

# Project Management

E-Course

Module 1

This document was prepared by Rtr. Bhuwan K.C. for E-course on Project Management. This document introduces participants to the concept of project management and to the values upon which it is based.

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## Introducing Project Management and Developing Objectives

### Introduction

In this module you will be introduced to the concept of project management and to the values upon which it is based. You will consider objectives as statements of intended action. You will develop skills in writing objectives using the SMART technique—explained later in the module—and will develop an awareness of the ways in which a vision for social change can be recorded as achievable actions. As an outcome you will have a set of well-defined, realistic objectives which will form the basis of your action plan.

### Project management

Project management became one of the ‘buzz words’ of the 1990s; everyone was using it. The term marked a shift from the management of routine work to the conceptualization of work as something which could be done in separate parts, as projects. ***It identified the fact that tasks could be brought together and managed as though they were part of a business or industrial enterprise, within a known time frame and with specific resources.*** In the non-government sector, its introduction also tended to coincide with a shift from funding for on-going operations to funding for a particular activity, which in turn, needed to be managed. In all aspects of the non-government sector, the inability to guarantee resources, except in the short term, has become part of every day experiences for many people. In the youth sector, volunteers are less likely to commit themselves to long-term, on-going activities. Project management has therefore increased in significance, as it becomes both a way to attract volunteers and a way to manage their involvement in actions for social change.

Project management brings with it a number of key terms, such as accountability, responsibility, timelines, vision, strategic planning, objectives, operational plans, resource allocation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These terms will be discussed throughout the modules; there is also a glossary attached you may refer to. Project management also implies the need to think and to plan at different levels, from the beginning of your project to its conclusion.

First, you must understand the difference between projects and programs. A **project** is a short-term activity that is temporary and targeted to make a short-term impact with potentially long-term consequences. A **program** is made up of a series of projects that have a short term and a long term impact. To illustrate the differences, take a look at the following examples.



### Example of Project:

UJALA is a rights-based service delivery women empowerment project in Karachi focusing on primary and curative health care services for marginalized girls and women living in brothels, serving on the streets and Kothi Khanas, an area located in the heart of Karachi from Kemari to Toll Plaza. This area is densely populated and host a lots of female commercial sex workers, pimps, in and out side county clients e.g. foreigner visitors, inter country migrant people, shipmen and luggage carriers etc.

Through rights sensitivity and women empowerment approaches, this project aims at providing women with an awareness of fundamental basic health, primary and curative health care rights so that women can sustain their livelihoods and improve their quality of life. It does so through **HIV** pre/post test counselling and support, and legal and protection referral services throughout the project area.

### What makes this a project?

This project is short term for a specific group of people and will have a limited impact because it is a temporary activity.

### Example of Program:

The Students against Global AIDS (SAGA) in Canada is creating a high school outreach curriculum that they hope will give Canadian youth a more in-depth understanding of the vast repercussions of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. Whereas many other HIV workshops educate high school students on prevention strategies – primarily the “ABC” approach – this program focuses more on the socio-political consequences of the epidemic, and practical steps that the students can take to make a difference. The curriculum will consist primarily of an interactive role-playing “game” in which each of the students will be given an identity in a rural village of a high-prevalence country. After the game, students will be encouraged to share what they have learned with friends and family, and to lobby politicians for more financial and political support towards international development commitments, including the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.

### What makes this a program?

SAGA is developing a curriculum that will be facilitated in high schools throughout Canada for an extended period of time. The intention is for many high schools to take the curriculum and implement it as an ongoing program in their school. Because of its duration and extensive outreach, it is considered a program.

Each of you should also be aware of the purposes of strategic plans, operational plans and implementation plans.

- **Strategic plans** set out the ‘big picture’ and focus on the overall direction of a program or organisation for a period of three to five years.
- **Operational plans** show what has to be achieved, the time frame within which specific projects will happen, and the activities that will take place.



- **Implementation plans** give the details of what work is to be done, by whom and when. It is a blueprint for action. The reality is that most of the time we do not document our implementation plans.

### Values of project management

When you start to work in a project management framework, it is important to acknowledge that you are also adopting a set of values that will have an impact on the way you and others will act. You cannot change this basic value set, although you will have some influence over the relative importance of each of the values as they are put into practice in your organisation.

**Efficiency** is focusing efforts and resources on the directed activities to maximize time and energy. Efficiency is at the centre of project management.

**Economy** is the management of resources with an aim of constant productivity; this helps ensure that funders can see their investments were used effectively.

**Consistency** is adherence to your project mission/principles so that actions are consistent with the overall aims of the project.

**Quality** helps you 'achieve the best possible outcome' by ensuring you produce the highest level of work possible.

**Realism** is remembering that since projects happen in the real world, they must be feasible and your goals attainable.

In non-government and community organisations, the real responsibility for decisions and actions often lies with a Board of Directors, making individuals feel that they have little responsibility for their actions.

However, in project management, **accountability**— the responsibility for resources and actions and for explaining what has been done—rests with the Project Manager and with the individuals who undertake particular activities and tasks. Accountability also implies the need for clear and open decision-making (**transparency**) and also for thorough and fair reporting to the community and to the funding body on the project's achievements and failure (**visibility**).

**Creativity** and **innovation** are also essential for project management to avoid becoming too routine. The involvement of young people in project management is important in gaining fresh ideas and new ways of approaching well-established problems.

Finally, the management of a well-chosen and well-planned project is likely to increase **participation** by the community in a range of activities and events that can lead to social change.



## Project Values

Project management is not a neutral or value-free tool. And neither is a project a set of neutral, impartial activities. As well as showing the values of project management, each project has an ideological base. In particular, you can expect to find values such as:

- Respect for cultural diversity
- Equality among men and women
- The importance of independence and initiative among young people
- The significance of learning—including learning from others
- The participation of minorities and the disadvantaged
- The centrality of open communication among members of the network
- The encouragement of actions directed at practical, beneficial changes.

Basing a project on values such as these is what makes an IYP project different from many other projects. For example, a project developed by Craig Seiler, from Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia aimed to create a wider listener base for an indigenous youth radio station. The radio station has a ‘talkback’ segment, which aims to dispel the negative light in which young people are represented through the print media. The principles and values of IYP are clearly evident in this example.

In reporting the outcomes of your project, draw on the values of honesty, trust and integrity. When things go well, do not exaggerate your claims of achievement. And when things go badly, be honest in your reporting of the problems, using it as an opportunity for your own learning. Also consider what others could learn from your problems and mistakes. The values of transparency and visibility are particularly important here.

Aleksandra Zekovic and Vojislav Jovanovic, from Montenegro, who aimed to increase the number of youth who actively participate in planning and decision-making within the NGO sector, achieved their objectives.

*“Beside the very obvious outcomes, we could say that with this project we really increased the level of knowledge that youth activists have in the area of volunteering and NGO work. ... One of our training participants has been involved in a volunteer exchange program, which was a work camp in Denmark. ... One very important thing is that we have applied to Balkan Children Youth Foundation with our project, ‘Active youth in practice’ and it is approved!”*

James Hallowell and Emerson Kamara, from Peacelinks in Sierra Leone, set out to train young ex-combatants in basic tailoring, so that they would have an income generating skill. Their program was successful and they reported:

*“The training program was documented and shown in the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service Television Programme “Youth in Perspective” (SLBS/TV) and we ended the program with a low key certification ceremony that attracted government authorities. As they were impressed by our work, they asked us to apply for funding for the SHARP program.”*



Reporting on problems you confront during your project is essential for effective learning. Through communication with others you may find a solution presents itself or someone else may offer a contingency plan. Here is how IYP action partners from 2000 reported on bad news.

*"I have some good news and some bad news at the moment. ... I broke my shoulder six weeks ago. I was unable to do any typing for the Online Chat with the dancers at the scheduled time and had to postpone this,"* said Carmen Daniels. *"Crafts for the economy and peace"* had been suspended for a month because *"our indigenous teacher ... was selected by her community to represent the rights and interests of the Embera indigenous people at the local political elections. What a shame she was not elected!"* said Ana María Marín.

### Setting objectives

The objectives of a project will reflect these values as well as indicate clearly what the project will achieve.

Some people talk about setting the objectives as 'the definition of the project.' This may be a more useful way for some people to start thinking about the process of planning.

'Defining a project' suggests an analytical approach, where a common meaning has been agreed, and then written down for all to refer to, rather like the definitions for words that we find in the dictionary.

Defining a project involves analysing the needs of the community from the community's perspective as well as analysing the capabilities of the organisation. These two processes will provide a number of possibilities for a project. The challenging part in creating a definition of a project, as in writing the definition of a word, is to make it simple, clear and unambiguous. You are likely to be confused about how to choose the best possibility and turn it into a reality.

One of the techniques available to help minimise your confusion is the use of the 'W questions', according to the European Union's Project Management T-KIT (see the bibliography). You ask yourself specific questions whose answers will identify the individual elements of the project and show you how to link them. The questions are:

#### Who? – For who and with who?

Who are the target groups? Who are the partners? What are their roles? What are their views on the project? What are the strengths and weaknesses which come from these relationships?



### What?

What are the main activities and how will they occur? What are the social, political, economic, cultural and educational dimensions of the project? What will be the project's impact?

### Why?

What needs are satisfied by the project? What motivates the participants? What are the aims and objectives of the project? What are the funding options?

### Where?

What is the social context of the project? What is the situation of the participants? Is there any reason to focus on geographic location?

### When?

What is the time frame for the project; short term, medium term or long term? When will it be implemented and how does that match the flow of activities in the community?

### How?

How will the project be implemented? What are the techniques used? How will the experience, knowledge, skills and ideas of the participants and volunteers be used in developing the project?

The answers to these questions become the basis from which you will write the project's objectives. Writing your objectives can be thought of as the documentation of your hopes and visions for the project.

**Objectives** are statements of specific action within a given time frame. Some texts say that they are a way of making the project 'concrete.' But since concrete is an inflexible building material once it has set, it may be more appropriate to say that objectives are statements which make the project realistic and achievable while also allowing you some flexibility in the ways you will reach your achievements. Objectives show what will be done, by whom and in what time frame.

Objectives should be simple and clearly worded, so that they can be easily shared with others and communicated to the public. When you start writing your objectives, your first task is to record what will change in the community when the project is complete. These are the **aims** of your project. Whatever else changes, the aim of your project cannot change or you will be working on a different project. The aims give the ideological, educational and operational framework for the project.

For example, Lamin Camara, from the Gambia, states the aim of his project as "*Raising awareness on the issue of AIDS.*"



## Writing SMART objectives

**SMART objectives** are another management buzz word. **SMART** is a useful way to remember and put into words many of the elements that make project management successful. Each letter of the word stands for an idea which you need to include in the objectives. In this section, the examples will be from projects intending to improve child health. Many communities have determined that improvements in children's health are significant in breaking out of a cycle of poverty.

### **S** stands for *specific*

The project goals and methods through which they will be achieved are clearly defined.

**Specific objective** The youth education team will produce two different posters about prevention of meningococcal disease and send copies to all of the school principals in the region for distribution through the notice boards.

Action words such as produce, send and 'for distribution' help convey exactly what will occur.

This objective assumes that the school principals have already agreed to support the project. When you are writing specific objectives, it's important to make sure that you have the agreement of all the people who will be carrying out an action.

### **M** stands for *multiple and measurable*

Most projects will only have one or two aims, but they will have **more than one** objective. The main advantage of having more than one objective is that you can identify more than one way of reaching your aim. Several objectives are usually easier to work with and the resources are usually easier to control. If you use multiple objectives, you can focus more comfortably on the differences in the needs of the groups in your community and you can evaluate your achievements specifically, identifying what worked well and what did not work so well.

Sound objectives will also be **measurable**. They will refer to quantity, quality or cost using numeric language. Measurable objectives allow you and others to know how well you did in reaching your target. They also give you an opportunity to reflect on the challenges you have set. For example, if almost no one has been attending the workshops you run, it would be reasonable to think that you can promote attendance and increase the number of people attending by 10%. If, however, 80% of the young people in your community already attend, and you want to attract parents and other adults, it might be more appropriate to focus on maintaining the proportion of young people attending and add an extra objective which indicates your intention to increase the number of parents attending by 10%.



**Measurable objective** The youth education team will increase attendance at the workshops on HIV/AIDS prevention techniques by 10% over last year's attendance figures.

### **A** stands for *attainable or achievable*

The objectives you set need to be ones over which you have control and influence. Your ability to achieve what you set out to do must not be dependent on someone else. If you wanted to improve the health of children in your community, and you believed that uncollected garbage contributed to sickness, you would not set an objective like "The Municipal Council will establish a garbage collection scheme for the Smithtown housing settlement," because you do not have control over the Municipal Council. You might say: The youth education team will hold a public meeting to draw the attention of the residents and the Municipal Council to the benefits of establishing a garbage collection scheme.

The objectives need to be limited in scope so they are within your grasp. **Achievable objective** The youth education committee will organise a one-day forum to be held in conjunction with Health Week and will invite health workers, managers from the municipal council and residents to discuss ways in which the incidence of malaria can be reduced.

### **R** stands for *results-focused and realistic*

Although you will be spending your time on the activities of the project, you have to keep in mind the reason for carrying out the project. In the objective, state the output or result that you expect to have rather than what you will do. Don't set out to impress by setting high targets; aim to make a difference in your community. If you are not realistic about what you want to achieve and fail to meet the high standard you set for yourself, you may find that you do not receive funding in the future because you 'failed to deliver.' Being unrealistic can put the longer-term vision of the project in danger.

### **Un-realistic objective**

Our organization will reform the village's health care system, ensuring all children have access to vaccines and vitamins.

### **Realistic, result-focused objective**

The youth education committee will work with the local health worker to ensure that the children under the age of 5 in 60% of the families in Smithtown have received the Vitamin A supplement by the end of 2004 and that records of who received the supplement have been kept.



## **T** stands for *time frame*

A project is always described in terms of the time when it will happen – a good time frame is essential for writing your objectives. *Timed* and *timely* are related English words that show the importance of the factor of time in setting the project's objectives. In saying that a project is 'timed,' it means that the objective states when the activity will happen or when the results or outcomes will be known. Timely has a different kind of meaning - a timely project is one which happens 'at the right time.' It may be 'timely' because a problem has just been recognized, because a national policy is beginning to support particular kinds of action for social change, or because a new solution is being recognized.

### **Time frame objective**

The youth education committee will update the HIV/AIDS prevention kit by June 24, in time for the next series of workshops, and will include information on the recent changes to drug availability and costs.

### **Why do projects fail?**

There are a number of reasons why a project may fail. It is important to consider some of the common factors given for projects not being successful in meeting their objectives.

Projects sometimes fail because:

- ✓ The original project idea about how to bring about the desired change is based on assumptions that proved to be inaccurate;
- ✓ Not enough background research is done when the project is being designed leading to preventable mistakes being made or the project failing completely. The timeline set for achieving the project objectives is unrealistic;
- ✓ the original goals were not clearly expressed, so participants either did not know what to aim for or did not know when they had achieved the objective;
- ✓ the Programme Coordinator does not communicate well with the project team, the community and the funders, especially when things are not going well; and
- ✓ There is poor record keeping and a lack of good administrative skills. Thus, the writing of objectives is significant in making sure that a project can be successful. Other common reasons are that:
  - ✓ the project team and community were not involved in designing and planning the project;



- ✓ the project team is either not involved in making decisions concerning the project or is not aware of how decisions are made.

Another key reason for a project failing is because the Program Coordinator does not have the authority to make decisions or to speak on behalf of the organisation. The role of the Program Coordinator will be explored in the next module.

## Conclusion

Project management, with its emphasis on a structured approach to action, will help you to identify the project values and the management values which are essential to a successful outcome. If you have already asked the 'W-questions' as suggested by the European Union Project Management T-KIT and mentioned above, you will have made a strong start on the management of your project. The SMART technique will be useful in helping you to clarify what you are really trying to achieve and how you will achieve it.

