HUMANITARIAN ACADEMY · HUMANITAIRES JOBS

Project DPro (PMD Pro) Foundation exam preparation

Course handout · Day 3 : The logical framework, theory of change and indicators

Independent, free preparation for the Project DPro Foundation (PMD Pro) exam: 8 days of 6 hours to master the five project phases (identification and definition, set up, planning, implementation, closure), the logframe, governance, the critical path, risks, change control and the guide's five principles. Guided readings in the free PM4NGOs guide, graded deliverables, quizzes with explanations and three original mock exams, including a full one in the official format (75 questions, 2 hours, 65%). The official exam is taken and paid for with PM4NGOs; this preparation is neither endorsed nor accredited by PM4NGOs.

https://humanitairejobs.org/en/academy/preparation-examen-pmd-pro/jour-3/

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Day 3 : The logical framework, theory of change and indicators

Objectives

- Build a consistent logical framework: vertical logic, horizontal logic, assumptions.
- Write SMART indicators with means of verification, baseline and target.
- Link the logical framework to the theory of change and to the monitoring and evaluation plan.

The theory of change

The **theory of change** explains how and why the project's actions should lead to the intended change. It makes the intermediate steps and necessary conditions visible. Example: "If households have access to safe water within 500 m *and* adopt handwashing, *then* diarrhoea among children will decrease, *because* the main transmission routes will be cut, *provided that* the water points are maintained."

The theory of change is broader and more explanatory; the logical framework is its concise, measurable version, expected by most donors.

Vertical logic

The logical framework is read from bottom to top:

- **Activities**: what the team does (drill, train, distribute).
- **Outputs**: what the project directly delivers and controls (15 functioning water points, 300 people trained).
- **Outcomes** (or specific objective): changes in behaviour or situation among beneficiaries (households use safe water).
- **Impact** (or goal): the long-term change to which the project contributes along with others (reduced child mortality).

The project manager is responsible for outputs. They influence outcomes but do not fully control them. Impact depends on many actors.

Assumptions and the "if… and… then" logic

Assumptions are external conditions, outside the project's control, needed to move from one level to the next. The reading is: *if* the activities are carried out *and* the assumptions at this level hold, *then* the outputs will be achieved; and so on.

An assumption must not be a condition the project can guarantee itself (otherwise it is an activity to add). A very likely assumption does not need to be written; a very unlikely and decisive one is a "killer": the design must be reviewed.

Horizontal logic: indicators and means of verification

Each level has its **indicators**, its **means of verification** (where and how the data will be collected) and its assumptions. An indicator states the **baseline** (at the start), the **target** and the deadline.

A good indicator is **SMART**: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. Weak example: "improved hygiene". Correct example: "% of targeted households reporting handwashing with soap at key times, from 15% (baseline, March) to 60% (end of project), KAP survey".

From the logical framework to the monitoring and evaluation plan

The logical framework is not a document to file away after signature. It feeds the **monitoring and evaluation plan**: for each indicator, the definition, collection method, frequency, person responsible, tool and planned use of the data. It also sets the evaluation points (mid-term, final) and the questions they will ask.

PM4NGOs also publishes a free specialised guide on monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, MEAL DPro, which details these tools.

Exercise: repair a logical framework

Situation. A colleague proposes: impact "train 300 health workers"; outcome "15 water points built"; output "30% reduction in diarrhoea"; assumption "the team will carry out the activities on time".

Task. Find the four mistakes and rewrite correctly.

Answer. 1) "Train 300 workers" is an activity or output, not an impact. 2) "15 water points built" is an output, not an outcome. 3) "Reduction in diarrhoea" is an outcome or a contribution to impact, not an output. 4) Carrying out activities on time is under the project's control: it is not an assumption. Correct version: impact "contribute to reducing child mortality"; outcome "30% reduction in diarrhoea prevalence among under-5s"; outputs "15 functioning water points, 300 workers trained"; assumption "management committees maintain the water points".

Key takeaways

- Vertical logic: activities → outputs → outcomes → impact, read with "if… and… then".
- The project controls outputs, influences outcomes and contributes to impact.
- An assumption is external; if the project can guarantee it, it is an activity.
- SMART indicator with baseline, target, deadline and means of verification.
- The logical framework feeds the monitoring and evaluation plan (see also MEAL DPro).

Quiz

1. "15 water points built and functioning" is, in a logical framework:
   A. An assumption
   B. An impact
   C. An output
   D. An outcome

2. Which of these is a correct assumption?
   A. Cement prices remain stable
   B. 100% of the budget will be spent
   C. The project will build 15 water points
   D. The team will recruit an engineer

3. Which indicator is the most SMART?
   A. Clear improvement in access to safe water across the district
   B. % of targeted households using an improved source: 30% → 80% by December
   C. Number of people made aware of hygiene during the project
   D. Communities' satisfaction with the water points built

4. The correct reading of the vertical logic is:
   A. If the impact is achieved, then activities can start in the field
   B. If indicators are carefully chosen, outputs will be delivered
   C. If outputs are delivered and assumptions hold, then outcomes follow
   D. If the budget is approved by the donor, the impact is guaranteed

5. An assumption is judged both decisive and very unlikely. What should be done?
   A. Review the design
   B. Keep it as it is
   C. Turn it into an indicator
   D. Remove it from the framework

6. What is the project manager directly responsible for?
   A. National policies
   B. The assumptions
   C. The outputs
   D. The impact

7. Which column of the logical framework states where and how the data will be collected?
   A. Intervention logic
   B. Project assumptions
   C. Means of verification
   D. Objective indicators

8. How does the theory of change complement the logical framework?
   A. It details the schedule and budget of each activity
   B. It explains why and under what conditions change happens
   C. It replaces the logframe when the donor accepts it
   D. It sets the numerical targets of each project indicator

Quiz answers : 1. C · 2. B · 3. C · 4. A · 5. C · 6. B · 7. A · 8. B