeting.

Without an action plan, implementation is very difficult. Work tends to be confused and uncoordinated. It is difficult to know who should have done what by when. Sometimes things don't get done and no-one notices until it is too late. A strategic framework is the skeleton of planning that results in impact. An action plan is the hands that lead to efficient and effective implementation.

In order to use an action plan effectively, an organisation or project needs good time management. Without this, the plan just won't work. On the next page we look briefly at time management.

Time management

Both organisations/projects and individuals need to be able to manage their time well if planning is to translate into implementation.

What helps individuals manage their time well?

- diaries;
- saying "no";
- clear boundaries (e.g. "I am not available between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.");
- self-discipline;
- personal planning;
- delegating;
- good management from those in supervisory positions.

What helps organisations/projects manage their time well?

- departmental/project/organisation monthly and year planners;
- good planning with clear deadlines;
- good management – monitoring progress and identifying potential hold-ups and delays;
- good management – available to deal with potential and actual crises;
- regular work progress reviews;
- keeping meetings to the necessary minimum;
- sufficient efficient administrative support;
- an ethos or culture that is flexible and supportive but task-oriented.

Planning tools - overview

There are many tools you can use when you do your planning. We have included some of them. This does not mean that you have to use them. If you think they might be useful, then use them. It is possible to do your planning without any clever techniques or tools at all, simply by asking the right questions. Do not fall into the trap of making your planning process just a move from one technique to the next. The techniques simply help you to focus your thinking – it is the thinking that is important.

 (We have drawn heavily on the Olive Publication *Ideas for a Change: Part 1: Strategic Processes*, July 1997 for this section).

THE SWOT ANALYSIS

Purpose: To identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of an organisation or project, and the external opportunities and threats the organisation or project face.

The best time to use a SWOT Analysis is after you review progress and after you have done some sort of environmental scan.

The process can be done for the organisation, departments, projects and units. It can make a useful contribution to an organisational diagnosis.

SWOT stands for:

S	=	Strengths
W	=	Weaknesses
O	=	Opportunities
T	=	Threats

Strengths and weaknesses are factors that are internal to the organisation and can be addressed within the organisation. Opportunities and threats are external to the organisation and provide challenges to the organisation.

Time: You probably need about an hour to do a SWOT Analysis.

Steps:

1. Give each participant in this stage of the process a set of blank cards to record Opportunities and Threats. They must answer the questions:

   ▪ What are the Threats facing us in the next period of time?
   ▪ What are the Opportunities facing us?

They should write only one threat or one opportunity on each card, but can have as many cards as they need.

Ask the participants to place the cards in columns under the headings Opportunities and Threats which you should put up on a board or wall.

Cluster similar issues and discuss. Get rid of duplicates. Reformulate if necessary.

2. Ask participants to identify Strengths and Weaknesses and follow the same process as above.

3. You should end up with something that can be transferred into the following format:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	**Threats**

4. In discussion, answer the following questions:

- What can we do to maximise our strengths?
- What must we build or develop to overcome weaknesses or problem areas?
- What do we need to do to make use of the opportunities?
- What can we do to minimise or neutralise threats?

5. Finally, prioritise by asking these sorts of questions:

- What is really important for our current and future work?
- What is too serious to ignore?

THE PEST ANALYSIS

Purpose: To scan the external environment for forces and trends that may be opportunities or threats for the project or organisation. To help the project/organisation understand its context.

The best time to use a PEST Analysis is probably after you have had input on "the big picture" and before you do a SWOT Analysis (see previous pages).

PEST stands for:

P   =   Political
E   =   Economic
S   =   Social
T   =   Technological

You could add other categories if you thought they might be useful. e.g. Legislative, Psychological, Cultural, Ecological.

Time: You probably need about an hour for the PEST Analysis process.

Steps:

1. Ask the participants in the process to break into four groups. They should then identify potential opportunities and threats under the headings given. Each group should deal with one aspect. If you add any categories, form extra groups. Get the groups to write one opportunity or threat only on each card. As a variation, you could get them to use different coloured cards for opportunities and threats, with a third colour for a factor that could be both.

2. Let the groups put up their cards under the appropriate headings on a wall or board.

3. Cluster similar things, discuss the ideas presented.

4. Identify those things that are most significant for your current and future work.

FUTURING

Purpose: To enable a group to free itself of the constraints of current work and context in order to develop a true vision of how they would like the future to look.

This is probably best done before the group tries to develop a vision or mission statement.

Time: You probably need about an hour to do futuring with a reasonable sized group.

Steps:

1.   Divide the participants into groups of six or seven people each.

2.   Explain to them that they should imagine it is 10 years down the line (you should choose the time period that seem most suitable – removed from the present but not lost in the mists of the future). They have been away for that period of time on an extended sabbatical. They have just arrived back in their home country, and they find it changed in every possible way – all for the better. This country is now everything they ever dreamed it could be. What do they see?

Give them cards and ask them to write each exciting thing they see on a card – one development per card.

3.   Ask the groups to put their cards on a wall. Cluster the ideas that seem similar and take off duplicates. Discuss the "future vision" that emerges.

4.   In plenary, turn the cards into a vision statement for the project or organisation. (This could also be done in groups, but would then require some synthesis or putting together.)

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Purpose:　To identify the organisation's, or project's, key stakeholders and their concerns and expectations, and to explore how they influence the organisation.

A stakeholder is anyone or any group or any institution or structure that has any kind of stake in your organisation or project.

This is a useful exercise to do when you are thinking about partnerships and also before you do your action planning.

Time:　You probably need about an hour to go through this process.

Steps:

1. Ask the participants in the process to identify all the organisation's or project's stakeholders. You can do this as a brainstorm. They must understand that stakeholders are not necessarily positive. So, for example, there may be another organisation that sees this one as a competitor for funds. The other organisation is still a stakeholder. It has an active interest in the organisation or project.

2. Divide participants into groups to answer the following questions about each stakeholder group:

   ▪ What is their interest in our organisation?
   ▪ What are their expectations from their relationship with us?
   ▪ What contribution could they make to the organisation?

3. Do a stakeholder map on a flipchart. It will look something like this:

	Interests	Expectations	Potential
Stakeholder	**What is their interest in the organisation?**	**What do they expect from their relationship with the organisation?**	**What contribution could they make to the organisation?**
1. 2, 3.			

4. Evaluate the organisation's performance against the positive expectations.

5. Ask the participants what influence the stakeholder has on the organisation.

6. Let the participants rank the stakeholders in order of importance for the organisation when it does its planning.

GAP ANALYSIS

Purpose: To identify the gaps that need to be addressed between where the organisation is now and where it aims to be in the future.

This is a good technique to use after you have done a vision and mission statement, an organisational diagnosis, and an environmental scan, and programme planning. It is a good introduction to planning the internal changes needed to meet your targets and goals. You need to know where you are, and where you want to be.

Time: You probably need about an hour to do a Gap Analysis.

Steps:

1. Identify the gaps between

    what we have NOW and what we must have IN THE FUTURE

    what we can do NOW and what we must be able to do IN THE FUTURE.

2. Identify those gaps which are quantitative (we need more …   people, systems, financial resources, knowledge, etc.) and which are qualitative (we need improved … capabilities, systems, methods, relationships, etc.)

These gaps show what must be done to make the organisation efficient and effective.

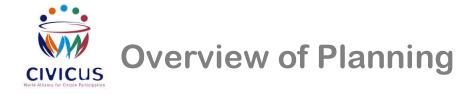## LOGICAL FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS (LFA)

Purpose: The LFA is an overall planning tool. It uses a logframe or matrix (table) with columns and rows to help you plan a project. The rows represent a hierarchy (top to bottom) of goals and objectives, from overall goal to activities, and the columns represent the way in which achievement of these goals and objectives can be verified (shown to have taken place). This makes the LFA a very good tool for planning for monitoring and evaluation (see this section later in the toolkit). Many donors now insist that organisations use the LFA to do their planning. It is, however, a very complex tool and it does not work if it is not used rigorously (see Glossary of Terms). It really requires a toolkit of its own to take you through the process.

Time: The LFA can take about a week to do properly.

Steps:

Although different headings are used by different LFA practitioners, the matrix usually looks something like this:

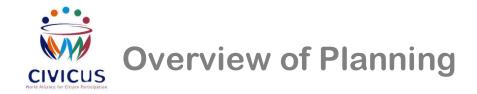| Narrative summary	Objectively verifiable indicators (see Glossary of Terms)	Means of verification	Important assumptions (see Glossary of Terms) about conditions
Overall goal/development goal			
Project purpose			
Result Areas (what must be achieved in order to fulfil the project purpose)			
Activities			

Monitoring and Evaluation

(see also the separate toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation)

Monitoring is the systematic, ongoing collection of data (information) in order to assess progress and make changes and adjustments where necessary. Information collected through monitoring makes an important contribution to evaluation. Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of a development organisation or development work, with the aim of determining the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the work. Through monitoring and evaluation, development decision-makers are given the information they need to improve, maintain, change or develop their work, and to learn from their experiences.

A whole toolkit has been devoted to monitoring and evaluation. Here we are concerned to touch on some of the aspects of monitoring and evaluation that are closely linked to planning.

If you plan with monitoring and evaluation in mind, then you make monitoring and evaluation much easier. This is one of the reasons why the LFA (see previous page) is such a useful planning tool – it builds in indicators (see Glossary of Terms) against which development work can be monitored and evaluated.

PLANNING FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The most useful evaluations are those that are built into the work of the organisation or project as part of the planning process. Not only does this mean that evaluation is planned from the beginning, but also that, as the work progresses, the right kind of information can be collected to make evaluation easier. Planning for evaluation should begin from the moment that a needs assessment is done, and on through the planning stages. Being clear about the impact you want to have (the difference you want to make), and the objectives you want to achieve in order to do this, is part of planning – but this kind of clarity also makes for the most useful evaluation and guides the monitoring process.

Your **problem analysis** (see section on this) is the starting point for both your planning process and the evaluation process. It provides a **baseline** (see Glossary of Terms**)** against which future work can be measured: the evaluation of impact measures where you are now against the starting point that was established in the problem analysis. If the problem analysis highlighted poor final year schooling results as a key problem, then monitoring information will be collected on this, and impact evaluation will be based on the improvement in this pass rate. If the problem analysis established that low employment levels were a key problem and the project undertook to address this, then employment levels after the intervention will be measured against employment levels at the beginning of the intervention in order to evaluate impact. Your **overall goals** provide the target at which you are aiming, so you are able to assess or compare your achievements against your targets; while your more **specific objectives** and your **action planning** provide interim targets for what you must do. So each planning step becomes part of the monitoring and evaluation process. **Your strategic framework** provides a **qualitative framework** for the evaluation by providing guidelines for assessing operations against operational principles. Did you do things the way you said you would? Did you involve beneficiaries? Did you collaborate? Did you maximise the use of resources? and so on.

Your planning process should tell you what kind of information you need to collect so that monitoring and evaluation can take place. It should also provide you with indicators (see Glossary of Terms and the next section) or signposts that become the focus points for monitoring and evaluation.

INDICATORS

Indicators are measurable or tangible signs that something has been done. So, for example, an increase in the number of students passing is an indicator of an improved culture of learning and teaching. The means of verification (proof) is the officially published list of passes.

Another example: a government HIV/AIDS programme had as its impact indicators:

- Reduction in the incidence rate of HIV infection;
- Reduction in teenage pregnancies;
- Reduction in the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases;
- Increased distribution of barrier methods;
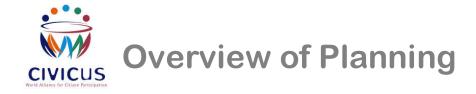- Baseline shifts in specifically targeted groups.

By measuring these indicators over time, the programme hoped to be able to show that it was having an impact. Defining these indicators was part of its planning process. It was planning for monitoring and evaluation – this is another way of saying it was planning so that it could be held accountable for the money spent on the programme.

But the programme went further than this. It also established indicators of good practice by which the "how" of its work could be assessed. These indicators included:

- Consultation with key stakeholders takes place regularly;
- Collaboration with other actors takes place whenever possible;
- Implementation is marked by transparency – open communication with the public;
- Information sharing takes place on an ongoing basis;
- Efficient use of resources.

Clearly, there would be no point in establishing these "how" indicators when the time arrived for evaluation. They needed to be stated upfront in the planning process, as part of the strategic framework, usually in the form of operational principles, based on organisational values (see the section on Elements of a strategic framework).

It is not always obvious how one actually measures indicators even when they are as tangible (concrete) as the examples given. If you want to have information on your indicators available for monitoring and evaluation, then you do need to establish ways of measuring. We deal with this in the next section: Planning to measure.

PLANNING TO MEASURE

How do you measure indicators?

This is another question that needs to be answered during the planning process so that systems of measuring and recording can be put in place immediately.

So, for example, the government programme on HIV/AIDS needs to be sure that statistics are available to enable it to measure its indicators such as "reduction in teenage pregnancy" or "increased distribution of barrier methods". Very often, civil society organisations rely on government statistics to measure impact at the macro (big) level, but they need to put in place methods for measuring impact within a project context. So, for example, if the hoped for impact is "better quality of life" in a community, and one of the indicators is "increased percentage of household income spent on education and recreation", there would need to be a baseline survey of what was spent on education and recreation at the beginning of the intervention, and then regular follow-ups in the same households. These surveys would need to be included in the action planning and in the budgeting.

What about qualitative indicators?

Is it possible to measure an indicator such as "consultation with key stakeholders takes place regularly"? Yes, it is, provided you know in advance that you will need to be able to show this. All that is required is a simple filing system with a folder headed "Consultation with key stakeholders". A record of these meetings is then filed in this folder each time they occur. This folder then forms the basis for regular analysis and reporting on the types of stakeholders who have been consulted, and the frequency of such consultations. These analyses can inform management practice (should we be doing more with any group?) as well as provide backup in the accountability process.

All this is dealt with in far more detail in the toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation. The important point to note here is that this kind of measurement is only possible if it is included in the action planning process. All action plans should include the setting up and/or maintenance of a monitoring and evaluation system.

BEST PRACTICE

Example

An organisation called Enough for All (EFA) had been set up in the early 1990s to promote sustainable development in a developing country (Country A). It focused on educating young people at schools about environmental issues, and had three departments: Education, Publications and a Secretariat which included the financial and administrative arms of the organisation. When the organisation was set up, it had been agreed that its impact would be measured in terms of a baseline survey which had been done in 1992 with adults in the 18 to 24 age group, to determine their attitude to the environment. The survey had found this group to be very ignorant of the fundamentals of sound environmental practices.

At the end of the year 2000, and in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, planned for 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Board of EFA agreed to a request from the management team for EFA to initiate a full-scale planning process.

Step 1:   In preparation for the planning process, EFA commissioned two experts on sustainable development to do an evaluation of what it had achieved in the past seven years, and requested that they work with an organisational development consultancy which would do an organisational diagnosis, looking at internal issues within EFA that impacted on the work.

        The evaluation team found that there had been a signficant growth in understanding of sound environmental practices in the targeted age group in Country A. However, as EFA had not done surveys, or before and after studies, among its direct beneficiaries, it was difficult to attribute this change to the work of EFA. They did note that EFA, unlike many civil society organisations, had gone to scale and reached 20 000 high school children each year, that its publications were of a high quality, and that the sample of students included in the evaluation who had gone through the EFA education programme were better informed on environmental issues than the control group (see Glossary of Terms) that the evaluators had set up. The evaluators further noted that the EFA strategy of focusing on school-going youth was limiting the impact of its work as it did not reach those who were more immediately likely to be involved in environmental decision-making in Country A.

        Internally, the evaluation team noted that, while the organisation was well-managed, the fact that it did not do lobbying and advocacy work as a major field of activity meant that it had lost some of its most knowledgeable and valuable staff members over the years. Professional staff complained that the scope of activity in the organisation was very limited. Several now worked for international agencies. EFA spent a lot of time and effort training professional staff who seldom stayed more than two years.

Step 2:   As a further preliminary step to the planning process, EFA got one of its ex-staff members, who was then working for an international agency, to come in and lead a morning seminar in which all staff and some Board members participated. The topic of the seminar was: *The current status of sustainable development internationally and nationally*. The expert's input was followed by some lively discussion, from which it became clear that Country A was sadly lagging behind international trends in its environmental policies and legislation. The policy-makers, who tended to be in their forties and older, had not been influenced by EFA's work at all. EFA began to think that its original problem analysis which had focused on the ignorance among the young people of the country needed to be rethought. At a special session, the programme staff reworked their problem tree and decided that the focal point was the lack of sound policies, and that this was integrally linked to the general ignorance about environmental issues at every level of the society.
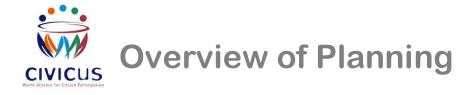
Step 3:   The management team then asked one of the members of the evaluation team (from the organisational development consultancy) to facilitate a strategic planning workshop. Although they could have done this themselves, they felt that having an outsider with an in-depth understanding of the organisation would push them to be more rigorous (see Glossary of Terms). With her help, the staff and some Board members examined their vision, values and mission statement. They found that, while their vision remained much the same, as did the values on which their operating principles were based, most people in the organisation felt that the mission statement needed to change to accommodate what they had learned from the evaluation and the challenges that had emerged during the seminar. The revised mission statement was:

EFA is working towards a situation where Country A has sound environmental policies and can guarantee ongoing sustainable development for the benefit of all. We believe that this is best achieved through the education of all our citizens, and through ensuring that our legislators are well-informed on environmental issues. To this end, we use all available avenues to educate and inform our citizens about environmental issues and to encourage the promulgation and implementation of environmentally sound legislation. We do this in partnership with other agencies in civil society that share our beliefs.

So EFA's overall goal/development goal of sound environmental policies and sustianble development for all remained unchanged. More specifically, it now saw itself as bringing about legislative or policy change as well as ensuring that all school children were educated on the issues. Its immediate goals (project purpose) were to see that the country's legislators understood the issues, and to ensure that the country had an informed citizenry overall. EFA set some measurable indicators for success, including:

At least 70% of all current legislators have a score of 80% or more on a sustainable development questionnaire before the 2002 summit. (It was agreed that a baseline questionnaire would be done for comparative purposes).

Step 4:   With this clarified, EFA, helped by the external facilitator, reviewed its strategy and decided that it was very limited and would have to be extended so that a wide target group and a wide variety of educational techniques were included. Its strategy now became mass education and lobbying and advocacy work. The programme staff felt that they could build on their publications and training skills but that they did not have expertise in lobbying and advocacy which should be a major part of their strategy.

Step 5:   In a further session, still with the external facilitator, EFA developed new SMART objectives and reviewed its structure. On the basis of its reworked strategy, it decided that it needed an advocacy and lobbying unit, an education and media unit, and a secretariat. This would clearly involve capacity development and some staff recruitment, as well as the formation of partnerships.   This would need to be taken into account when the organisation did its action planning. At this point, the external facilitator wished them luck and withdrew, leaving EFA to do its own action planning.

Step 6:   The newly structured departments worked individually to draw up action plans and budgets which were then reviewed by the management team. As they did not yet have a staffed advocacy and lobbying unit, the management team worked on this action plan and budget, in preparation for drawing up job descriptions and human resourcing plans.

Of course, the work had only just begun, but the Board and staff of EFA were excited and filled with energy and enthusiasm.

RESOURCES

CIVICUS would like to acknowledge the following as invaluable resources in the preparation of this toolkit:

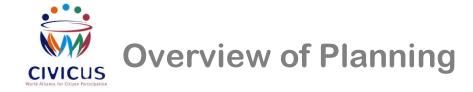Olive Publications   *Ideas for a Change: Part 1:   How are you managing organisational change?* July 1997

Olive Publications   *Ideas for a Change: Part 2: Organisation diagnosis?* December 1997

Olive Publications   *Project Planning for Development*, Olive 1998

Shapiro, Janet   *Evaluation: Judgement Day or Management Tool?*   Olive 1996

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Assumptions	When used in the context of a logframe analysis, assumptions are the beliefs you have, founded on knowledge and experience, about the conditions under which you will be operating. So, for example, if you are planning a project that supports informal sector businesses, then you may have an assumption that the government of the country in which you are operating is supportive of the informal sector. If you are wrong in your assumption, this may lead to the collapse of the project. In our example, if the government starts to arrest people running informal sector businesses, or imposes unrealistic taxes on them, this is likely to have very bad consequences for your project. When an incorrect assumption leads to the collapse of a project it is referred to as a "killer assumption".
Baseline investigation	A baseline investigation is a study done before an intervention. It provides you with data (information) about the situation before an intervention. This information is very important when you get to monitoring and evaluation as it enables you to assess what difference the intervention has made.
Control group	A control group is a group of people, similar to those who have been involved in an intervention, but who have not had the intervention. Where no baseline study exists with which to compare a sample, a control group provides some data about impact.
Indicator	An indicator is a measurable or tangible sign that something has been done or achieved. So, for example, an increase in the number of students passing is an indicator of an improved culture of learning and teaching. The means of verification (proof) is the officially published list of passes.
Leverage	Leverage means the ability to make a big difference through a relatively small action or step because it involves many aspects of the problem.
Opportunity cost	Opportunity cost is the cost in terms of alternative ways in which money and time can be spent. If they are spent on your organisation or project, they cannot be spent elsewhere. It is always important to assess the worthiness of your ideas and plans rigorously in terms of opportunity cost.
Problem tree	A problem tree is a tool or technique which will help you to analyse the problems in a community and the causes and effects of the problems.

Rigorous

Rigorous is a word that describes a systematic, honest, disciplined way of working. When you are rigorous, you do not look for easy solutions or easy ways out. You look for real understanding and honest responses, even if they are difficult.

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation is an international alliance established in 1993 to nurture the foundation, growth and protection of citizen action throughout the world, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizens' freedom of association are threatened. CIVICUS envisions a worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens in confronting the challenges facing humanity.

These CIVICUS Toolkits have been produced to assist civil society organisations build their capacity and achieve their goals. The topics range from budgeting, strategic planning and dealing with the media, to developing a financial strategy and writing an effective funding proposal. All are available on-line, in MS-Word and PDF format at www.civicus.org and on CD-ROM.

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