

# Logframe - A Critique

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Logical Framework Analysis (Logframe) and its variants as a required method for planning and monitoring illustrate how procedures can reinforce relationships of power and control. With origins in management practices for infrastructure projects, the logframe embodies a linear logic associated with things rather than people, with simple and controlled conditions, and with closed systems. It has what has been called vertical and horizontal logic, required in a matrix form. The vertical logic down the matrix is concerned with ends and means - with objectives, goals and purposes, then outputs, then the activities intended to achieve the outputs. The horizontal logic across the matrix is from narrative summary to objectively verifiable indicators and means of verification. A final vertical column is used to identify assumptions about the external environment that enable or hinder the realization of activities, outputs and purpose.

In many instances, in its time, the logframe has served well to focus attention on the links between activities and their intended effects, and, hence, to sharpen interventions. For example, at the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the logframe was found to be useful in shifting the focus from technology toward people, and in demanding evidence of the connections between proposed activities and their impacts on poverty. This signals that certain procedures have their time and place; but changing conditions may require their reassessment and replacement. In its heyday, the logframe gave rise to a small army of practitioners who trained others in the technique, and then helped them to carry it out. Some agencies have now abandoned it or do not require it - although there are indications that a new generation of policy makers are favouring it as a requirement for funding proposals.

Most critics of the logframe recognize the value of thinking through some of the vertical logic of a project, but find the experience of using it costly and disempowering. Donor-induced logframe meetings rarely include poor people, yet participatory poverty assessments present much evidence that the priorities of poor people often differ from those perceived by outsiders and local elites. Often, expatriates dominate and the language is English. The idea in ZOPP (*Ziel-Orientierte Projekt Planung*), a close relative of the logframe developed by the German aid agency Deutsche Gesellschaft for Technische Zusammenarbeit, is that stakeholders should brainstorm until they agree on one single core problem. This involves a reductionism that flies in the face of multiple and changing realities. Logframe analysis more generally inhibits process and participation and is often experienced as rigid and constraining. When the actual and sensible activities being undertaken differ from those in the frame, reporting can become a nightmare, and the eventual external 'purpose-to-outcome' evaluation can be perceived as a looming threat rather than an opportunity to learn and do better.

The common experience has been a control orientation that discourages innovation and learning, and reinforces unequal power relations. The reluctance of disempowered recipients to tell powerful donors how bad they find the logframe and how it generates frustration and anger seems likely to have been a factor in prolonging its life. External practitioners, well-meaning intermediaries and some NGOs have found a niche industry in supplying expertise to prepare and report on logframes for others, sparing them those demotivating and time-consuming tasks. 'How to do it' guides have been produced for contexts, especially problematical for logframes. Whatever their merits, these are liable to perpetuate the logframe, the myths that surround it and the unequal power relationships that it induces and sustains.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Robert Chambers and Jethro Pettit *Shifting Power to Make a Difference* in "Inclusive Aid : Changing power and relationships in international development" by Leslie Groves and Rachel Hinton, (2004) Earthscan, London