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BENEFITS OF USING **LOGICAL FRAMEWORK APPROACH** IN THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

In India with wide spread inequality and contrasting realities, work in the field of social development is a focus area for stakeholders that include government, donors, social activists and social organizations, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), socially responsible private organizations and international development organizations. According to a recent article in *Wall Street Journal*, since the year 2000 a few segments that have attracted large foreign investments in the social sector include those for underprivileged education, healthcare for the poor, microfinance, financial inclusion, development of social entrepreneurship etc. The new Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Bill to reserve 2% profits of public enterprises towards CSR activities is expected to further fuel the growth of the social sector in India.

A pertinent question is: what do social development activities achieve? Can we measure performance outcome of social development work effectively? Does the CSR framework have broader implications for the private sector?
Measuring the effectiveness of social development work is important for the following reasons:

- The recipient of the aid or support program such as the underprivileged section of the population being targeted under the particular scheme may have an interest in knowing the extent to which their situation will be improved as a result of social development effort. They can provide timely feedback for any course-correction as well as help donors/stakeholders to keep a check on efforts by implementation partners.

- Donors as well as implementation partners need to know whether the resources they invest in the activities have indeed made the greatest possible contribution towards achieving pre-determined goals e.g. poverty reduction / health care coverage etc.

- Local as well as national and international development organizations have a need to learn from their experience and clearly know what works and what doesn't work in a local setting to continuously improve their social development programmes.

One such monitoring and evaluation method for development projects was introduced in United States in the 1960s called 'Logical Framework Approach (LFA)' which was extensively adopted by most of the developmental agencies across the globe including United States Agency for International Development (USAID), German Development Organization (GTZ) and the World Bank.

Several bilateral and multilateral agencies and many NGOs have made this framework a mandatory standard for project planning and project management since the 1980s. The logical framework matrix consists of 16 fields divided into different areas. The matrix consists of a causal chain of results, hierarchy of objectives and intervention logics. In the planning phase, the matrix is used to elaborate the project design or the logical model, step by step. This model is used as a basis for designing detailed tasks in project life cycle management such as annual operation planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

For many people the advantage of LFA is that it forces people to carefully think through what they are planning to do and create a hypothesis aimed at change for the ultimate beneficiary, which has to be proved. LFA can encourage transparency and flexibility in planning a project with stakeholders. It is a powerful way to focus ideas, coordinate resources and pinpoint future difficulties and opportunities.

In the logical framework matrix *(Table 1)*, the first column has a hierarchical project causal chain at four levels. It starts with the direct effect / outcome of the project. At the two lower levels, there are outputs and activities enumerated that the project will provide in order to achieve the project outcomes.
At the highest level is the project goal or the long term structural change which the project is expected to achieve or contribute to. The stringency of causal relationship between the four levels decreases from bottom to top as external influences increase at each level of the log-frame (i.e. the matrix).

The key element of determining effectiveness of the project design is effectiveness of the causality between levels of outcomes and outputs. The second and third columns capture indicators that make it possible to monitor

achievements independently and objectively.

Although they are already identified at the planning stage, these parameters could be adapted or modified during course of implementation. As no indicators are necessary to monitor project activities, the corresponding field in the matrix is used to capture required input resources.

In the fourth column, identification of external factors or risks helps to give assurance about a causal relationship between two consecutive levels under absence of risk materialization.
The core of the Logical Framework is the logic model that runs through the matrix in the form of a series of connected propositions:

~ If these Activities are implemented, and these Assumptions hold, then these Outputs will be delivered
~ If these Outputs are delivered, and these Assumptions hold, then this Purpose will be achieved.
~ If this Purpose is achieved, and these Assumptions hold, then this Goal will be achieved.

Critics of the LFA note that the underlying logic model is too simple for the complex realities encountered in the field. They add that the LFA encourages blinkered vision and allows little flexibility. In practice, log frames (i.e. the matrix) are often filled out without going through the whole planning process, which defeats the methodology. The LFA is occasionally criticised for being based on an exclusively western way of thinking and therefore not very suited to other cultures.

Despite some criticism, the LFA has become a key project management and strategic planning tool for the public or the social sector. It is also useful for the planning of several private sector projects, especially when lack of clarity of objectives presents challenges, which if not addressed may lead to project failure.

PERTINENT QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED

- *What do social development activities achieve?*

- *Can we measure performance outcome of social development work effectively?*

- *Does the CSR framework have broader implications for the private sector?*

		Hierarchy of Objectives	Indicator	Means of verification	Assumptions (external factors / risks)
Effects of project	*Long Term Vision*	**Goals / overall objective** Improvement in the living condition of people and/or in the situation of natural resources to which the project makes a contribution *(broader targeted impact)*	Key indicators related to the overall goal	Sources of information for indicators / methods to get this information?	External factors to sustain overall objectives in the long term
	Direct Effect	**Project objective / outcome / purpose** Changes in the behaviour and in the capacities of key persons, people and/or organizations (target group) *(Utilization of project outputs, adoption of improved practices and changes of attitude)*	Indicate benchmark indicators to prove whether intended changes in the behavior and capacities have been achieved	Sources of information for indicators / methods to get this information?	Factors and conditions are necessary to achieve outcome towards goal
Operation domain of project		**Outputs** Products and services provided by the project *(training on new knowledge, skills and attitude, improved or new technologies, new tools, new equipment, new methods, resources, infrastructure etc.)*	Indicate benchmark indicators to prove whether project outputs have been provided in sufficient quantity and quality	Sources of information for indicators / methods to get this information	External conditions required to obtain expected outputs on schedule towards objective
		Activities Set of project activities to provide the outputs. A group of activities can be mapped to each of the project outputs.	**Means / costs** Financial, material and human resources means as well as their costs		Pre-conditions before the action starts to provide outputs

UTILITIES OF LFA

LFA is useful for the planning of several private sector projects, especially when lack of clarity of objectives presents challenges, which if not addressed may lead to project failure.

LFA can encourage transparency and flexibility in planning a project with stakeholders. It is a powerful way to focus ideas, coordinate resources and pinpoint future difficulties and opportunities.

The LFA communicates the essential elements of a complex project clearly and succinctly throughout the project cycle.

In a research carried by Booz Allen Hamilton in 2006, it was empirically demonstrated that for private sector projects in oil and gas companies in UK, adopting LFA has increased the success rates of projects.

When applied within an organization, the LFA can be a means of articulating a common interpretation of objectives of a project among all stakeholders and how these will be achieved.

The LFA has the power to communicate the essential elements of a complex project clearly and succinctly throughout the project cycle. It is used to develop the overall design of a project, to improve the monitoring of project implementation and to strengthen periodic project evaluation.

The adoption of LFA by private organizations, its customization and coupling with a few other project management techniques offers a more promising future for project management.

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