7. Project Goals, Objectives, Outputs and Activities

A. Establishing the Goal of the Project

The first step in designing a project is to formally recognize and then state what the overall purpose of the project is; this is the goal. It is intended to address what has been identified as the problem. Since we work through our ONS partners, within ARC it is desirable to achieve this through sustained service delivery of the ONS.

A Goal represents:
- The ultimate aim or purpose of the project. This is written to reflect a sustainable improvement in human conditions in a target group through quality service delivery by the ONS.
- The anticipated improvements in some aspect of the lives of the target population. It describes expected changes after ARC interventions have been completed.

The goal may not be immediately attainable. Some goals are only reached well after the end of the project.

Example of a Project Goal

Decrease the mortality rate among infants 0 to 12 months of age in the target population.

Note: This is a long-term goal that probably cannot be achieved during the life of this project.

B. Establishing Objectives for the Project

Objectives represent the stepping stones to achieving the project goal. They reflect changes in the human condition, in behavior or practices that lead to achieving the goal. Unlike the project goal, objectives must be achieved and measured by the end of the project, and should also continue afterwards without additional external resources. This is what is meant by sustainability.

For example, changes in behavior, (adopting better breastfeeding practices) should continue indefinitely after a health education project has ended. For this reason, objectives are set in alignment with the direct causes of the problem we are trying to address through our interventions. Objectives represent an elimination or reduction in the factors that have been identified in the problem analysis as the key underlying causes of the problem.

Objectives:
- Reflect the intended changes in systemic conditions or behaviors that must be achieved to accomplish the goal/strategic objective
- Should have measurable indicators which show what, when, and how conditions, behaviors, and practices will change
- Must be verifiable at some point during the execution of the project
- Should continue to be met even after the project's end

Example of a Project Objective

> *Reduced rates of diarrheal disease among infants 0-12 months*
> **(This is a change in the human condition: fewer babies getting sick).**

> Note: The project could have another objective/ intermediate result, for example, reductions in the rates of acute respiratory infections (also known to be fatal to infants). For purposes of illustration, only diarrheal disease will be included here.

C. Establishing Outputs

Outputs are the direct results of the project interventions (i.e., sets of activities). When determining outputs, think back to the hypothesis and proposed interventions; consider: 'What are the key results from the proposed interventions that will be both necessary and sufficient to achieve the stated objectives results?' The question " how?" is helpful in defining the outputs that will contribute toward the achievement of your objectives. The logframe generally summarizes a cluster of two to three outputs that together are both necessary and sufficient to achieve EACH of the proposed objectives.

Example of a Project Output

> **Increased percentage of mothers who, exclusively breastfeed infants.**

D. Establishing Activities

Activities should be outlined in the logframe or described in a workplan or Gantt chart, but must still be carefully thought out and planned during the project design process.

Activities are specific actions carried out to achieve outputs such as hiring field staff, designing and carrying out training sessions, making home visits, etc.

As a general guideline, the project design should summarize several related activities that are both necessary and sufficient to achieve each of the intended outputs or results. You will see that the inclusion of activities in the logframe extends its length as a project with, for example, two objectives and two outputs for each objective may have as many as 20 to 28 separate activities. This is why it is recommended hat activities be outlined on a Gantt chart or workplan. This will also enable you to decide their timing, to avoid conflicts or overloads, and to ensure that they are in accord with seasonal and other constraints on implementation. For example, in agricultural support programs, farmers must be provided with seeds, training, or other inputs before the planting season. They should be interviewed about yields, marketing and other factors relating to production during or shortly after the harvest. In a health program, the onset of the rainy season may affect disease incidence. All these will affect your implementation. If you are intending to use program volunteers or staff to collect data, your recruitment and training must precede the implementation of the baseline survey.

For example, if training is the intervention, the activities may comprise 1) development of a training curriculum, 2) field testing message and training materials, 3) training of trainers, 4) identifying training participants, 5) implementation and completion of the actual trainings, 6) monitoring quality of training, etc.

Example of a Project Activity

> *Health volunteers will visit mothers in target area at least four times during the first six months after the infant's birth to provide information about good breastfeeding and weaning practices.*

E. Establishing Inputs

Inputs are resources used to implement activities. These include field staff, facilities, equipment, or money. If training is the intervention, for each activity you should think of the critical inputs that will be needed. These can include the materials, trainers, venue, and logistical support. In the case shown below, the trained health workers are a project input, produced through the use of prior inputs needed to carry out the training program. This double layer of inputs is common in projects with a big training component.

As with the activities, inputs should not be in the logframe. Where a detailed work plan or Gantt chart has been prepared, activities and inputs will be shown. They MUST be reflected in the annotated budget required for any full project design.

Example of a Project Input

> *Twenty-five trained health workers with breastfeeding counseling skills and the means to make home visits (transport, educational materials, etc.).*