



Project guide

Analyses, Design, and Inception of a Civil Society Project

Colophon

Project guide:

Analyses, Design, and Inception of a Civil Society Project

CISU - Civil society in Development,

Klosterport 4 X, 3. and 4.fl, 8000 Aarhus C. - DK

P: +45 8612 0342

M: cisu@cisu.dk

www.cisu.dk

Text:

Mette Kjærtinge, Søren Asboe Jørgensen, Dorthe Skovgaard Mortensen

Consultative group:

Maria Graversen, Christoph Lodemann, Theis Dencker, Anders Reimers Larsen, Rune Vinter Pedersen, Camilla Bøgelund, Rikke Kragelund Matthews

Case material: Dreamtown and Youth Dream Centre Sierra Leone

Photos: Simon Sticker

Layout:

Sesil Knage & Rune Bødker, www.tetrabit.coop

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Table of Content

● About this guide	5
Brief about Project Cycle Management	6
Being a civil society actor: concepts and approaches	7
The Human Rights-Based Approach	7
Sustainable change	8
Partnership and participation	9
● Part 1: Analyses – understanding the situation	13
1.1 Conceptualising the project – what is the ‘development issue’?	14
1.2 Analysing the context	16
1.3 Problem tree analysis	22
1.4 Stakeholder analysis	26
1.5 Resource analysis	30
1.6 Project choice: From ‘development issue’ to ‘focal problem’	31
1.7 Target group analysis – identifying target groups	35
● Part 2: Designing the project	39
2.1 Understanding the change logic	40
2.2 Theory of Change	41
2.3 Using the Theory of Change when developing the results framework	50
2.4 The results framework	51
2.5 Target group analysis – analysing the nature of the target groups	66
2.6 Budgeting	69
2.7 Risk assessment	71
2.8 Designing the implementation strategy	75
● Part 3: Inception – preparing for implementation	83
3.1 Planning the activity schedule	84
3.2 Developing a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan	88
3.3 Creating a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework	93
3.4 Financial monitoring	96
3.5 Accountability in project implementation	98
● Glossary	102

Together, you and your partner have decided to embark on a new project. Many exciting steps lie ahead of you. This guide will outline the steps necessary from the idea stage to inception and to ensure you develop a solid analysis of your context, a valuable project design, and establish a strong foundation for implementing the project. Enjoy!

How to use this guide - key to icons

Throughout the guide we use various icons to help quickly identify different content:



The example sign is used when referring to the project case example. Throughout the guide, we will refer to a case based on Dreamtown and YDC-SL's project work in Sierra Leone. The partners have kindly tested most of the project management tools presented in the guide, and their work is used to exemplify how the tools can be applied.



The definition sign is used when defining specific words and concepts in more detail.

About this guide

This guide is aimed at civil society organisations working with international development through partnerships.

In addition to introducing project cycle management and concepts and approaches to civil society projects, the guide contains several practical tools that can be used for carrying out analysis, project design and kick-starting your project (inception phase). The guide uses a case developed in a collaboration between Dreamtown and their partner Youth Dream Centre Sierra Leone (YDC-SL) to demonstrate examples of the tools' application throughout.

You will thus throughout the guide be able to follow Dreamtown and YDC-SL's journey from their initial ideas to the inception of a project in Bonga Town in Sierra Leone focusing on empowering youth and duty bearers to develop a safe and prosperous environment in Sierra Leone's slums and informal settlements. Sierra Leone has a young and growing population, and, like most developing countries, it is experiencing rapid urbanisation which is putting enormous pressure on cities to accommodate an increasing number of young residents. Thus, many of Sierra Leone's young city dwellers grow up or settle in slums and informal settlements where life is challenged by limited access to basic infrastructure, health and safety, education, livelihoods and employment, public spaces, and general spaces for youth to convene and exercise active citizenship. Whilst the case is specific for the areas Dreamtown and YDC-SL work in, it will assist in exemplifying and thus understanding the different methods and tools of this guide. The guide is divided into three main chapters that follow the first three phases of the project cycle; analysis, project design, and inception. The guide can be used as a reference point when preparing a new project or as a general training manual for the first three phases of project cycle management.

The guide is not directly linked to any of CISU's funding opportunities and -guidelines but is CISU's proposal to manage a good project development- and inception process. It is based on projects developed and implemented in partnerships – e.g. between Danish civil society organisations and civil society organisations in the Global South.

There are numerous guides available on project management, methods, and tools for preparing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating international development projects. CISU's online learning site on FABO supplements this guide and will continually be updated with additional tools, methods, and reflections on project cycle management (see: <https://fabo.org/cisu/project>).

Different organisations may use different terms to describe the same thing. In this guide, one set of terms will be used consistently, with comparisons between these and related terms, and at the back you will find a full glossary at the end of this guide.

Enjoy the guide!

Brief about Project Cycle Management

Projects can have many different sizes and outcomes, but what they have in common, is a structure for planning/designing, implementing, and evaluating projects. To support this, project cycle management can be a useful perspective to understand the different phases of a project's lifetime.

Project management is the discipline of planning, organising, managing, and controlling resources to achieve a project's outcomes. **Project Cycle Management (PCM)** distinguishes between the different phases of the project cycle and is the process of managing the different project phases with due regard to resources available, changing conditions, and new learning for the purpose of achieving sustainable and positive changes in people's living conditions, increasing participation in society, promoting human rights, and ensuring equal opportunities, as well as strengthening civil society. When designing and implementing projects, it is essential to ensure that adequate time and resources are dedicated to the analysis and design phase, as these two first phases are critical in ensuring effective project inception, implementation, and evaluation. And a dedicated focus on how to kick-off the project (inception) will assist you in getting off to a good start.



The figure presents the project management cycle overall and how different phases feed into other phases of the cycle. The analysis- and design phases inform each other. The analyses inform the design of the project, and the design can again provide new perspectives and information that are relevant to the analyses. Implementation and monitoring are iterative processes where learning is continuously included into the implementation of a project. The final evaluation of a project should always feed directly into the design of a new project. This guide relates to the planning phase of a project through analysis, design, and inception.

Project Cycle Management (PCM)

Project Cycle Management (PCM) is based on the philosophy that projects which are well-planned, well-managed, and consistently adapting to changing conditions and incorporating learning are more likely to be successful and lead to lasting change. This said, development remains difficult to plan because the work involves people! It is hardly ever a straight-forward process where A leads to B which leads to C... and the change we want to achieve is seldom the effect of a single isolated intervention but a consequence of many different contributions. Each project is thus unique and should be adjusted to its specific context.

Being a civil society actor: concepts and approaches

When working with civil society projects, a particular focus on the following principles and cross-cutting issues are essential.

The Human Rights-Based Approach

The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) recognises the equality of all human beings and emphasises our legal and moral obligation to promote human development and justice among people sharing the same fundamental and universal human rights. By the virtue of being born human, every adult or child living in poverty, oppression, or suffering the consequences of conflicts and disasters are **rights-holders**, not passive objects, or recipients of charity. By accepting that human beings have a legitimate claim of rights, we acknowledge that there are actors in society who have obligations and responsibilities to respect, protect, and fulfil these human rights. These actors are considered **duty-bearers**.

There is no *one* authoritative way in which a rights-based approach is understood and incorporated into development work, but the principles applied by different development actors are relatively consistent and refer to the same ethical motivation of ensuring justice and dignity for every human being. These principles include **Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination**, and **Transparency**, and focuses on empowering rights-holders to claim their rights; building duty-bearers' capacity to enforce human rights and perform their duties; and ensuring a meaningful and beneficial participation of the project's stakeholders in the different phases of the project cycle.

Do no harm

The do-no-harm concept aims at ensuring that project actions are not causing injury or injustice to people, communities, or the environment. In complex settings, influenced for example by shrinking space for civil society, climate related disasters, violence, conflicts, poverty or extreme inequality, good intentions can sometimes unintentionally make situations worse. Development projects (the provision of assistance/services/resources) are seldom neutral and can change delicate balances of power and be misused to strengthen one side of a conflict and weaken the opposing side. The possibility of causing substantial harm increases when projects fail to identify and address the detrimental effects of otherwise well-intended actions. Organisations and partners must therefore strive to uphold the principle of 'do no harm' by understanding the context and the two-way interaction between project activities and the context, and by adjusting activities to avert harmful outcomes and reinforcing opportunities to maximise positive impact.

Sustainable change

Project sustainability refers to whether changes and improvements gained are likely to continue when the project comes to an end. Utilising a Human Rights-Based Approach focusing on addressing the fundamental and structural causes of poverty and suppression of human rights will bring you a long way. Moreover, enabling civil society groups and individuals to improve the conditions they find important and which – structurally and in the longer term – will help advance their lot in society at both local, national, and global level.

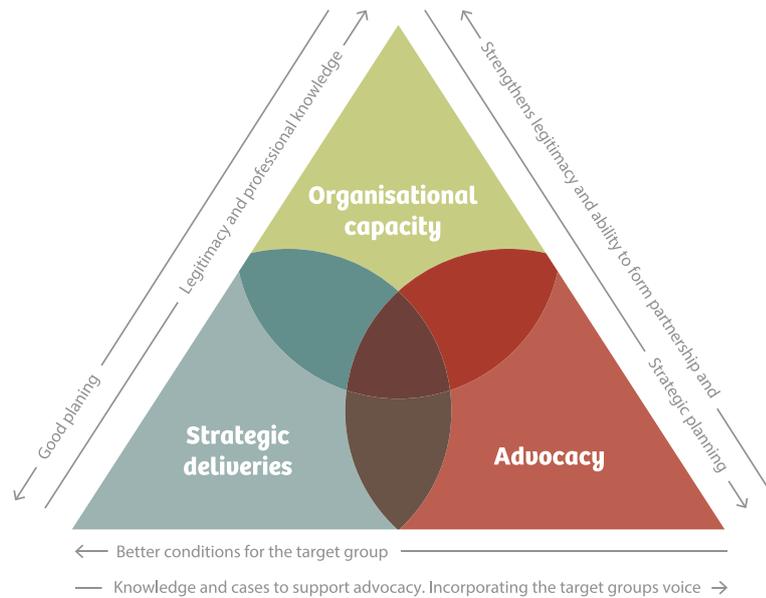
The **Development Triangle** has proven to be a very useful tool for designing implementation strategies for civil society projects and for creating synergy and balance between different project components. It illustrates how three core elements of development projects together can address the fundamental causes of deprivation of basic human rights.

The Development Triangle illustrates the relationship between some of the most common strategic components of a project and how they potentially influence each other.

A: Organisational capacity refers to the local partner and other civil society groups' legitimacy, professional skills, and organisational systems and strategies to carry out their mandate, partly to the partner's (and other civils society entities) ability to carry out activities and use and maintain the results in a sustainable manner.

B. Strategic services are what the project partners contribute directly to the primary target group of rights-holders, including professional and technical services as well as tangible goods. Strategic services can be delivered in the form of training or more tangible goods and services. The strategic services can contribute to giving an organisation greater legitimacy in relation to its target groups of rights holders and duty-bearers, or as a means for evidence-based advocacy. The core of the matter is that making such deliveries must be seen from a long-term perspective as a means of advancing sustainable development rather than as an end in itself.

C: Advocacy is a systematic and strategic effort to influence decision-makers (legal and moral duty-bearers) to bring about lasting and positive change for a significant number of rights-holders whose rights either have been or are at risk of being violated. Advocacy may target politicians and international forums, but may also be directed at local authorities, communities, school boards, or perhaps private firms in the local area. Advocacy involves for example policy advocacy or building capacity of duty bearers to respond to legitimate claims of rights-holders and thereby permanently improve the living conditions for rights-holders. Effective advocacy will also strengthen the legitimacy and ability of organisations to become part of new partnerships and alliances.



The development triangle

Partnership and participation

Developing and implementing projects that are based on common goals, respectful cooperation, clear distribution of roles, rights and obligations, transparency, continuous dialogue, and mutual contributions and achievements - as well as being accountable to participants, citizens, and back donors through regular and transparent monitoring and evaluation are all key to international development projects.

According to the human rights principles, all people have the right to participate in and access information relating to the decision-making processes that affect their lives and well-being. It is thus a fundamental principle that the people we seek to serve are actively involved and participate in the different aspects of a project. Participation empowers and mobilises people as actors in their own development. It encourages the contribution of individuals and groups, creates ownership, and promotes stakeholders to support and sustain change. For participation to be meaningful and beneficial, it is crucial that people are involved throughout the project cycle, and not merely as sources of information in the analysis and design phase.

By applying a participatory approach, you can ensure that direct target groups and rights-holders and duty-bearers are actively and meaningfully engaged in the implementation of the project. Participation should be empowering. It is therefore important to ensure equal participation and include those who need extra support to participate and whose voices are rarely heard. This may require providing additional, intentional support to encourage and build the capacity of marginalised people to participate, including for example people with disabilities or minority groups. Finally, when it comes to participation, it is crucial to overcome the potential barriers and ensure equal participation of people with different gender, age, social position, ethnic, or religious orientation to promote diversity. This is often an advantage when seeking to understand a situation and create change.

Levels of participation

Participation can take place in different ways, at different levels and involve different people. It is important to consider levels of participation with your target groups and stakeholders early on. Being transparent about proposed levels of participation for target groups and stakeholders might encourage increased buy in from these actors. Remember to also consider representation of your different target groups according to for example gender and age.

No participation

No participation includes **informing** people and stakeholders of the project you intend to implement and to create awareness of important issues that will enable people to become more actively involved as participants.

Lower-level participation

Lower levels of participation include **consulting** people (asking for their opinion) in decision-making or planning processes.

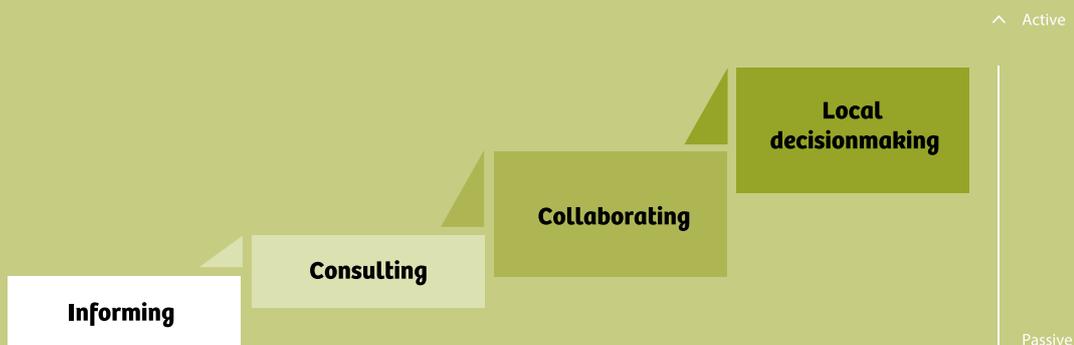
None of the above approaches are considered as truly participatory and do not guarantee that people's concerns and ideas will be included.

Medium-level participation

Medium-level participation refers to active **collaboration** with the people involved in the project. Here, people and stakeholders directly **contribute** to all parts of the project cycle and possibly through activities and concrete solutions.

Advanced levels of participation

With an advanced approach to participation, targeted people and stakeholders take the **leadership** in the design and implementation processes. Power is delegated and decisions are based on for example community-led decision-making where people are given the dominant decision-making authority in relation to specific processes, plans, etc.



Ladder of participation

About this guide: Summary

This guide will hopefully be a helpful tool for both developing relevant, suitable, and effective projects as well as exercising good management practices, effective decision making, and continuous learning throughout the project cycle.

With this background information and introduction to important principles for international development projects, you are now ready to dive into the first stage of your project development process

– Understanding the situation



Part 1: Analyses

- understanding the situation



Contextual knowledge is essential for being able to design a project that is relevant and feasible in the context where it will be implemented. In Part 1, we will focus on how to gain a solid understanding of the context and the socio-cultural, political, environmental, economic, and human rights factors that can promote or prevent development.

Part 1: *analyses*, consists of six sections:

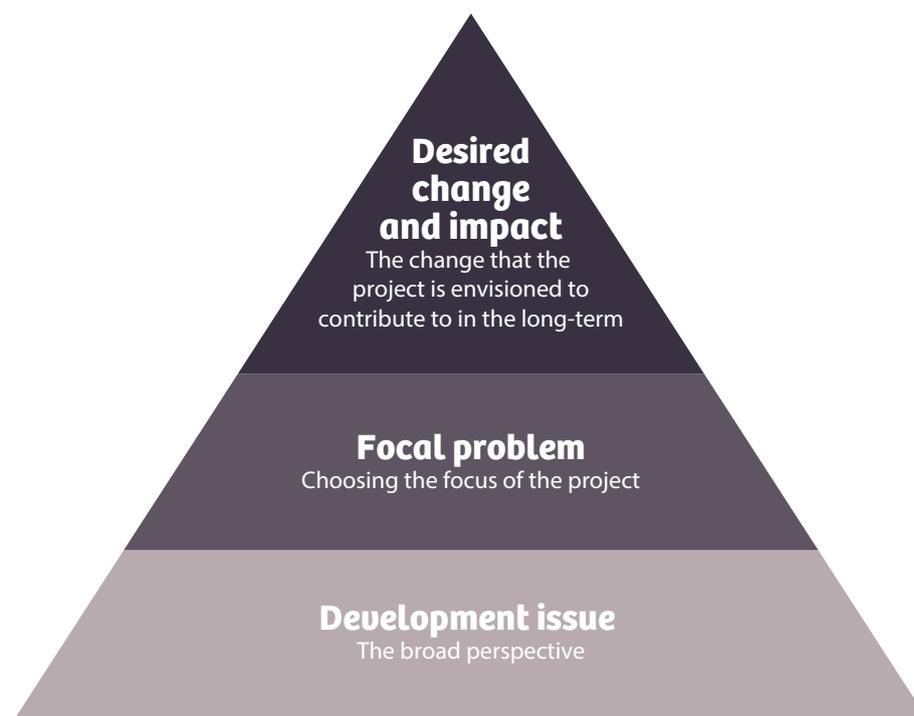
- 1 The first steps of conceptualisation of the project – what is the development issue?
- 2 Analysing the situation and context at large as well as identifying the root problems and causes of the development issue
- 3 Getting to understand possible relevant stakeholders through a stakeholder mapping and analysis
- 4 Understanding what resources are available to implement the project idea through a resource analysis
- 5 Based on the first four sections, you move from having a broad development issue and analysis to making the project choice and developing a focal problem
- 6 And lastly, you identify the target groups of the project

The context is the external circumstances and relationships that constitute the project environment and substantiates the relevance of a particular project.

Definition

1.1 Conceptualising the project – what is the ‘development issue’?

During the analysis stage, it is important to keep an open mind in terms of possible project ideas and solutions, but in order to conduct a useful analysis, it is necessary to focus on an overall development issue for the project. A ‘development issue’ can be defined as the social problem or structural inequality that you want to address with the project.



During the analysis- and design phases you will work from a broad perspective (development issue), narrowing your project by choosing a focus (focal problem), and lastly, have chosen the change that the project is envisioned to contribute to in the long-term, through a desired change (Theory of Change) and impact (Results Framework). Though the desired change and impact belong to two different methods, they will more or less be phrased in the same way.

This initial conceptualisation should be conducted in genuine close cooperation between the partnering organisations and will typically be based on the partners’ joint priorities and experiences, and a common ambition for contributing to change in a certain area.

The development issue can evolve from a participatory process among partners guided by the following key questions:

- 1 What development issue is of main concern and what do we wish to change?
- 2 Who are the people affected by the development issue?
- 3 Which sector(s) do we need to consider if we want to impact the development issue concerned?

It might be helpful to record the initial conceptualisation of the project using the following template:

General Information	
Project location:	
Partners:	
Overview of the project	
Development issue (main area of concern):	
People affected:	
Sectors involved:	

Dreamtown and their partner, Youth Dream Centre Sierra Leone (YDC-SL), in Bonga Town, Sierra Leone, have previously collaborated on supporting young people's development priorities and activism. Based on past experiences, the partners have decided on an overall development issue for a new project that addresses challenges for marginalised youth in Bonga Town.



General Information	
Project location:	Bonga Town, Sierra Leone
Partners:	Youth Dream Centre Sierra Leone and Dreamtown
Overview of the project	
Development issue (main area of concern):	Marginalised youth in Bonga Town
People affected:	Youth, in particular young women, and girls
Sectors involved:	Health, including Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV), democracy, infrastructure, education, and employment.

1.2 Analysing the context

After the initial conceptualisation of a future project, you may already have an idea of the problems, human rights violations, needs, barriers, and resources encountered in the area where you work. Nevertheless, it is important to conduct an actual analysis to gain a solid understanding of the context. The context analysis may consist of different elements depending on the size and complexity of the project, but it should as a minimum include a situational analysis and a problem analysis (see tools section below). Other analyses such as resource analysis, climate assessment, market analysis, conflict (do no harm) analysis, and gender analysis, can be applied, where relevant.

It is good practice to collect data from different sources and examine it carefully. Data might include consultation with community members, statistics about poverty levels, climate vulnerability assessment, and assessments of civic space². It is important to keep an open mind and take an inclusive approach to data collection because the information gathered will help to determine the project design.

Active involvement and participation of different stakeholders is also important to ensure that the analysis includes the views of different people, including representatives of marginalised groups who are often excluded as informants and in decision-making processes. It is equally important though to not raise expectations among the participants in case funding for the project is not ensured.

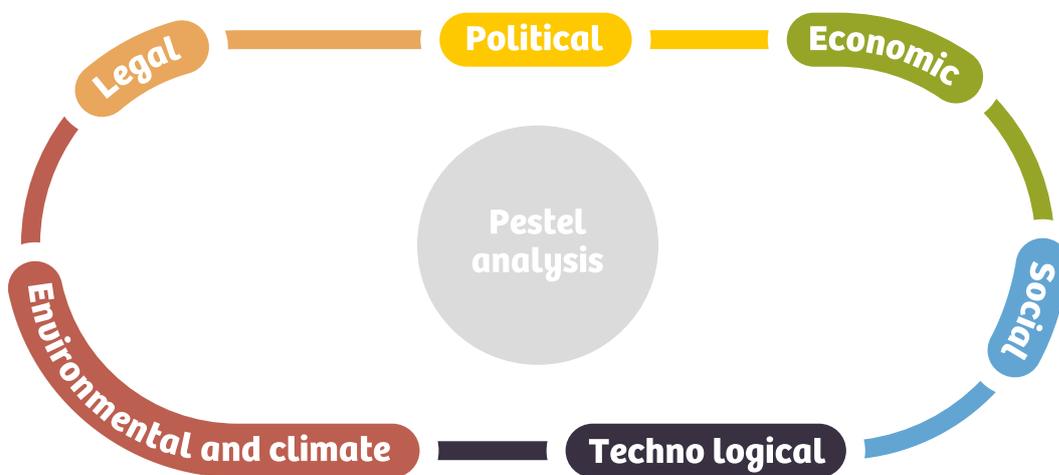
Finally, it is necessary to work jointly as partners to develop a shared understanding of the context, and to examine the context each time a new project is to be designed, as the context keeps changing and new projects should be adapted to such changes.

From the many available context analysis tools, we have selected a few that we find particularly relevant for analysing the current situation in a given country/region/area and the problems and resources in a specific area.

1.2.1 The PESTEL analysis

The PESTEL tool will help you make a situational analysis of the context at large, and thus provide valuable information about external conditions that may positively or negatively influence the project.

The PESTEL analysis provides information about the wider (macro) context, the political and legal situation, and the socio-economic, environmental, and technological conditions in a given country. The analysis helps determine if there are particular areas of concern or opportunities that may have a bearing on the project and if it is to be implemented in a stable or fragile context.



The matrix below includes examples of questions to cover the different spheres of community life. Prior to conducting the analysis, it is important to consider which spheres are most important/relevant for your development issue and to decide on a set of questions that covers the most important issues within the sector and target group identified.

PESTEL MATRIX

Relevance in relation to:	[insert development issue]	
Spheres:	Examples of questions (for inspiration)	Data

Overview of the project

Political:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has power locally and nationally, formally, and informally, and how representative are they? • Is there a history of violent conflict or of coups and other violent or unconstitutional changes of power? • Are certain groups legally, or in practice, excluded from the political decision-making process? • What are the main priorities of national/local decision-makers? • What policies exist of relevance to the development issue and how effective are they? • Is the civil society vibrant or constrained? Does CSOs have capacity to organise demands for rights and services? 	
Economics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the economic situation and poverty rate in the country/project location? • Are particular power differences causing certain groups to be excluded from economic opportunities. If so, what are the differences and who are excluded (e.g., women, ethnic minorities, migrants)? • Is there a large informal economy? • Have public institutions and services been allocated adequate budgets to provide the services people are entitled to? • How does the existence / non-existence of a land/agrarian reform impact the social and economic structures? 	
Social (and cultural):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there major ethnic, tribal, cultural, religious, linguistic, or other divisions in the country/project location, and are certain ethnic, religious, or other groups particularly disadvantaged? • How are people with disabilities and other marginalised groups viewed and included in the community? • Are there areas of significant gender inequalities? If so, which groups of women or men (girls or boys) are particularly disadvantaged? • Who (men, women, boys, girls, grandparents) normally takes on which roles in households? 	
Technological:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much of the local population has access to technology (computers, tablets, mobile phones, etc.) and/or the internet? • How does technology affect local life and development? 	
Environmental & climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the climate changing and/or is the project location prone to natural/environmental hazards? If so, how does these affect the context and the target group? • Is the thematic focus impacted by or impacting on climate change? • Are there any climate and environmental risks and vulnerabilities? • Do community members have equal access to natural resources? 	
Legal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the constitutional structure of the state (type of government)? • Is the country party to relevant United Nations and/or regional treaties? • Which specialised and independent supervising entities exist in the country and how do they function (for example, anti-corruption commission, human rights commission, or ombudsman office)? • Do people generally have access to legal institutions/justice systems? • Are gender inequalities perpetuated through law and, if so, in which pieces of legislation? 	

Methods for data collection

- Information for both context analysis and PESTEL can be collected from different (often secondary) sources. The following sources should be considered, as applicable to the specific context:
- Official government documents.
- Reports of international agencies, human rights institutions, donors, and international and local NGOs.
- Academic studies (books and journals).
- Public opinion surveys and statistical datasets.
- Newspaper and magazine articles, and other media sources, including internet sites.
- Expert and key informant interviews.
- Seek to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data and try to differentiate the sources and techniques as much as possible. This is particularly important in fragile contexts, where discourses and narratives can be very polarised.



Pestel matrix - Bonga Town

In Bonga Town, 15 community representatives took part in a 3-day co-analysis workshop. Day one was spent on the PESTEL analysis:

Agenda item 1: Talking participants through the PESTEL tool

Agenda item 2: Q&A to clarify definitions and questions

Agenda item 3: Participants were divided into groups according to the different spheres in the PESTEL analysis

Agenda item 4: Group presentation – then a plenary Q&A for each group

The analysis is shown in parts, focusing on the most important spheres relevant for the development issue:

Marginalised youth in Bonga Town

SPHERES	QUESTIONS	DATA
Political:	<i>Who has power locally and nationally?</i>	Locally: Chiefs, Chairmen and ladies, Mammy Queens, Imams and pastors, Counsellors, Youth groups, Women's groups, ghetto boys, CBOs, local businesses. National: Government ministries, Police and Military forces.
	<i>Is there a history of violent conflict?</i>	Sierra Leone has experienced 11 years of civil war, three military coups, and violence involving young people occurs during election times.
	<i>What are the priorities of national decision-makers and what policies exist of relevance to the development issue?</i>	National priorities: Education, Health, Agriculture, Transportation, SGBV. Policies of relevance: Sexual Gender Base Violence Act (Reviewed 2019), the three Gender Act (2007), and the National Youth Policy. In addition, 'Hands Off Our Girls' initiative by the Office of the First Lady.
Social (and cultural)	<i>Is civil society vibrant or constrained? Does CSOs have capacity to organise demands for rights and services?</i>	There is a vibrant civil society in Sierra Leone, with a large number of actors ranging from youth groups to larger NGOs. CSOs attempt to cover gaps in service delivery by Government, however, their capacities and resources are limited.
	<i>Are there specific groups that seem to be left out?</i>	Young people in poor communities are largely left out. There still exists a strong stigma around youth (especially men) that they are idlers based on the mobilisation of youth in the civil war. In addition, women are largely left out due to traditional and cultural gender norms and stereotypes.

	<p><i>Who (men, women, boys, girls, grandparents) normally takes on which roles in households?</i></p>	<p>Men: Bread winners. Women: Household and childcare. Boys: Provide security, fetch water, iron cloths, act on behalf of parents as care givers. Girls: Wash the dishes, fetch water, clean the compound, go to the market, assist mothers in cooking. Grandparents: Serve as advisors to the family,</p>
	<p><i>Are there areas of significant gender inequalities, and which groups of women or men are particularly disadvantaged?</i></p>	<p>Young women living in poor urban communities are particularly disadvantaged. There is a high rate of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and teenage pregnancies, resulting in school drop-outs, stigmatisation, and pressure on income. Further, women are under-represented in decision-making processes.</p>
	<p><i>What are the structures of traditional authority, and how important are they?</i></p>	<p>Section Chief (highest authority): Settles disputes, advises youths, delegates roles and responsibilities. Chairman (first entry point in community): Oversees community activities, intervenes in emergency issues, liaises between government and the community. Youth Chairman: Mobilises youths, discusses issues affecting youths, facilitate youth activities, organise cleaning activities, liaises between the chairman and youths. Women's leader: Represents women in decision making processes, mobilises women, solves conflicts, represents the community, identifies vulnerable women for social services. Town crier: The mouthpiece of the community and the leaders, passes on information to the community.</p>
<p>Legal</p>	<p><i>What is the constitutional structure of the state?</i></p>	<p>Written Constitution, Multi-Party State, Democratic Government, Parliamentary System of Government.</p>
	<p><i>Do people generally have access to legal institutions/justice systems?</i></p>	<p>Because of poverty and lack of influence, people do not generally have access to legal institutions, and justice systems and services are poorly managed.</p>
	<p><i>Which specialised and independent oversight entities exist in the country and how do they function?</i></p>	<p>Anti-corruption Commission, Human Rights Commission and Ombudsman Office, Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, Ministry of Labour, The Police Complaint Board, Peace Commission.</p>

1.3 Problem tree analysis

Having made a situational context analysis, a natural next step would be to conduct a detailed analysis of the development issue i.e., the specific problem(s) and/or human rights violations you intend to work with.

The problem tree analysis has been used for decades in the development sector and represents a means for discussing, visualising, and linking the causes and effects of a specific problem and identifying factors that may need to be addressed or considered in order to solve the problem.

The problem tree must be based on the development issue at stake. The tool consists of four steps, which are best performed in a participant-oriented workshop where a representative selection of stakeholders jointly reflect on and analyse the existing situation from different perspectives.

The four steps in the problem tree analysis are:

Step 1

Using the development issue that you have explored in the context analysis, for example, marginalised youth in Bonga Town, summarise it in a few words and place it at the centre (as the trunk of the tree). It is important to identify an existing problem, not a possible, imagined, or future one.

Step 2

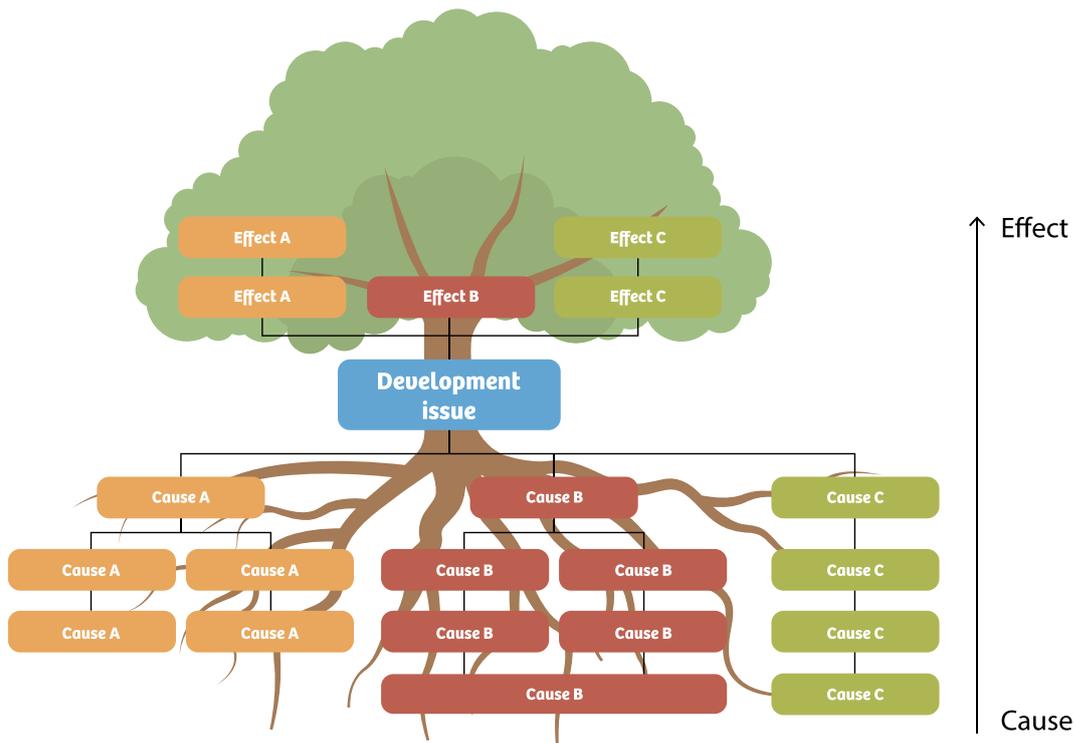
Identify other relevant problems associated with the development issue. Each problem should be phrased in a brief sentence as an unfavourable situation. Avoid lumping together two or more problems and seek to avoid phrasing problems merely as the absence or lack of something.

Step 3

Discuss each problem, clarifying what it means and if it is to be regarded as a cause or an effect of the development issue. Make sure to dig deeply by asking “so if this is the problem, what is the cause of that” until you reach a very root cause. Likewise, ask “if this is an effect of the development issue, does that lead to” until you reach the ultimate effect.

Step 4

Relate the problems to each other by drawing up a ‘problem tree’ that illustrates how the problems are interconnected (see figure).



Place the causes as the roots of the tree to illustrate what has led to the development issue and place the effects as the branches of the tree to illustrate what is happening as a result of the development issue. Make sure there are logical connections between the different causes and effects. If there are gaps in logic, add in a new cause or effect. In some cases, it might also be relevant to reformulate the development issue.

The underlying causes to the development issue will typically represent different levels with some being immediate causes whereas others will be underlying or structural root causes. The problem tree will thus visualise the different root causes to a development issue and highlight that the development issue can be approached from several angles.

The completed problem tree will have created an overview of some of the main problems relevant to the development issue. This overview will help to understand the complex situation and make an informed choice as to which problems the project should focus on solving (see more in section 1.5 project choice).

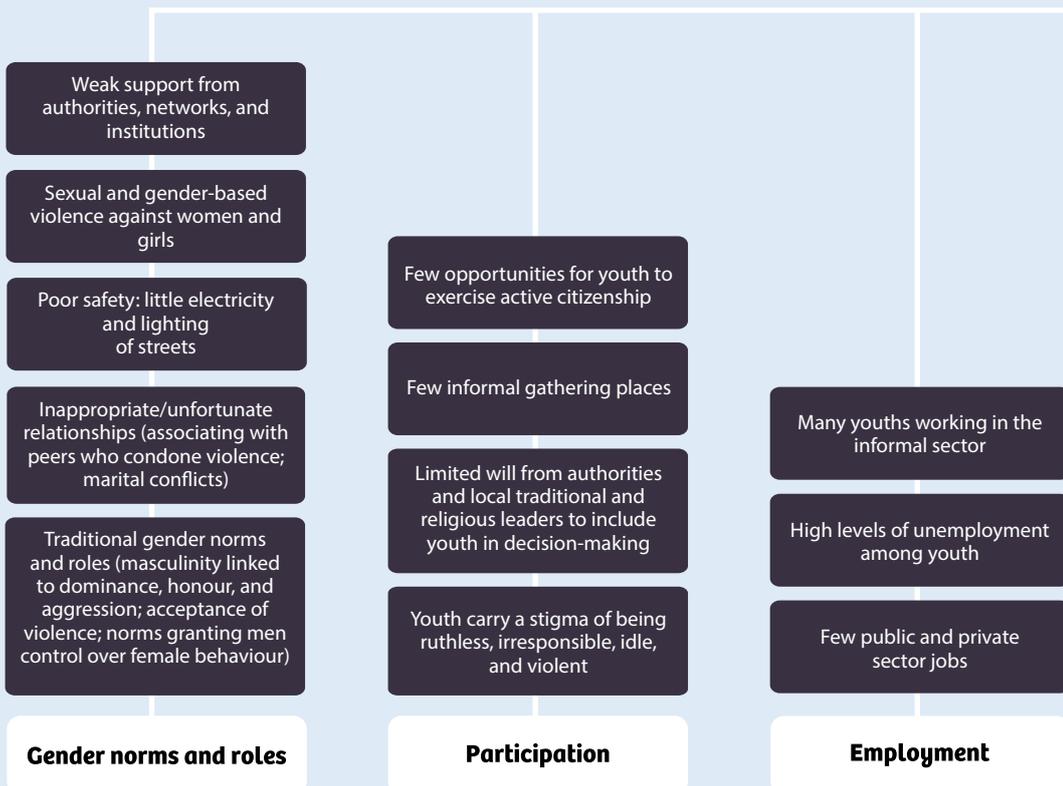
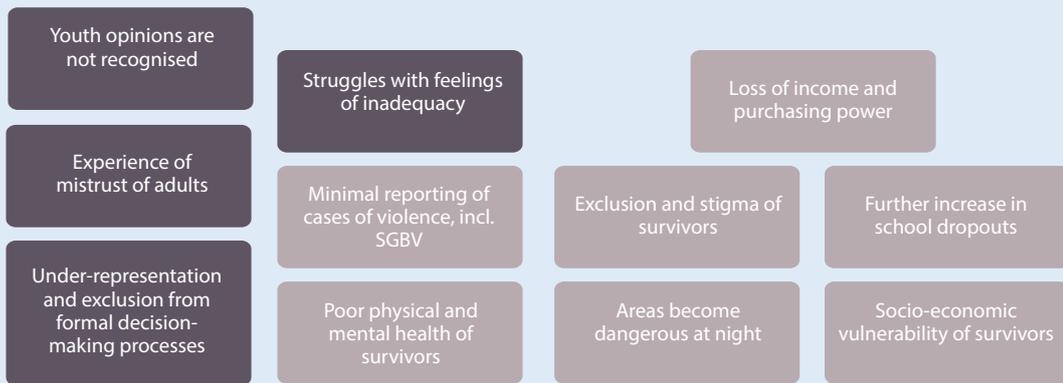
When choosing a development issue, bear in mind that the broader the development issue is, the more complex the problem tree will be. The benefit of the exercise is to give partners a common overview and fundamental understanding of the key causes and effects. It is not a scientific exercise and will always be a simplification of reality. Creating a problem tree is an important process but it is important not to get lost in the detail.

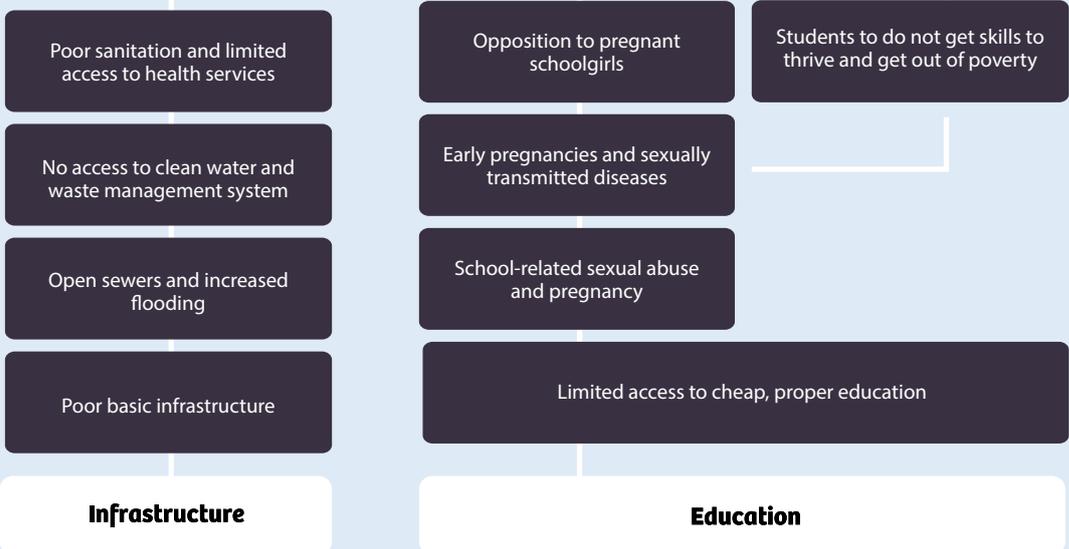
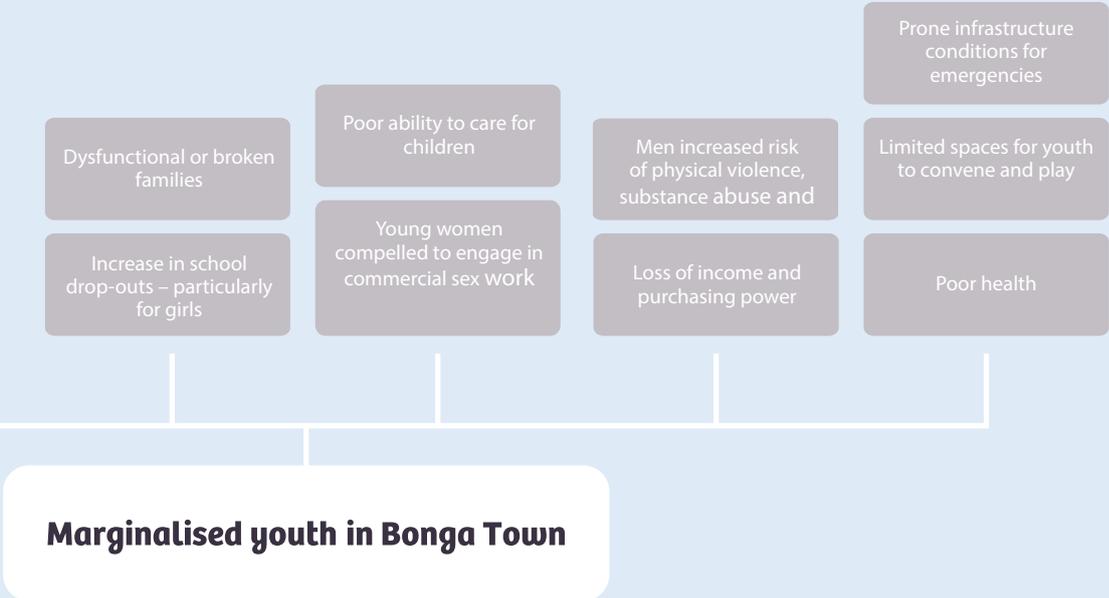
Example

Problem tree - Bonga Town

Young people are faced with many problems in Bonga Town. On the second day of the co-analysis workshop, the participants drew up a problem tree focusing on marginalised youth in Bonga Town as the development issue.

At the workshop in Bonga Town, the analysis led the participants to identify the following causes and effects related to the development issue; marginalised youth in Bonga Town.





1.4 Stakeholder analysis

The stakeholder analysis helps to identify the different people for whom something is at stake in relation to the development issue and furthermore to analyse their level of interest, ability to influence the situation, and potential resistance to the project.

A stakeholder analysis provides valuable information about different types of stakeholders and inspiration on how to engage them. This can later be used to manage the risks posed by stakeholders opposing an intervention.

Definition

A stakeholder is any person or group of people who is involved with, have a special interest in or influence on a certain issue or situation.

Examples of stakeholders within different sectors

CIVIL SOCIETY	PUBLIC SECTOR	PRIVATE SECTOR	OTHER SECTORS
Community Based Organisations	Ministers and advisors	Corporations and businesses	Sports people
National NGOs	Civil servants and departments	Business associations	Cultural personalities
International NGOs	Elected representatives	Professional bodies	Influencers
Social movements and advocacy groups	Courts (judiciary)	Business leaders	Celebrities
Media	Local government / councils	Financial institutions	
Religious groups, leaders, and institutions	Police, army, security forces		
Political parties	Commissions		
Trade and labour unions	Public service providers		
Traditional authorities	International bodies (World Bank, United Nations, etc.)		
	Educational and research institutions		

More than belonging to a certain sector, stakeholders are often categorised as either:

Rights-Holders, i.e., individuals and groups whose *entitled rights* (and the enforcement of these rights) are challenged or suppressed and who will benefit from a change of situation.

Duty-Bearers, i.e., individuals and groups, who have a legal or moral obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the rights-holders and who have the power to significantly influence the lives of others.

See more in the introduction.

The primary and legal duty-bearer is the State (government, public authorities, and officials, etc.) which carries the principal legal obligation and responsibility towards its citizens, whereas the moral duty-bearers (for example community leaders, religious leaders, private companies, civil society organisations and family) hold a moral responsibility to respect and protect fellow human beings who are marginalised or particularly vulnerable.

Strive to involve different groups of people in the initial stakeholder mapping to ensure that the analysis is representative of- and reflecting both rights-holders and duty-bearers, for example through a workshop. The relatively technical stakeholder matrix may be completed with a smaller group of persons, for example key staff and volunteers in the partner organisation.

Please note that the stakeholder analysis must be revisited throughout the project to check that the interests of the stakeholders are adequately addressed and that stakeholders with influence are properly engaged.

1.4.1 Stakeholder mapping

The stakeholder mapping is simply conducted by identifying the various stakeholders of relevance to the development issue by answering the following questions and filling in the two columns in the template below:

- Who are the **rights-holders** for whom something is at stake in relation to the development issue – and what are their main characteristics?
- Who are the **duty-bearers** in relation to the identified rights-holders and the development issue at large – and what are their main characteristics?
- Who are the other relevant actors working with the same or similar development issues in the local context (for example local authorities, other organisations, institutions etc.) – what relevant initiatives are currently being planned or implemented, and how does these initiatives support or challenge a new project?

KEY STAKEHOLDERS	WHO	CHARACTERISTICS
Rights-holders		
Duty-bearers		
Other Relevant actors		



In the case of Bonga Town, the partners have identified the following stakeholders related to the first two 'roots' about participation and gender roles and norms.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS	WHO
Rights-holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young women and girls • Youth groups
Duty-bearers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs • Local leaders: Chief, Chairman, Chair Lady, Youth Chairman, Women's leader, Town crier, Mammy Queen, Counsellor, Religious and traditional leaders • Service providers (public and private): Family Support Unit, Rainbo Initiative, Local police
Other Relevant actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil society actors: Children Advocacy Forum-SL, OXFAM-SL, Sabi Resident Development, Purposeful, Media Sierra Leone, Alhaji Hassan, local CBOs. • Gangs • Community members at large

1.4.2 Stakeholder matrix

Having identified the different stakeholders, you are now ready to examine the individual stakeholder's **interest** in and **influence** on the development issue. Involve a few key persons (staff and volunteers) with significant knowledge of the local context in ranking the stakeholders according to:

- 1 their **interest** (low, medium, high) in the development issue and in changing the present situation.
- 2 their formal or informal **influence** and (functional and financial) capacity (low, medium, high) to address the situation and change it.

The ranking is done according to the stakeholder matrix (see below). To complete the exercise, sketch the matrix on a flipchart or wall and write each stakeholder on a sticky paper. Now place each stakeholder in the matrix according to level of interest and influence on the given situation and the desired change.

Stakeholder matrix

INFLUENCE ON CHANGING THE SITUATION	High	Potential opponents (need for advocacy or capacity strengthening)		Potential project supporters and allies (seek close engagement)
	Medium			
	Low	Unaware / unintended (work with awareness raising)		potential beneficiaries (focus on empow-
		Low	Medium	High
INTEREST IN A CHANGE OF SITUATION				

Stakeholders with a high **degree of interest in** and **influence** on changing the situation are likely to be supporters and allies of your project and should consequently be actively engaged in the project to utilise their power and attentiveness to achieve the desired change.

The stakeholders with **high interest, but low influence** often represent the rights-holders (the ultimate beneficiaries) of the project. The project should therefore be designed to protect their interests and empower them to *claim their rights and hold duty-bearers accountable*.

Stakeholders with a low degree of interest in changing the situation will require a different type of engagement. Those with **high influence and low interest** have the potential to obstruct or slow down the project. Consider adopting a constructive engagement approach by providing relevant information to increase interest as well as conducting advocacy and strengthening capacity, in an attempt to gently alter their view of the project.

Finally, stakeholders with low **influence and low interest** may simply be unaware of the potential benefits of the project, and they should primarily be engaged by raising awareness and sharing of information.

Please note, that if you are working with a sensitive human-rights issue, your project is likely to constitute a threat to formal and/or traditional powerholders. Such powerholders are prone to object to the project - and may pose a risk to the success of project. In such situations, it may be necessary to adopt a risk-minimising approach and tone down the language of rights and also safeguard partners that might be endangered through their rights-based work.

Example

In the case of Bonga Town, the identified rights-holders and duty-bearer were clustered along the following lines after the stakeholder mapping exercise regarding participation and gender roles and norms:

Stakeholder matrix				
INFLUENCE ON CHANGING THE SITUATION	High	Gangs	Chief, Chairman /-Lady, Youth Chairman, Women's leader, Town crier, Mammy Queen Local police Counsellor	Service providers Youth groups
	Medium		Community members at large Religious and traditional leaders	Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs Civil society actors
	Low			
		Low	Medium	High
		INTEREST IN A CHANGE OF SITUATION		

As shown in the matrix, several local duty-bearers are grouped at the level of medium interest and high influence, because young women's safety in public spaces is not at the top of their agenda but their potential level of influence is high when it comes to changing the situation. The Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs is placed at a medium influence level, as the gap between policy and practise is big, and therefore, even though issues on women's safety is high on their agenda, their actual influence in a community like Bonga Town might be limited. Community youth groups, on the other hand, can have a high level of influence as they work closely with young people and can be part of changing behaviours and attitudes as well as give support to victims of abuse in a community with no support services available

1.5 Resource analysis

When seeking to understand the context, we often focus exclusively on problems and tend to forget that in every community, even the most fragile ones, there are networks, structures and persons with abilities, talents, and resources that can be (or maybe already are) organised to generate solutions to communal problems. These capacities and resources should also be assessed as part of the context analysis.

By conducting a resource analysis, you will be able to uncover the capabilities and resources already available. The following resources are the types to consider while keeping your development issue in mind:

- **Human resources:** identify the resources available, including persons (staff and volunteers) with relevant skills, networks, or cultural capital, role-models with ability to provide guidance, etc.
- **Organisational / institutional resources,** identify the resources available, including civil society structures, political structures, informal networks, and public services.
- **Economic resources,** identify the resources available, including public budgets, donor funds, means for sustaining livelihoods (money and savings, grain stores, livestock, tools, and equipment).
- **Natural resources,** identify the resources available, including land, forest, water, air, minerals etc.
- **Physical resources (man-made infrastructure),** identify the resources available to your development issue, including buildings, water supply and sanitation services, communication systems etc.

When conducting the resource analysis, it is advisable to ask a range of community members with different perspectives to identify existing resources that can be used to address the problems identified during the problem analysis.

Resource Matrix		
	What resources are available in our community that can help solve the problems identified?	How can these resources be used to improve our situation?
Human resources		
Organisational / institutional resources		
Economic resources		
Natural resources		
Physical resources		

1.6 Project choice: From ‘development issue’ to ‘focal problem’

Based on the context-, problem tree- and stakeholder analyses, and resource analysis (plus any other analysis conducted), it is time to make a so-called project choice and narrow down to a focal problem for the project.

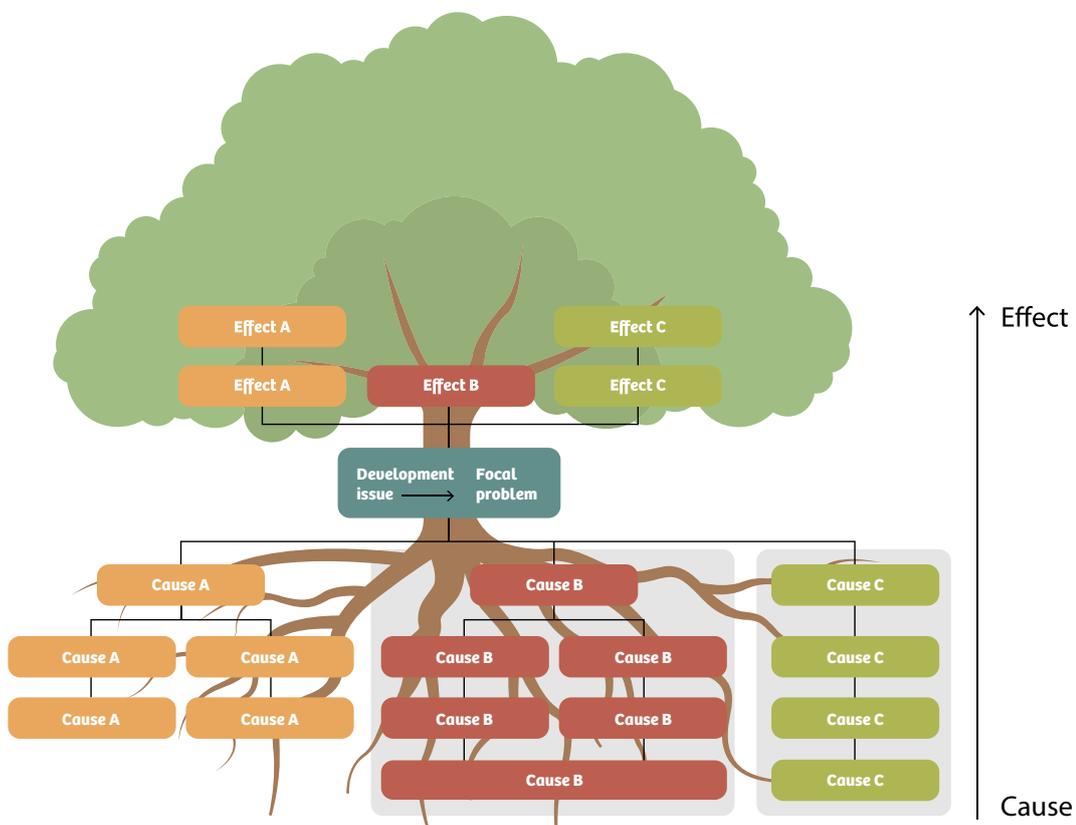
Project choice is basically about narrowing the scope of the project, deciding on which specific problem or human rights violation you want to tackle, and to articulate the desired change to be achieved while also considering the partners’ joint capacities and respective contributions, the scale of the project, and the prospects for the partnership and future collaboration.

By making a project choice, the project is not conclusively defined, but you have chosen a focus of your project: your general ‘development issue’ has been transformed to a ‘focal problem’, which will be used as the point of departure in the design phase.

When making the project choice, it is important to engage the decision-makers (managers/ board members) in partnering organisations as well as relevant project staff and volunteers. It will furthermore enhance project participation and ownership, if a manageable group of stakeholder representatives are included in the decision-making process.

Plan a decision meeting to decide on the project choice. In order to be able to reach a decision, participants must have the necessary information about the context and development issue as well as the problem tree and the stakeholder- and resource analyses. The objective of the meeting is to reach a joint decision on which of the problem ‘clusters’ to focus on going forward.

Taking the problem tree as a point of departure, ask the question: **Which main root causes should we focus on?** You can for example mark the parts of the problem tree that you would like to focus on as shown in the illustration below.



To enable prioritisation of the root causes you want to focus on, you need to reflect on the following:

- What will the situation look like if you succeed in achieving the desired change?
- Who are the main stakeholders (rights-holders as well as duty-bearers) and what are the project partners' current relations to the stakeholders?
- What capacity, special knowledge and experience do the partners bring respectively?
- What is the Danish organisation's added value to the project and the partnership?
- What is the anticipated size (budget) and timeframe of the project?
- What prospects do the choice of project create for the partnership and future project collaboration?
- When facilitating the discussion, make sure that the discussion leads to clear, concise, and joint answers that will enable the partners to identify the focus of the project (the focal problem).

To assess the viability of the project choice, the following checklist can be useful:

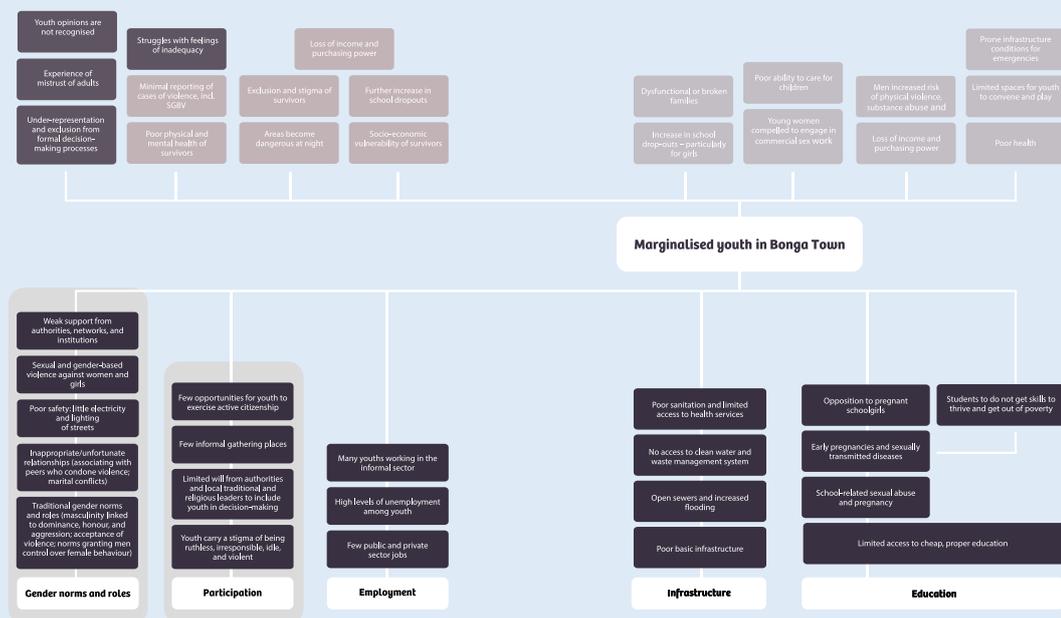
Project focus checklist	
FOCAL PROBLEM:	
Worthwhile: Is the project choice relevant to local problems and priorities?	Yes
	No
Feasible: Is it possible to manage the project given the context, capacity and previous experiences of the implementing partner organisation(s), and the Danish partner?	Yes
	No
Realistic: Is it likely that the project will lead to tangible results and lasting change for the identified rights-holders?	Yes
	No
Fundable: Is it realistic to get funding for the project?	Yes
	No
<i>The project idea should only be taken forward if you can answer yes to all the above questions. If not, you will have to reconsider or reframe the focus.</i>	

Example

Focal problem - Bonga Town

In the case of Bonga Town, the problem tree outlines a number of project options for addressing the development issue related to marginalised youth in Bonga Town. Starting from the left, these are related to participation in decision-making processes, gender norms and roles, education, employment, and infrastructure.

In its project choice, the partners chose to focus on the issue of gender norms and roles, incl. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and participation.



After discussions among the partners, they formulated their focal problem: **challenges to young people's safety, in particular related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).**

Besides considering the different analyses, YDC-SL and Dreamtown took the following into consideration when making their project choice:

- Their experience and legitimacy working with youth in Bonga Town.
- Young people's ownership to the idea and the possibility that the project will lay the foundation for raising other issues in the long term.
- Possibility of combining strategic service delivery with capacity building and advocacy.

1.7 Target group analysis – identifying target groups

The final analysis to be conducted is identifying the project's target groups. An offshoot of the stakeholder analysis (section 1.3) and the project choice (section 1.5) and a further clarification of who the project should be targeting.

A **target group** is made up of people with the same characteristics and similar needs, interests in, and influence on a project.

Definition

The target groups of a project are the people expected to benefit – in one way or another – from the results of the project. It can for example be the people whose specific problems or human rights issues are addressed, professionals whose capacity is strengthened, or the general public whose awareness has increased as part of the project.

There are different ways to define and describe target groups, but we would suggest dividing them into the following two levels:

- 1 **The primary target group:** the persons (rights-holders and relevant duty-bearers) who will actively and directly be involved in activities, and benefit from the project's outputs and outcomes.
- 2 **The secondary target group:** the people (rights-holders and duty-bearers) who will be exposed to the project (its purpose and results) but not be directly involved.

When selecting your target groups, please note that equal participation of people with different gender, age, social position, ethnic or religious orientation promotes diversity which is often an advantage when seeking to create change.

If you have already conducted a participatory stakeholder analysis, it is possible to make your target group identification on top of this, and you may then only need to involve relevant staff and volunteers in the analysis.

Start by identifying and arranging the project's main target groups, divided into primary and secondary target groups.

The **primary target group** often consists of different sub-groups, including rights-holders whose situation will be positively impacted by their primary involvement in the project (see the stakeholder matrix section 1.3.2). The involved rights-holders will typically be representatives of a larger group of rights-holders selected based on their affiliation with a civil society group, their position in community, or their potential as role models.

Key duty-bearers can also form part of the primary target group when actively and directly involved in activities, for example through advocacy efforts, capacity building, and professional dialogues aimed at improving their knowledge of- and ability to provide certain services or enforce certain rights. In the stakeholder analysis, these duty-bearers will typically figure among the stakeholders with high influence on the project and either high, medium, or low interest in the project (see the stakeholder matrix section 1.3.2). Their involvement in the project needs to be designed according to their attitude towards the project.

In case the project contains a component of organisational capacity development of the partner organisation, the involved staff, board members, volunteers etc. will also qualify as a primary target group.

Finally, the **secondary target group** represents the people who will be exposed to the project but not directly involved in or necessarily benefit from the project, including for example the surrounding communities, people in similar situations, etc.

WHO	
PRIMARY TARGET GROUP(S)	
Rights-holders	
Duty-bearers	
Other Relevant actors	
SECONDARY TARGET GROUP(S)	
Rights-holders	
Duty-bearers	
Other Relevant actors	

Analysis phase - summary

By the end of the analysis phase, you should have the following elements:

- **A context analysis**
- **A problem tree**
- **A stakeholder analysis**
- **A resource analysis**
- **A focal problem, and**
- **An identified primary and secondary target group**

These elements form the foundation for the next step of designing your project. Throughout the design phase, it might be necessary to adjust the different analyses.

The first step in the design phase is to develop a Theory of Change (ToC). Have your focal problem to hand, as this will be the direct link between the analytical - and design phase!



Part 2: Designing the project



At the heart of any development project is the ambition to change a particular problem or human rights issue. In the first phase, we have carried out the most essential analyses and have narrowed the development issue down to a focal problem. In the design phase, we will help you qualify your focal problem into a 'desired change' and identify the best way to achieve this change.

You will be introduced to an overall understanding of the logic of change and presented with two design approaches, namely Theory of Change (ToC) and a results framework. ToC and the results framework are both flexible approaches that help produce a visual summary of the project design. The two approaches complement each other as:

- A Theory of Change looks at how change happens in a given context and how you can influence this change.
- A results framework shows in a structured manner how your project is expected to lead to results at different levels, and how changes can be measured.

Part 2: Designing the project, consists of seven sections:

- 1 Understanding the logic of change
- 2 Tools for developing a ToC
- 3 Designing a results framework based on the ToC
- 4 Creating a detailed target group analysis
- 5 Project budgeting
- 6 Developing a risk assessment and register to monitor risks throughout the implementation of the intervention
- 7 And lastly, designing the implementation strategy with emphasis on project sustainability

Combined with the context analysis (Part I), the design phase provides the necessary raw material for making a project document.

As in the previous phase, it is essential to adopt a participatory approach and involve all relevant actors. If you have made a stakeholder analysis and identified your primary and secondary target groups (see sections 1.3 and 1.6), this will help you decide on the most important stakeholders to involve in the design process. If possible, consider holding a project design workshop where relevant staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders come together to work through the design.

2.1 Understanding the change logic

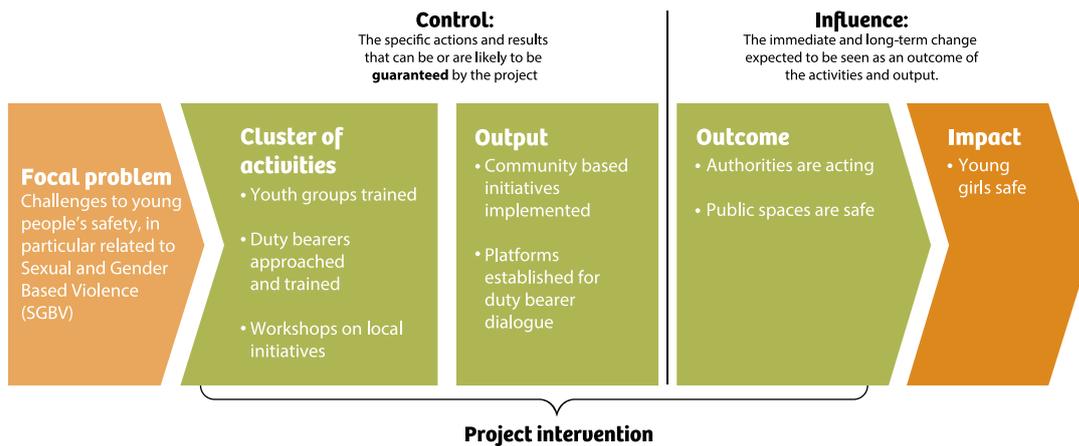
As mentioned in the introduction, Project Cycle Management is based on the philosophy that well-planned, well-managed, and adaptive projects are most likely to be successful and lead to lasting change. If we subscribe to this philosophy, it is more likely that the project will succeed if it is based on a solid design that takes into consideration the contextual knowledge and understanding gained in the analysis phase (part I).

Overall, a well-designed project demonstrates a clear relationship between 1) the problem, 2) the project itself, and 3) the desired change.



This relationship can be illustrated as a **results chain**. The chain illustrates how planned activities are expected to lead to certain **direct results**, for example tangible products or changes in knowledge and skills, defined as **outputs**, which in turn are expected to contribute to creating **immediate changes**, for example changes in behaviour or practices, defined as **outcomes**, in the hope that these will contribute to creating the **long-term desired change** in society, defined as **impact**. Please note that the definitions of output, outcome, and impact are elaborated further in section 2.4.

The causal relationship between the different levels of the change logic represents a qualified estimate of how certain actions are likely to lead to the desired change. However, development is hardly ever a straightforward process, and the change logic must be continuously monitored and adapted to a changing context.



You can explain the uncertainty of the change logic by making a distinction between the things you are **likely to control**, namely the project activities and outputs, and what you are **likely to influence**, namely the outcomes and impact of the project.

The change logic can also be formulated as a project Theory of Change (ToC). The ToC method, introduced in the next section, is a flexible approach to describing the complexity of the change you aim to achieve.

2.2 Theory of Change

Theory of Change (ToC) is an approach for **planning, learning, reflecting, monitoring, and documenting** change. Basically, it sets out what is expected to change for whom as a result of your project and creates a shared understanding of how change happens. Thus, the ToC is built around a narrative about how we think change will happen.

A **Theory of Change (ToC)** explains the desired change and assumptions about how that change is expected to happen in a particular context.

Definition

The ToC is – as the name implies – a theory in the sense that it represents an informed “best guess” of what will support the desired change. The theory must consequently be tested and refined regularly to ensure that it remains relevant within the given context.

Please note, the better you understand the context and its challenges and opportunities, the better you can develop a theory for how to make changes. The context, problem tree, and stakeholder analysis (Part 1) are therefore important reference points when developing a ToC.

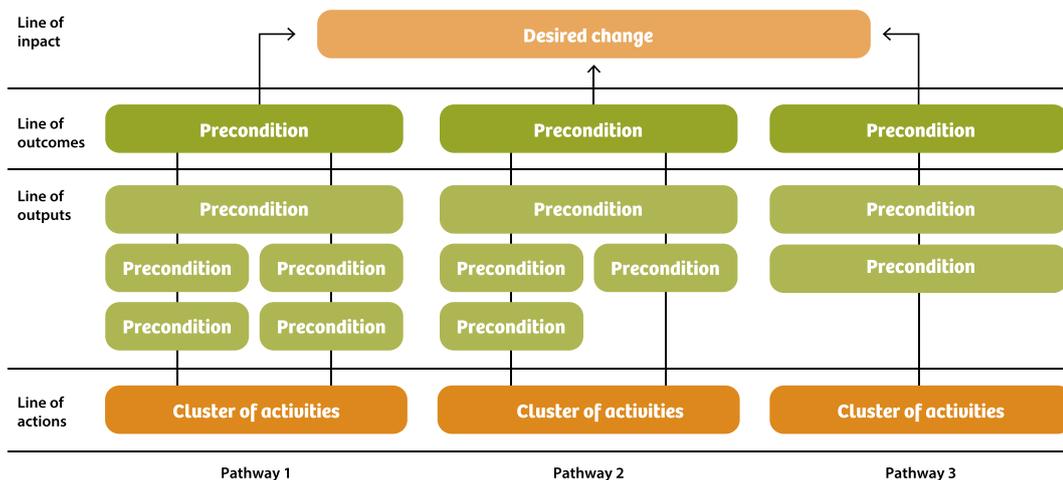
Developing a ToC is a creative exercise visualising the logical pathways to the desired change and explaining what you need to look out for during implementation.

There is no single pre-defined template for how to work with a theory of change, but it is often manifested as a visual model also often referred to as a pathway with a written explanation (a narrative) to support it (section 2.8).

ToC pathways come in different visual shapes, some are linear maps (as the example shown here), others have the shape of a spiderweb or a story path. You will also find that some ToC pathways have a very simple pattern, while others are more complex, and finally some have a graphical layout.

Still, in the visual ToC pathways, the different elements, the desired change, preconditions, and clusters of activities are linked together in logical sequences describing the theory of change.

Theory of Change (ToC) template example



You may use the ToC pattern that resonates with the group you are working with. You just need to make sure that the ToC pathway captures the agreed theory behind the project, or in other words the different pathways to change.

Definition

A **pathway** refers to (a visual) sequence or hierarchy of changes that map out the theory of how change will happen at different levels.

The development of a ToC pathway is further described in the sections below.

If using the ToC to plan a new project, you will need to involve the relevant staff and volunteers in your organisation. It may also be beneficial to include representatives of the rights-holders and duty-bearers with the most interest in and influence on the project (the stakeholder analysis), to ensure their commitment and ownership to the project and that their knowledge and experience are included. Yet, it is not necessary nor efficient to involve everyone. A smaller group of four-five key stakeholder representatives work best.

A participatory workshop is the most common means for developing a ToC. It is important that the ToC process is well facilitated and enables everyone to contribute, regardless of their status and knowledge of the tool. You can choose to get support from an external consultant who has expertise in ToC facilitation, which also enables staff and volunteers to participate fully in the development of the ToC (rather than facilitate).

The stages in developing a Theory of Change

There is no single predefined template for developing a ToC, but it is useful to divide the process into different steps. The process tool below contains five basic steps (see the ToC process tool).

We would suggest using steps 1 – 5 as a basis for a facilitated and participatory ToC workshop and refer to the general facilitation tips above.

Step 1 - confirm the basics

Start by making sure that those participating in developing the ToC have a common understanding of the context and its key challenges and opportunities as well as the agreed 'focal problem' (the context analyses, section 1.2- 1.6).

In the case of Bonga Town, the focal problem agreed upon was challenges to young people's safety, in particular related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).



Step 2 – the desired change

The overall desired change is the starting point for your ToC. Those involved in the development of the ToC must therefore initially make a clear formulation of the desired change to be seen as the long-term effect of the project.

The formulation of the desired change should be informed by the agreed focal problem.

When formulating the desired change, consider the focal problem and envision what the situation would look like if the problem was solved. The desired change must be formulated as the changed state of affairs.

Example

In the case of Bonga Town, the focal problem was challenges to young people's safety, in particular related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). If this problem is solved, a changed state of affairs is that young women and girls will be safe from gender-based violence. The desired (envisioned) change can thus be formulated as follows: **"Young women and girls are safe from gender-based violence in Bonga Town"**.

Line of impact

Young women and girls are safe from gender-based violence in Bonga Town

Step 3 – preconditions and pathways to change

The **pathways** describe the change at different levels and summarise **the theory** of how change is expected to happen.

When developing the pathways, you must work backwards from the desired change to establish a logical sequence of preconditions for the higher-level change to take place. In the process, you will experience that some preconditions have to be added, moved, and deleted until a pathway eventually emerges that the group can agree on.

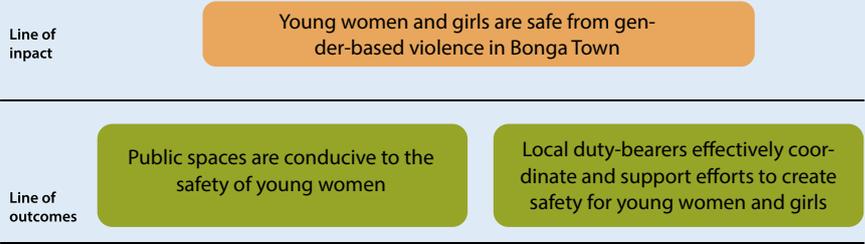
Finally, the logical sequence of preconditions can be connected by lines or arrows to clearly illustrate the different pathways to achieving the desired change.

By working backwards from the desired change, the participants will now have to carefully consider what are the preconditions (necessary conditions/or changes) that need to be in place for the desired change to be realised. Thus, preconditions are identified by asking the question: **"What conditions must be in place (for example changes in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude, or behaviour of key stakeholders) for the desired change to occur?"**.

The answers will help you to establish the higher-level preconditions for change.



If, for example, the desired change is a situation where “Young women and girls are safe from gender-based violence in Bonga Town”, the higher-level preconditions can be that **public spaces are conducive to the safety of young women** and **local duty-bearers effectively coordinate and support efforts to create safety for young women and girls**, etc.



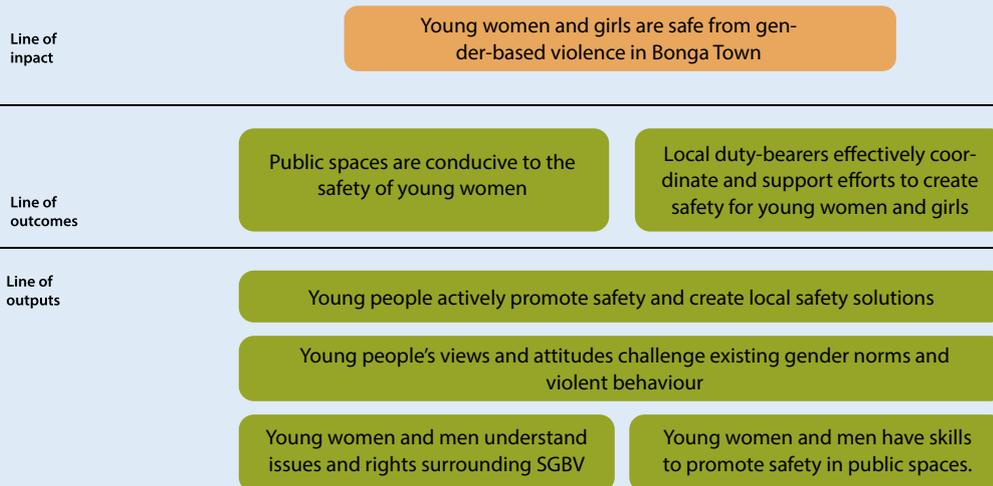
The next question you will need to ask is: **“What conditions must be in place for the higher-level preconditions to occur?”**

It may be helpful to refer back to the root causes identified in the problem tree (section 1.2.2) when working out the preconditions for the desired change to be realised. Please be aware that the preconditions are formulated as a new situation and not as activities. They are the immediate changes which are a prerequisite for the desired change to take place and the stepping stones that create the **pathways of change**.



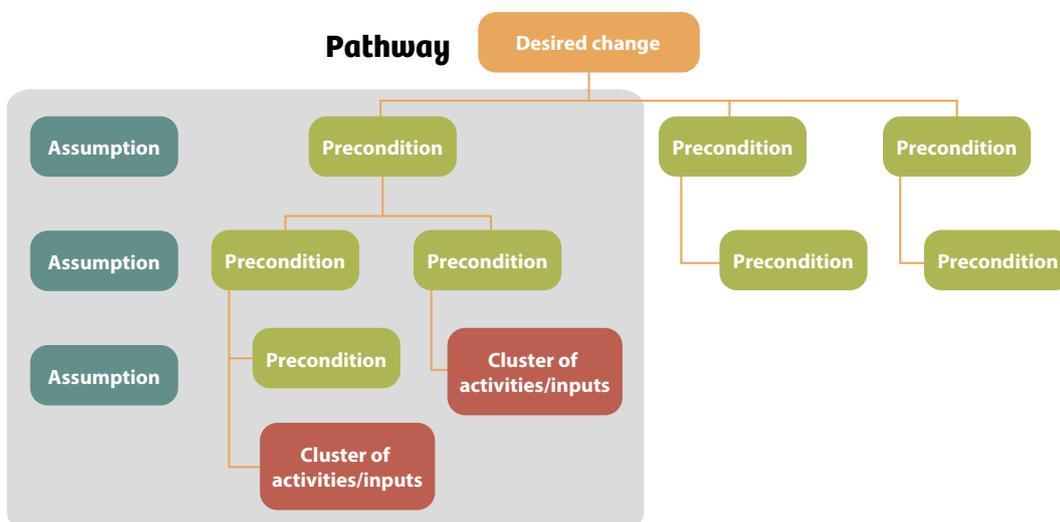
Example

Here, the example from Bonga Town (related to the precondition public spaces are conducive to the safety of young women) is that **young people actively promote safety and create local safety solutions, young people’s views and attitudes challenge existing gender norms and violent behaviour, young women and men understand issues and rights surrounding SGBV, and young women and men have skills to promote safety in public spaces.**



Step 4 – Assumptions

In the process of creating the project’s pathways of change, it is important to articulate assumptions about the change process in order to examine the validity of the theory and identify if there are assumptions that are hard to support (or even false).



ToC assumptions are the circumstances that make the theory work in practice. Thus, **an assumption is the expectation about how one precondition leads to another**. It could for example be that local authorities will give priority to new safety measures in Bonga Town, or that youths are entitled, capable, and willing to engage in community change. Thus, the assumptions add to the explanation of the causal logic between the various elements in the ToC. You will therefore need to think about the assumptions specific to each level in each of the selected change pathways.

When you have identified assumptions at all levels of the pathway, you have a very useful overview of all relevant assumptions that can be used when designing the results framework. At this stage, assess whether there are assumptions that are particularly essential to your ToC and therefore particularly relevant to follow during implementation. These assumptions are called 'key assumptions'. Key assumptions are given priority when designing your monitoring system.

Killer assumption – An assumption that is very unlikely to hold true. You need to reconsider this part of the project.

Definition

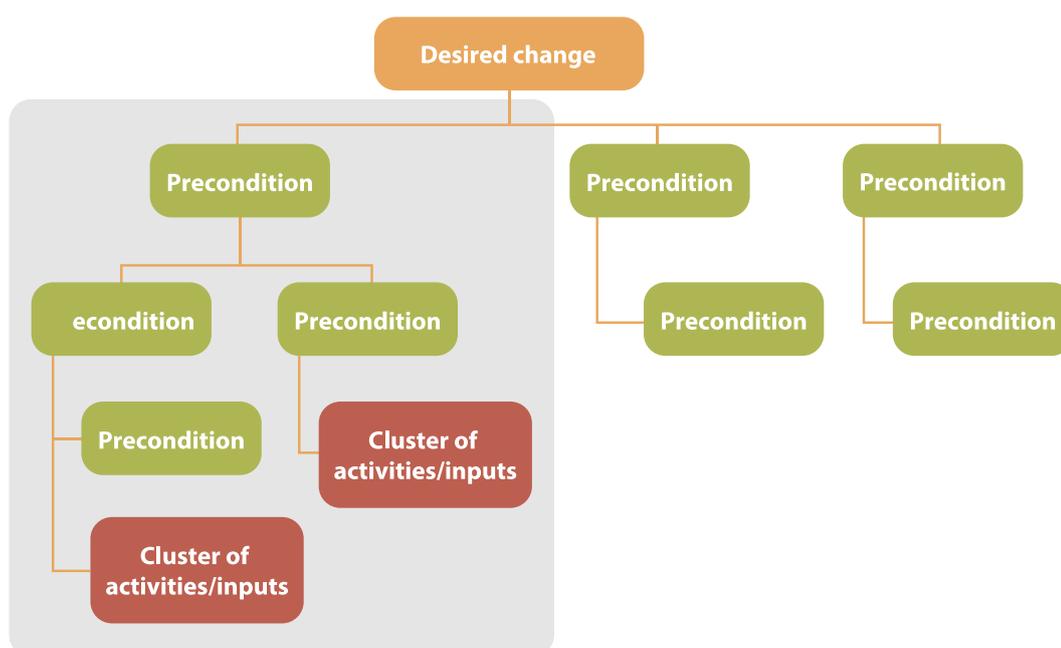
If you find that a significant assumption is unlikely to be valid, it is called a "killer assumption". This kind of assumption will challenge the feasibility of the project and you may need to reconsider the project design or at least have a risk mitigation in place.

One example of an assumption in the case of Bonga Town which could also be defined as a 'key assumption' is that **"knowledge and skills on SGBV will lead to attitudinal change"**. This is a very basic assumption in the pathway that is proposed. It will therefore be highly relevant to monitor whether "knowledge and skills" in practice leads to relevant positive attitudinal change.

Example

Step 5 – key clusters of activities contributing to change

You are now ready to start thinking about the key clusters of activities or working approaches needed to contribute to the desired change. By taking each pathway, consider what it takes to create the identified preconditions. This stage will help you rule out some of the pathways and focus only on the preconditions you will be able to influence through your project.



Remember that some clusters of activities will involve collaboration with other organisations or authorities, and some preconditions may only be achieved if these other actors are also involved one way or another. Use your stakeholder analysis (section 1.3) to guide you on which other actors to involve and how to involve them in a meaningful manner.

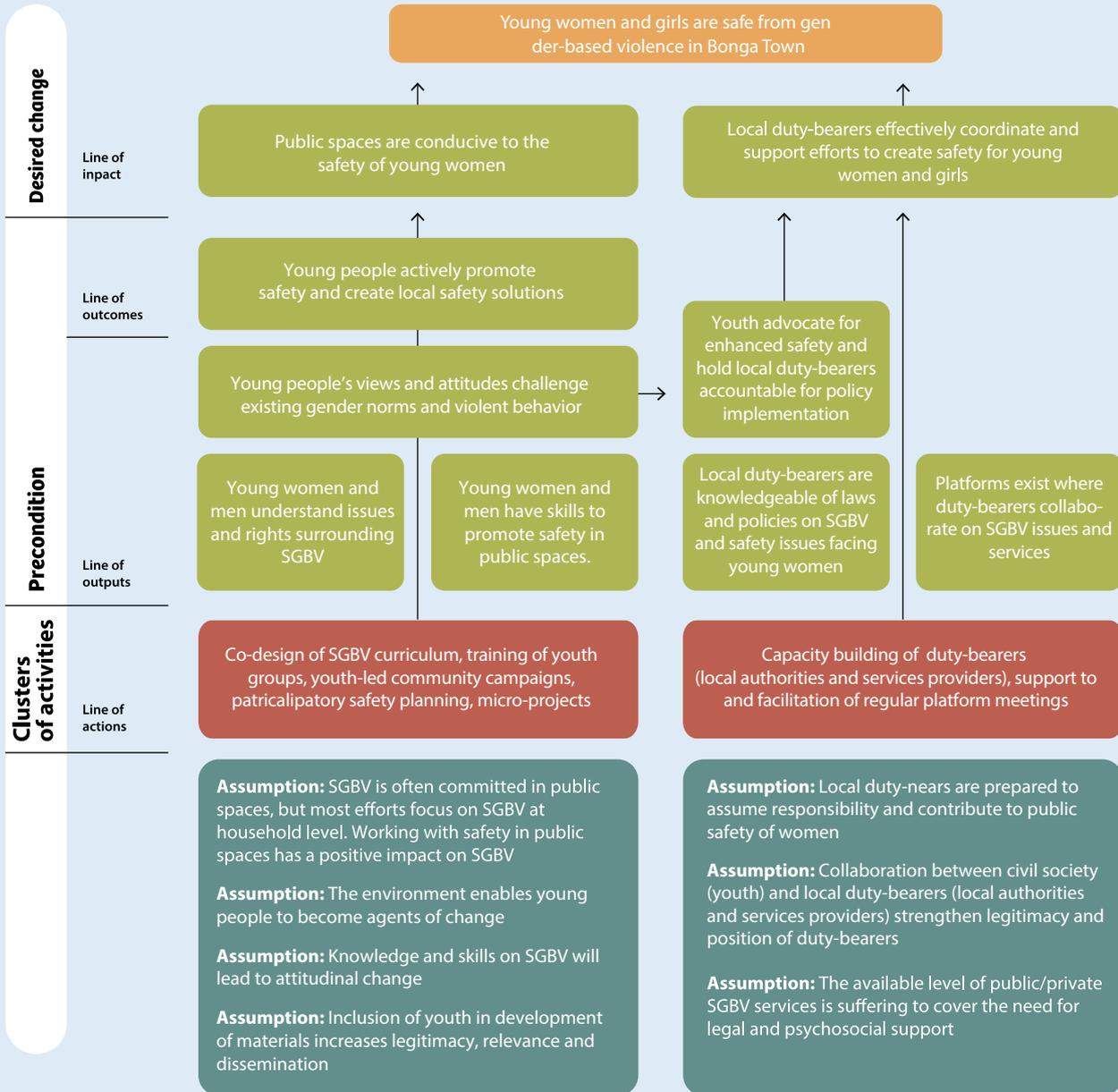
The identified clusters of activities or working approaches must be placed at the bottom of the ToC pathway and linked to the particular pathway they are associated with.

After the workshop, you will have to finalise the pathways. As you develop your ToC, you will need to make it available in a useful format. Most people find it useful if presented as a visual model.

Example

Theory of Change - Bonga Town

In the case of Bonga Town, the partners have developed a visual ToC with two pathways, incl. clusters of activities:



Pathway 1: Empowerment

Pathway 2: Capacity development

2.3 Using the Theory of Change when developing the results framework

The ToC and the results framework are different design tools and while to some they are incompatible, we believe in uniting the two.

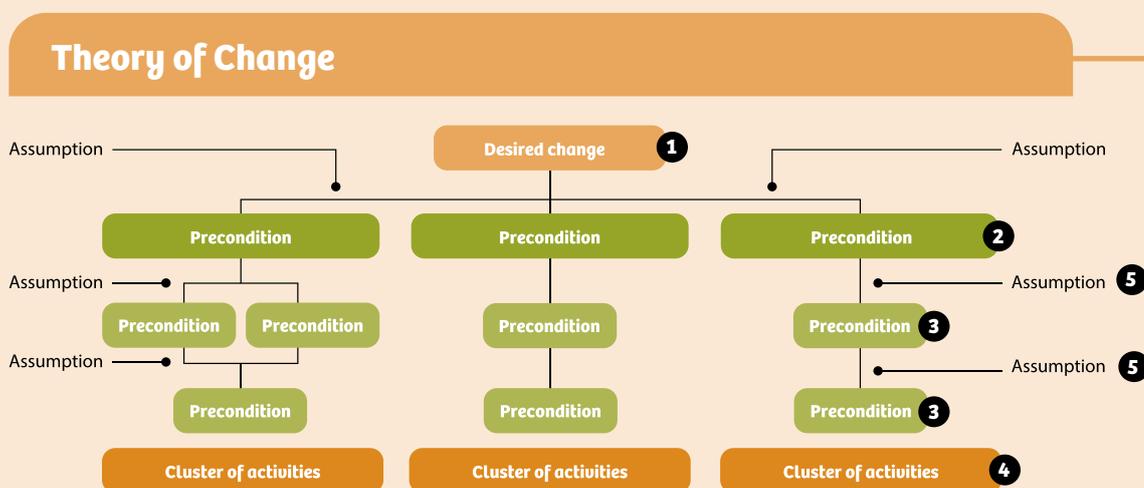
The ToC allows you to see beyond the usual project scope (expertise, available resources, geographical location). It emphasises that change in a society cannot realistically be achieved by a single actor and highlights the complexity of change as well as the different pathways to change.

The results framework on the other hand is useful for breaking down the preconditions in the ToC into practical steps and for defining indicators and setting targets that can be used for managing and monitoring project implementation.

In other words, the ToC is the change process at a strategic level, while the results framework works at the operational level. So rather than replacing the results framework, we believe that the ToC can contribute to the framework and enrich your strategic thinking.

The compatibility between the ToC and results framework can be illustrated as follows:

Connecting the Theory of Change with the Result Framework



2.4 The results framework

The results framework is rooted in the logical approach illustrated in the **results chain** (section 2.1) where the project's planned **outputs** contribute to creating the conditions necessary for achieving the immediate **outcomes** and subsequent **impact**.

Results are the changes that occur due to project activities; they can be positive or negative, planned, or unplanned. Desired results are the specific, planned, and positive changes that the project aims to achieve.

Definition

A **results framework** is a management tool presenting the desired results at impact, outcome, and output level and the indicators used to detect change. The results framework emphasises a focus on results – as opposed to activities – in project design and monitoring.

All levels of the results framework – from clusters of activities to impact – may need to be adapted during the course of the project because of changes in the context, new knowledge or experiences, or a flawed initial design. Adaptation is both acceptable and advisable.

Result framework

Narrative	Indicator	Assumptions
1 Impact		
2 Outcome		5 Assumptions
3 Outputs		
4 Clusters of activities		

2.4.1 Tool for developing a results framework

The results framework is developed using a matrix framework. Frameworks can vary slightly in form and content. We have chosen to apply the following type of matrix:

A results framework matrix					
PROJECT TITLE:					
Impact	[the overall change that the project is envisioned to contribute to in the long-term. Use the desired change from the ToC]				
Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Milestone	Target	Assumptions
[the changes anticipated to be realised as an effect of the project's outputs]	what is to be measured, not what is to be achieved]		[optional]		[the external factors that are accepted as true or certain to happen, without proof]
	Means of verification (MoV): [where and how the information about the indicator will be obtained. These need to be realistic]				
Outputs	Outputs Indicators	Baseline	Milestone	Target	Assumptions
[the specific and verifiable results of the project, which are very likely to be achieved as a direct consequence of the activities]	[optional]	[optional]	[optional]	[optional]	[the external factors that are accepted as true or certain to happen, without proof]
	Means of verification (MoV):				
Clusters of activities					

In the matrix, the left column articulates the results you aspire to achieve/contribute to at different levels (impact, outcomes, and outputs) while the columns for baseline, milestone, and target enable you to monitor and document the results against the baseline situation and specific targets. The column for assumptions indicates the external conditions, events, or decisions that are expected to hold true for the project to succeed.

Please note that the larger the project, the more details will be necessary to guide implementation and monitoring, whereas small projects do not need the same level of detail and may not require columns for milestones and assumptions.

The best results frameworks are a result of a participatory process involving key decision-makers and other relevant staff and volunteers in the partnering organisations. It may also be beneficial to include a few representatives of rights-holders and duty-bearers to tap into their specialised and experience-based knowledge when developing the framework, particularly related to targets and indicators.

A participatory workshop is the most common approach when developing a results framework. The duration of the workshop should be planned to 1 – 2 days (more if you do not already have a ToC) and it must be facilitated in a manner so everyone feels they can contribute, regardless of their status. For that to be possible, it is essential that all participants are well-informed about the project choice, the Theory of Change, and understand the underlying logic of the results framework, i.e., that impact is achieved via a results chain where activities lead to outputs, which in turn lead to outcomes, which eventually will contribute to impact (as explained in section 2.1).

2.4.2 The results framework step-by-step

The 7-step description is a demonstration of how to complete the matrix framework and how to understand the different levels and concepts in the results framework. To exemplify the different steps, we will make use of Dreamtown and YDC-SLs work with the results framework for their project in Bonga Town.

Be aware that the framework should be completed from top to bottom (starting from the left column) to establish a clear and logical relationship between impact, outcome, and output. This is contrary to implementation which follows a bottom-up-logic from activities over outputs towards outcome.



Step 1: Project title

The very first thing is to find a meaningful, easily understood, and brief title, which can be grasped without having to know the details of the project. Try to avoid abbreviations and other jargon that is only understood by the project partners. Remember also to indicate whether the project is a continuation of a previous project, for example by writing in brackets which phase it is.



Example

In the case of Bonga Town, partners decided on the following project title:

Project title: Safe in the City

Had the partners opted for a project title such as “SitC 2030” or “Ensuring young women’s safety in cities by 2030 and beyond” the title would have been less meaningful or too long to apply in everyday communication.

Step 2: Impact

Secondly, you should envision the desired long-term impact of the project.

The impact is not intended to be achieved by the project alone or within the timeframe of the project. It should consequently be formulated as a visionary but realistic changed state of affairs that reflects the identified problem or rights violation, and which is logically linked to the project’s expected outcome and output.

If you have developed a ToC (section 2.2), you are likely to be able to use the desired change to describe your long-term impact.



Example

In the Safe in the City project, partners envisioned the long-term impact of the project as follows:

Impact: Young women and girls are safe from gender-based violence in Bonga Town

Step 3: Outcomes

Thirdly, you must identify and agree on the expected outcomes of the project.

An **outcome** identifies what is anticipated to change as an immediate effect of the project outputs, and who will benefit.

Definition

Outcomes are formulated as the change that you hope to see in for example people's living conditions, policies and/or policy enforcement, or target groups and/or stakeholders' behaviour, practice or actions. The outcome statement should thus be formulated as "a new situation" and include a clear indication of "what" (the actual qualitative change) and "who" (the target group who will either be the change-makers or the beneficiaries).

As such, the outcomes are outside the sphere of direct control and cannot be guaranteed to be achieved by the project, but they should be 1) realistic and likely to materialise once the project outputs are achieved, and 2) relevant contributions to the realisation of the impact.

Again, if you have developed a ToC, you are likely to find your outcomes among the top-level preconditions in the ToC. You will also be able to find inspiration in the problem tree developed as part of the initial context analysis (section 1.2.2)

For the Safe in the City project, the partners agreed on the following outcomes:

Outcome

Outcome 1: Public spaces are conducive to the safety of young women in Bonga Town

Outcome 2: Local duty-bearers effectively coordinate and support efforts to create safety for young women and girls in Bonga Town

Example

Try to limit the number of outcomes as it will help to focus the project according to the project choice and make it more manageable. A rule of thumb is to identify no more than three outcomes. For smaller projects it is advisable with only one or two outcomes.

Step 4: Outputs

Next step is to describe the outputs that you find will contribute to achieving the project outcomes.

Definition

Outputs are the specific and verifiable results of the project that are very likely to be achieved as a direct consequence of the activities.

The outputs are formulated as the tangible results you expect to deliver. Outputs are thus more than completed activities; they are the short-term changes that occur as a result of the activities. It can for example be the acquisition of new skills, knowledge, or capacity, or the production of certain materials, goods, or services.

The outputs are necessary for achieving results at outcome level, and it is consequently important that the logic of the results chain from output to outcome is clear, coherent, and substantiates that the outputs will contribute to the achievement of the outcomes.

If you have developed a ToC, you are likely to find your outputs among the lower levels of the preconditions. Typically, not all preconditions will be included into the results framework, nor will the formulation of the preconditions and outputs be completely the same. You will have to make a choice of what preconditions from the ToC will be most relevant as outputs for the framework and thus also what you will be monitoring more closely. Remember that preconditions will most likely need to be rephrased as an output when being transferred to your results framework.

Example

In the Safe in the City project, the partners agreed on the following outputs necessary for achieving the first of the two outcomes:

Outcome

1. Public spaces are conducive to the safety of young women in Bonga Town

Output

- 1.1 Community-based safety and SGBV-prevention activities implemented in public spaces
- 1.2 Young women and men have knowledge and skills that enable them to act on issues and rights regarding SGBV

Step 5: Assumptions

Beyond the chain of intended results at output and outcome level lies a set of external factors about which we make assumptions that must be valid for the project results to be achieved.

Assumptions – as they appear in the results framework – are either external factors (for example certain situations or conditions and/or certain people's decisions or goodwill) that are accepted as true or certain to happen, without proof, and/or explanations of the causal logic (as identified in the pathway)

Definition

The assumptions in the results framework reflect factors that are necessary for the successful achievement of results but are beyond the control of the project. Whereas in the ToC, they are an explanation of the causal logic between the different elements (see step 4 in the pathway, section 2.2).

To identify relevant assumptions for the results framework, you can ask two questions:

- 1 What are the factors beyond our direct control that we assume will be necessary to link an output to an outcome?
- 2 What relevant explanations have been identified in the pathway to link an output to an outcome?

With the feasibility of the project in mind, it is important to identify and assess any external factors that might negatively impact the project. This will help avoid failures and take account of the most critical factors while developing the implementation strategy, including for example how best to obtain the goodwill of key duty-bearers and get them to take responsibility, or how best to ensure the access of specific target groups to certain services.

The column at the far right of the results framework ensures transparency about the assumptions that must be valid to achieve project results at the different levels of the results hierarchy.

Although the assumptions are placed in the rightmost column of the matrix, they are closely linked to the description of the project’s expected results. In example:



Test of change logic

Result summary			
	Narrative	Indicators	Assumptions
Impact			
Outcome	<i>Then...</i> local duty-bearers effectively coordinate and support efforts to create safety for young women and girls in Bonga Town		
Outputs	<i>If...</i> local duty-bearers are knowledgeable of laws and policies on SGBV and safety issues facing young women that enable them to act on issues regarding <i>If...</i> platforms exist where duty-bearers collaborate on SGBV issues and services		<i>And...</i> local duty bearers are willing to prioritise their time for trainings <i>And...</i> local duty-bearers are prepared to assume responsibility and contribute to public safety for women <i>And...</i> local duty-bearers are prepared to assume responsibility and contribute to public safety for women
Clusters of activities			

If output 1 and output 2 are achieved, and if the assumptions at output level are valid, then the outcome will be achieved.

Together, the results summary (output, outcome, impact) and assumptions columns illustrate the thinking behind the project and point to the necessary conditions for success.

As in the ToC (section 2.2, step 4), remember to look for ‘killer assumptions’

Step 6: Indicators, Means of Verification (MoV), baselines, and targets

After having completed the two outermost columns illustrating the thinking behind the project, the next and final step is to develop indicators, Means of Verification (MoV), baseline values, and targets – first at outcome level, then at output level – to establish a mechanism to monitor and document performance and progress towards the desired results.

Indicators

The indicator tells you **what is to be to measure**, not what is to be achieved, in relation to the intended outcome/output. The actual performance measurement will instead appear from the information provided in the columns for Baseline and Targets.

Please note that the indicators you choose for the project must be specific and clearly measurable.

Indicators can be either quantitative, reflecting for example:

- Numbers
- Percentage or proportion
- Prevalence
- Rate (example: birth rate—births per 1,000 population)
- Ratio (example: sex ratio—number of males per number of females)

Or qualitative, reflecting for example people's perception (judgments, opinions, or attitudes) towards a certain issue; a certain standard or a certain change in for example influence, awareness, knowledge, skills, behaviour, practice, or well-being. Qualitative indicators measure results in terms of:

- Perception of... (or judgment of, opinion or attitude towards)
- Compliance with...
- Quality of...
- Ability to...
- Extent of...
- Level of ...

Quantitative as well as qualitative indicators should, when relevant, be disaggregated according to relevant segments of the target groups to create the basis for nuanced information. Indicators can be disaggregated along different dimensions including gender, age, location, income level, occupation, administration level (for example national vs. local), and social groups. For example, in situations where the context analysis demonstrates that the roles and status of women and men respectively affect their access to specific services or the fulfilment of rights, a gender-sensitive indicator will be relevant to capture changes in gender relations over time.

Good practice suggests two or maximum three indicators per outcome. By limiting the number of indicators to a few carefully selected and relevant indicators, you are more likely to be able to monitor the indicators systematically and thoroughly. Bear in mind that an indicator is only useful if it provides relevant information and allows you to establish a baseline. If not, you will need to create another indicator.

Example

Example of right and wrong indicators:

Young women's perception of safety in public spaces	😊
An increased number of young women are safe in public spaces as an effect of project initiatives	😞

If for instance you aim to achieve “soft” outcomes such as a change in perception, for example self-esteem or confidence, it can be hard to make an indicator that captures and provides reliable data. However, you may be able to measure observable behavioural changes – known as “proxy indicators”. An indicator of self-esteem and confidence might thus be ‘readiness to make social contacts’ or ‘level of comfortability when speaking in public’.

Example

Example of right and wrong indicators:

No. of youth groups implementing initiatives on safety	😊
Level of knowledge / skillset of SGBV and sexual-reproductive health rights	😊
Young people in Bonga Town have increased knowledge of SGBV and sexual reproductive health rights and implemented at least 20 initiatives on safety by end of project.	😞

Including output indicators are oftentimes excessive, as the output indicator often will look like the output itself. It is more important to focus on the indicators at outcome level to understand the larger changes the project is contributing to. This is not to say that outputs should not be monitored, but this is still possible without a concrete indicator. Outputs are usually measured at regular intervals – as part of ordinary monitoring – to assess progress towards the outcomes.

If you plan to measure for example knowledge and awareness, it is not possible simply asking people if they know more than before becoming involved in the project. You will need to set more targeted indicators by specifying what they are expected to know more about. For example, a training session aiming to increase young people’s knowledge of how to be safe in public spaces can have an indicator about the trainees’ (women and men) ability to name specific safety measures and where to report incidents of violence or abuse – rather than asking about their level of safety awareness.

Please note that all your indicators must be supported by Means of Verifications (MoV), baselines, and targets.

Means of Verification (MoV)

Means of Verification is the methods necessary to obtain information to demonstrate what has been accomplished. The MoV indicates how and from where you get your data to support the indicator, establish the baseline, and demonstrate progress towards the target. While selecting your MoV, you should consider how best to trace the indicator and thus document your outputs and outcomes. It is important that the MoVs are realistic, and if the MoV turns out to be difficult (complex or very resource intensive) to establish, consider changing the indicator.

Baseline

A baseline describes the initial situation (relative to the indicator) prior to project implementation and is established to be able to document progress during implementation and once the project has been completed. A baseline can be developed with assistance from both primary and secondary data. Primary data is data that you collect yourself. Secondary data is data from other sources such as research/academic studies, public statistics, news articles, etc.

Baseline values can, as indicators, be either quantitative or qualitative:

Quantitative baseline values can for example be established by counting heads (actual numbers or sampling from a representative group/entity), measuring frequency or size, or by consulting existing statistics or public figures.

Qualitative values on the other hand can be established through observation, surveys, interviews, focus group discussions about behavioural patterns, quality of practice, level of knowledge, etc.

It is important that baseline data and analysis is current, consistent, and as accurate as possible, and disaggregated (e.g., by sex, age, profession) when appropriate. The baseline should, to the extent possible, be established prior to project implementation, but in some cases, it will be necessary to collect baseline data – especially qualitative data at outcome level – as part of the Project Inception Phase (see section 3.2.2). You may for example want to verify the partner's organisational capacity, collect perception data in the community, or document current professional practices among key stakeholders shortly after the approval of a project – and thus be able to include baseline data collection in the project budget.

If you use baseline data from external sources, you must make sure that the same source is used when collecting data during the project in order to enable comparison. For example, if baseline data on the number of cases of sexual and gender-based violence reported is obtained from the records of relevant local service providers and authorities (e.g., health clinics, legal and psycho-social aid clinics, police help desk), the project should consistently collect its data from the same sources, to ensure that the data collection methodology remains the same and enables comparability. If you plan to collect your own baseline data, consider if you have the necessary resources to ensure reliability and precision of data (including making sure that the data collection protocols, instruments, and procedures are kept and can be replicated) as primary data collection can be both expensive and time consuming.

Please note that baseline values are linked to indicators, and it is not necessary to produce a comprehensive baseline report. Oftentimes, data and information gathered as part of the analyses can be used as baseline values. Rather you must consider if it is realistic to collect the baseline data necessary to support the indicator and to do the necessary follow-up as part of monitoring and evaluation.

Targets

Targets represent the specific levels of results to be achieved within a given timeframe and contribute to establishing clear expectations for the implementing partners, project staff, and key stakeholders. In line with indicators and baseline data, the targets should be disaggregated where appropriate.

The targets help justify a project by describing explicitly what the project will produce, and once the project is being implemented, the targets serve as guideposts for monitoring and contribute to transparency and accountability by making information available as to whether results have been achieved over time.

Targets can be expressed differently but should clearly articulate the expectation about either quantity or quality of the expected result. Targets can thus be either quantitative or qualitative, depending on the nature of the associated indicator. Targets for quantitative indicators are numerical, whereas targets for qualitative indicators are descriptive. To facilitate comparison of baselines and targets, some indicators may convert qualitative data into a quantitative measure. It will be much easier to establish baselines and targets if using an Advocacy Index with agreed standards and assessment criteria to measure the advocacy capacity of an organisation, rather than making a qualitative description of its capacity.

Milestones act as an early-warning system, indicating at specific points in time how your project is expected to progress. Milestones must be set at appropriate intervals, for example every 12 months, which help to track progress along the predicted path. Milestones are only included at output level in the results matrix, but it may be relevant for larger and long-term projects to also define milestones at outcome level. Milestones may not be relevant to all projects, especially small-scale and/or short-term projects.

Indicators, Means of Verification (MoV), baseline, and target - Safe in the City



Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Target	Assumptions
1) Public spaces are conducive to the safety of young women in Bonga Town	Young women's perception of safety in public spaces	29% express a sense of safety in the public space	At least 50% express a sense of safety in the public space	There will be no significant political, health, or environmental factors adversely affecting the experience of public safety
	MoV: Sample survey (questionnaire) among 150 young women (15 - 35 years) conducted at two times (morning and evening) in 3 specific public			

Step 7: Clusters of activities

The last step is to combine the clusters of activities from your ToC (see section 2.2) with your results framework. You can choose to add a section to the different outcome sections of the results framework (see Safe in the City example) or develop a separate template. It can be a good idea to record main activities – as in the most essential actions necessary for transforming a given input into tangible outputs – that can contribute to the budget and, at a later stage, the detailed activity plan (see part 3, inception).

Most activities will relate to specific outputs, but some may be cross-cutting support activities necessary for the success of the project. It could for example be conducting annual reflection workshops, training of project staff, establishing a complaint's mechanism, or carrying out a study-tour to a similar project nearby.

It applies to all activities that they must be realistic in relation to resources available, as well as be appropriate to the situation in the partner organisation/country in terms of institutions, climate, environment, technology, culture etc.

Please note that activities are stated in terms of actions being undertaken rather than completed outputs. With smaller projects, it might make more sense to identify all specific activities as opposed to clusters of activities. This can also be a good way of designing a project. It is just important that there is a clear reference between the activities in the results framework and the budget.

Example

Results framework - Safe in the City

The results framework for the Safe in the City project is framed as follows (in this case, the partners chose to include output indicators):

Impact					
Young women and girls are safe from gender-based violence in Bonga Town					
Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Target	Assumptions	
1) Public spaces are conducive to the safety of young women in Bonga Town	Young women's perception of safety in public spaces	29% express a sense of safety in the public space	At least 50% express a sense of safety in the public space	There will be no significant political, health, or environmental factors adversely affecting the experience of public safety	
	MoV: Sample survey (questionnaire) among 150 young women (15 - 35 years) conducted at two times (morning and evening) in 3 specific public				
	Change in young people's perception of gender norms and SGBV	0	70% express that they have changed their perception on gender norms and SGBV	Youths are open to changing their opinions and perceptions	
	MoV: Survey (questionnaire) among youth (15-35 years) participating in trainings, at the end of the project				
	# of young women/men who have acted on SGBV	0	At least 50% of participating youth have acted on SGBV		
	MoV: Survey (questionnaire) among youths participating in trainings, at the end of the project, observations by partners.				
Outputs	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Milestone (mid-term)	Target (end of project)	Assumptions
1.1 Community-based safety and SGBV-prevention initiatives implemented in public spaces	# safety initiatives by youth groups	0	20 safety initiatives co-designed by 20 youth groups	At least 20 safety initiatives implemented by 20 youth groups	Local duty-bearers are supportive to safety initiatives by youth groups.
	MoV: Impact stories/testimonies from community members and youth groups, observation, and photos				
1.2 Young women and men have knowledge and skills that enable them to act on issues regarding SGBV	Level of knowledge / skillset	Limited knowledge of SGBV and rights	> 75% demonstrate an increased level of knowledge and skills relevant to combatting SGBV	> 75% have applied knowledge and skills to challenge gender norms / violent behaviour	Male youth group members are willing to act as positive role-models in the fight for gender equality and young wom-
	MoV: Pre-and post-training assessment, training outcome survey				
	# youth group members trained / scope of training	0	200 members (140 female and 60 male) trained 5x2-days	200 members (140 female and 60 male) trained 5x2-days	Young women and men are able and willing to prioritise their time for trainings.
	MoV: training programme, participant records				

Clusters of activities

- 1.1.1 Participatory safety planning
- 1.1.2 Micro-projects
- 1.2.1 Co-design of SGBV curriculum

- 1.2.2 Training of youth groups
- 1.2.3 Youth-led community campaigns

Impact	Young women and girls are safe from gender-based violence in Bonga Town					
Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Target		Assumptions	
2) Local duty-bearers effectively coordinate and support efforts to create safety for young women and girls in Bonga Town	# of initiatives taken by local duty-bearers	0	At least 7 initiatives from duty-bearers have been registered		Local duty bearers have achieved the necessary knowledge and skills to act on SGBV	
	MoV: Log where initiatives are noted down, impact stories/testimonies from the community members and youth groups.					
Outputs	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Milestone (mid-term)	Target (end of project)	Assumptions	
2.1 Local duty-bearers are knowledgeable of laws and policies on SGBV and safety issues facing young women that enable them to act on safety issues regarding SGBV	# of local duty-bearers trained / scope of training	0	50 local duty-bearers from local authorities and service providers have been trained	50 local duty-bearers from local authorities and service providers have been trained	Local duty bearers are able willing to prioritise their time for trainings	
	MoV: training programme, participant records					
	Level of knowledge / skillset	Limited knowledge of laws and policies	> 75% demonstrate an increased level of knowledge relevant to combatting SGBV	> 75% have applied knowledge and to act on SGBV issues		
MoV: Pre-and post-training assessment, training outcome survey						
2.2 Platforms exist where duty-bearers collaborate on SGBV issues and services	# of platform meetings held	0	At least 8 meetings held	At least 15 meetings held	Local duty-bearers are prepared to assume responsibility and contribute to public safety for women	
	MoV: Pre-and post-training assessment, training outcome survey					

Clusters of activities

- 2.1.1 Capacity building of duty-bearers (local authorities and service providers)
- 2.2.2 Support to- and facilitation of regular platform meetings

2.5 Target group analysis – analysing the nature of the target groups

Having developed the results framework, it is now time to make a closer analysis of the project's target groups. The purpose of the analysis is to make sure you have a common understanding of who they are, where they are placed, and how they will benefit from the project.

If you have not involved a representative group of people in the stakeholder analysis, you will need to ensure that the target group analysis is conducted with the involvement of both rights-holders and duty-bearers and includes the views of the most marginalised.

Taking point of departure in the primary and secondary target groups identified during the analysis phase, a closer analysis of the individual groups and actors should include:

- 1 An estimate of how many belong to the respective groups (disaggregated by age and gender).
- 2 The common characteristic – and differences – within the primary target groups, including for example geographical location, socio-economic conditions, relevant gender/age/ethnic/religious or other ratios, and how the members of the group are impacted (differently) by the problem / human rights violation addressed by the project.
- 3 The involvement of the primary target group(s); i.e. is it a rights-holder or a duty-bearer, how and why they will possibly be engaged in activities (including monitoring and evaluation). Involvement can for example be considered along the lines of “informing”, “consulting”, “collaborating” and “leadership” (see introduction).
- 4 The benefits for the primary target groups; how are they expected to benefit from taking part in the project.

	Who	How many (by age/gender)	Common characteristics	Involvement (How and why)	Benefits
PRIMARY TARGET GROUP(S)					
	Rights-holders				
	Duty-bearers				
	Other relevant actors				
SECONDARY TARGET GROUP(S)					
	Rights-holders				
	Duty-bearers				

The target group description must be transparent in relation to the selection criteria for the primary target groups and substantiate why these have been selected for involvement in the intervention; for example, due to their particular (or potential) role in society/community, particular motivation, organisational position or affiliation, professional skills etc.

In addition, the target group analysis must be gender and age sensitive, specifying relevant areas where women and men (girls/boys) or young and older people have different conditions and/or prerequisites and therefore will be involved in different ways.



Target group analysis - Safe in the City

In the case of Bonga Town, the goal is to decrease the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual and gender-based violence by enforcing their right to safety. Women and girls living in Bonga Town are thus rights-holders and the ultimate beneficiaries of the project.

Target group analysis - Safe in the City

		How many (by age/gender)	Common characteristics	Involvement (How and Why)	Benefits
PRIMARY TARGET GROUP(S)	Youth group members	20 youth groups with 15 members each. In total 300 (180 female 120 male) Members aged 15-35.	Rights-holders, active in youth groups in Bonga Town. Low-income group with unequal access to services, education, and trainings.	HOW: Engaged through co-design of SGBV curriculum, training, youth-led community campaigns, participatory safety planning, micro-projects. WHY: To increase understanding of issues and rights surrounding SGBV and promote safety in public spaces.	Empowerment, skills, and knowledge on how to promote safety and take lead in community development.
	Local authorities (Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, Chief, Chairman/-Lady, Youth Chairman, Women's leader, Town crier, Mammy Queen, Counsellor, Religious and traditional leaders)	15 persons, aged 40-60 (5 female, 10 male)	Duty-bearers have power in local decision-making and strong impact on community activities. Limited capacity to coordinate and engage with civil society groups. Promote a culture of silence around SGBV.	HOW: Engaged through capacity building and facilitation of regular platform meetings. Targeted through youth-led campaigns and advocacy. WHY: Local leaders can enhance positive changes for safety.	Collaboration between youth and local duty-bearers strengthen legitimacy and position of duty-bearers
	Local service providers (Family Support Unit, Rainbow Initiative. Local police)	30 persons, aged 30-50 (20 female 10 male)	Service providers have a strong interest in improving efforts on SGBV, but they lack capacity and resources.	HOW: Engaged through networking, receive support to improve referral mechanisms and handling SGBV cases. WHY: By improving referral mechanism, survivors of SGBV will have access to the necessary services.	Improved capacity and environment to operate and fulfil their mandate
SECONDARY TARGET GROUP(S)	Young people's networks (parents, community members and youth groups in surrounding communities)	1500 persons (750 female 750 male)			

The target groups of the project include representatives of the female rights-holders through the active involvement of female members of local youth groups together with their male counterparts. In addition to members of local youth groups, the project also involves various duty-bearers (local authorities and service providers) who – with the right knowledge and will – can make a positive contribution to the enforcement of women and girls' right to safety.

2.6 Budgeting

Developing a realistic budget is a key part of the design phase. A budget is an estimate of the total costs of achieving your outcomes and cannot be developed separately from the results framework. The budget is thus your best indication of how much money to raise/apply for to carry out the project, and you should always opt for seeking a maximum impact at the lowest cost possible.

Starting as early as possible with the budget is a good idea, as the budget and financial limitations can have an impact on your strategy and thus results framework and ambition levels. What exact budget format to use will often depend on donor requirements but the following will present some general basics to developing a budget.

The budget can be outcome-, output- or activity based. In this guide, the budget is based on the clusters of activities defined in the ToC and results framework. The outcomes can assist in structuring the budget (see figure below).

When developing the budget, consider the following costs for all partners involved:

- Project activities (e.g., workshops, development of action plans, stakeholder meetings etc.)
- Travel and transport
- Investments and equipment (e.g., computers, vehicles, bikes) An investment will typically not be direct inputs for activities such as seed corn or learning materials. As a rule of thumb, investments are hardware items that are handed over to a partner when a project ends.
- Human resources (staff)
- Administration costs (e.g., rent, Internet costs, stationary, etc.)
- Monitoring of the project
- Evaluation
- Diversity and inclusion (disability compensation)
- Audit costs

The budget is best developed in Excel. It should contain all project costs and correspond to the outcomes and clusters of activities in the results framework. Use the clusters of activities as your point of departure, describing the underlying calculations in your budget notes.

Some costs may not relate directly to an output but to cross-cutting activities necessary for the success of the project, for example hiring new staff (if such are required), conducting a start-up workshop or annual reflection workshops, training of project staff and volunteers etc. Such costs can be grouped under the headline “cross-cutting cost”.

Example

Budget - Safe in the City

LINE REF.	DESCRIPTION (ACTIVITY, ITEM ECT.)	TOTAL BUDGET
1. Activities		
Outcome 1.		
1.1.1	Participatory safety planning	78.500
1.1.2	Micro-projects	50.000
1.2.1	Co-design of SGBV curriculum	53.000
1.2.2	Training of youth groups	45.000
1.2.3	Youth-led community campaigns	67.000
Outcome 2.		
2.1.1		
2.2.1		
2.3.1		
Outcome 3.		
3.1.1		
3.2.1		
3.3.1		
Cross-cutting costs		
4.1.1		
4.2.1		
etc.		
1. Subtotal		

Remember to develop the budget in the local currency but include the currency required by the donor. When deciding on a currency rate, take the average rate from the last couple of years and then set the rate a bit lower to protect against money losses.

Having prepared the budget, you should make sure that it is presented in a clear, easy-to-understand and transparent way, and that project costs are reasonable and well justified in view of the target group and the results expected. Throughout the design process, adjust the results framework continuously. When doing so, make sure to adjust the budget accordingly.

2.7 Risk assessment

Risks are defined as the uncertainties that may affect the outcome of your project. By conducting a risk assessment, you will be able to identify and better control the risks that may constitute a barrier to the implementation and success of your project.

Please note that risk assessments are not intended to prevent projects from being implemented but rather to ensure that potential risks are known beforehand and - to the extent possible - mitigated.

A **risk assessment** is a means for identifying potential hazards and risk factors, analysing the potential negative impact, and determining ways to mitigate the risks.

Definition

Risks can be assessed in different ways and along different dimensions. Two specific tools have been chosen here which we hope will be of value to you.

The identification of risks is largely subjective, and different people might have different views of the relevance, likelihood, and impact of a certain risk. It is therefore vital that the analysis is conducted by more than one person and involves people with elaborate context knowledge.

2.7.1 Risk analysis

Firstly, identify and list the potential risk factors associated with your project using the template below. Risks will typically fall within different categories such as external risks which are risks that may arise in a particular political/economic/environmental (or climatic) context or programmatic risks which are the risks associated with the planning, coordination, management, and operation of the project.

Please note that the risks should be phrased to clearly identify effects and possible causes of the risk to the extent possible. See example from the Safe in the City project.

Example

Risk analysis - Safe in the City

In Sierra Leone, the partners have jointly identified a number of risk factors that could potentially influence the Safe in the City project:

RISK CATEGORY	POTENTIAL RISK FACTOR
External/ contextual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor implementation of laws and policies on SGBV as an effect of limited knowledge of laws and policies, lack of interest/willingness to implement, and limited funds for implementation. • Lack of access to information on SGBV from Government, police, and local service providers due to poor case management and registration. • Changes in political priorities due to changes in the political system (national and local). • Shrinking space for civil society due to changes in NGO policies. • Complexities in changing violent behaviour and gender norms due to traditional practices related to SGBV and gender stereotypes. • Health-related crisis as an effect of infectious diseases or health risks stemming from climate-related disasters.
Programmatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor collaboration between local duty-bearers and community groups. • Low interest and willingness amongst duty-bearers and community members to engage in the project due to lack of incentives. • High expectations among youth and community members of the benefit from project resources. • Community conflict due to rivalry between gangs / tribes. • Interference by politicians during election times (mobilisation of youth for party political purposes), or interference of powerful community stakeholders. • Corruption with project funding.

When all potential risk factors have been identified, they should be assessed along the dimensions of: Impact and likelihood. The scale below provides a definition of the different levels of likelihood and impact of a certain risk.

Having assessed the risks along the dimensions of impact and likelihood, you may use the risk analysis matrix below to estimate the severity of each risk and consider the need for mitigating actions.

Risk analysis matrix				
LIKELIHOOD	Almost certain	Minimal damage or disruption	Serious damage or disruption	Massive damage or disruption
	Possible	Minimal damage or disruption	Serious damage or disruption	Massive damage or disruption
	Unlikely	Minimal damage or disruption	Serious damage or disruption	Massive damage or disruption
		Minor	Major	Significant
IMPACT				

2.7.2 Risk register

You can use the risk analysis matrix to make a risk register. This will allow you to arrange your risks and describe the necessary preventive measures – so-called mitigating actions - to be applied.

Mitigating actions are measures that either reduce the impact of a risk or make it less likely to occur. The mitigating actions are thus essential for risk management and must be as specific and realistic as possible.

When completing the risk register, make use of the risk analysis matrix and add the mitigating actions and an estimate of the risk level after mitigation using the scale: low, medium, high (and associated colour-code).

Low
Medium
High

Risk register				
RISK CATEGORY				
Risk factor	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions	Risk level after mitigation
<i>Insert more rows if necessary...</i>				

Example

Theory of Change narrative - Safe in the City

The risk factors identified for the Safe in the City project have been analysed by the partners along the lines of likelihood and impact and supported by mitigating measures in a risk register:

RISK FACTOR	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	MITIGATING ACTIONS	RISK LEVEL AFTER MITIGATION
Poor implementation of laws and policies on SGBV	Almost certain	Significant	Capacity building of duty-bearers and advocacy efforts	Medium
Lack of access to information on SGBV from Government and service providers	Almost certain	Minor	Building relationships with service-providers, conduct trainings in case-management and monitor cases at community level	Low
Changes in political priorities	Almost certain	Minor	Tolerate the risk, but keep tracking it	Low
Shrinking space for civil society	Possible	Major	Building relationships with relevant duty-bearers and keeping track with CSO regulations	Low
Health-related crisis / Climate-related disasters	Almost certain	Significant	Tolerate the risk, but stay flexible in programming to adapt to the context; maintain preventive measures and build capacity to operate in a nexus context	Medium
Cultural norms related to SGBV and gender stereotypes	Almost certain	Significant	Build knowledge and awareness; gender mainstreaming in programming	Medium
Poor collaboration between duty-bearers and community groups	Possible	Significant	Build good working relationships among relevant project actors from the beginning of the project; capacity building support for all actors involved	Low
Low interest and willingness amongst duty-bearers and community members to engage in the project	Unlikely	Significant	Good communication of project relevance and benefits for the community; inspiring facilitation of activities; ensure input on programming from all stakeholders; creation of local ownership	Low
High expectations of benefit from project resources	Almost certain	Major	Managing expectations from beginning of the project; ensure necessary cost-recovery of project participants	Low
Interference by politicians in election times	Almost certain	Major	Capacity building and mentoring of youth groups in civic participation	Low
Project interference of powerful community stakeholders	Possible	Significant	Awareness on and consideration of traditional power structures in the community; involvement of stakeholders in all project phases	Low
Corruption with project funding	Possible	Significant	Capacity building on financial management; financial checks and controls; on-going monitoring	Low

2.8 Designing the implementation strategy

The implementation strategy combines the work you have done in relation to the ToC, the results framework, and the different analyses (especially target group and risk analyses), but where until now it has primarily been about “what you aspire to achieve”, the strategy describes “how you intend to achieve it”.

Remember to look for feasible (low-cost) and climate sustainable local solutions, strategies, and approaches relevant to your project. These can be derived from past experiences, local knowledge, or other locally implemented interventions. If relevant, deliberate experimentation/piloting of methods and approaches to identify what works in a given context can be included.

To build and structure the implementation strategy, it can be helpful to write up a narrative description of the theory behind your project – your ToC pathway(s). This narrative can be used as the foundation for developing a broader strategy description. The first step towards designing an implementation strategy could therefore be to develop your ToC narrative.

Step 1: the Theory of Change narrative

The Theory of Change (ToC) narrative supports the content of the visual ToC model and is used to explain the pathways of change, highlight some of the major assumptions, and, thus, justify the project. As such, the narrative makes a compelling case as to how and why your project expects to make a difference.

The following questions can guide you in structuring the ToC narrative:

- **What is the desired long-term change (impact)?**
Briefly describe the overall desired change that you would like to contribute to, including the immediate changes you hope to see.
- **Why is the project relevant in the context?**
Provide a summary of your understanding of the context, its key challenges and/or opportunities and the rationale for pursuing the intended changes.
- **Why do you think it will work?**
Describe the pathways leading to the desired change, i.e., the logic chain of preconditions and clusters of activities leading to the desired change. This can be done by constructing sentences using ‘if’..., ‘then’..., ‘because’...
- **What are the assumptions?**
Articulate the most important assumptions, including key assumptions that need to be monitored during implementation.

Example

Theory of Change narrative - Safe in the City

The partners in Bonga Town have formulated their ToC narrative as follows:

Sierra Leone has declared a state of emergency on gender-based violence as the number of SGBV cases is sky rocketing. It is especially women and girls residing in poor communities such as Bonga Town who are at risk. The long-term desired change we hope to see happening as a result of the project is for young women and girls to be safe from gender-based violence in Bonga Town.

The development of a safer environment for young women and girl rests on a number of envisioned change pathways. One of these pathways includes the creation of safe public spaces in Bonga Town. While many violations take place within households, an important, and often overlooked, challenge is the insecurity that young women feel in public spaces, such as streets, markets, fetching water, or going to the local community centre.

If public spaces are to be safe, then young women and men must know what constitutes SGBV, how it affects people and how to respond to cases. Knowledge is important because it helps create behaviour change. The key cluster of activities to strengthen young people's knowledge of SGBV include co-design and rolling out of training curriculums together with youth groups.

Furthermore, if public spaces are to be safe, then young women and men must acquire skills to actively engage in SGBV prevention activities in public spaces. Through youth-led action, the wider community will become aware of the SGBV challenges within Bonga Town, which will also help break down age stereotypes. The key cluster of activities that will facilitate this change include participatory safety planning processes and support to youth-led micro projects related to SGBV prevention.

If the above changes are to take place, then it is vital that local duty-bearers support the project initiatives because they are the ones who hold both the formal and informal power in Bonga Town. Duty-bearers such as the local chiefs and councillors must therefore be engaged from the very beginning so that they feel included and endorse the project activities.

Assumptions: The change processes described above rest on a number of assumptions, which are important to be mindful about. This includes the assumption that young people are willing to be actively engaged in creating change when given the necessary space and capacity to participate. It also includes that a supportive environment exists in Bonga Town, where local duty-bearers have the desire to contribute to increased public safety for women and to collaborate with youth.

Step 2: unfolding the implementation strategy

When you have the ToC narrative, use this as a foundation and introduction to a more refined implementation strategy. There are many ways of describing a project's strategy, but the following elements can guide you:

- The connection between your clusters of activities, outputs, and outcomes (here the ToC narrative can be of assistance).
- What methods and approaches you will use to implement your activities.
- What target groups, partners, and other stakeholders will be involved when.
- How the strategy will lead to long-lasting improvements for your target groups (sustainability of change achieved).

2.8.1 A note on sustainability

A very important element to consider is **the sustainability of the change achieved**. Consider the support needed for the local partner and target groups to use and maintain the results beyond the lifetime of the project. Some outcomes might be expected to be sustained beyond the project period without further support (you have achieved self-sustained outcome/impact), while other outcomes might be sustained through some follow-up activities.

In the case of Bonga Town, Dreamtown and YDC-SL have a number of deliberate strategies that will contribute to creating lasting change. For example, the development and roll out of the SGBV curriculum will create more awareness in society. They also expect that the curriculum will be used after the project has ended and will thus benefit many more youths than the ones targeted in this project.



The partners will also support youth groups in creating their own projects and doing advocacy with local duty bearers to create more safe spaces in Bonga Town. By supporting the youth groups through organising, training, and empowering them, combined with hopefully successful experiences with advocacy, the partners expect that the youth groups will still be functioning and actively making a difference after the project has ended. In addition, partners put efforts in place to try to link up the youth initiatives with city-level and national initiatives on SGBV.

Preparing for a project's sustainability involves reflecting on the strategy and methods you have chosen and whether these will enhance the likeliness of creating lasting improvements in the particular context.

In the process of planning the project's sustainability beyond the lifetime of the project, it can also be useful to consider which of the following three types of strategies to adopt to ensure project results are sustained:

- **Phasing down** by gradually decreasing input and activities during the project lifetime while emphasising utilisation of local resources to sustain project benefits. Phasing down is often a preliminary stage to phasing out or phasing over.
- **Phasing over** by transferring project activities to other stakeholders for example cbos, national ngos, or local authorities who have ownership of the activities and will be able to sustain and/or accelerate the results.
- **Phasing out** by withdrawing all input to the project. Ideally a project is phased out only after achieving permanent or self-sustaining outcomes (or after phasing over to other stakeholders), thus eliminating the need for additional external inputs. Self-sustaining outcomes could for example be outcomes that can be maintained by internal funding (membership fees, income generating activities, etc.).

The strategy should be the last element to complete before preparing a comprehensive project proposal. The following checklist can be used to double check whether your strategy is complete.

Checklist before submitting a proposal

IS YOUR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:	
Worthwhile: Relevant to local priority rights and needs?	Yes
	No
Feasible: Possible to implement in the given context and with the given capacity of the partners (including the technical/professional skills of staff and volunteers)?	Yes
	No
Acceptable: Presented to and obtained consent from the community and relevant authorities?	Yes
	No
Participatory: Ensuring the participation of the direct target groups of rights-holders and duty-bearers, including participation of marginalised groups that might traditionally be overlooked?	Yes
	No
Appropriate: Designed in a manner that is suitable to the direct target group(s), and taking into account the specific needs and/or opportunities of women/men and young people/older people?	Yes
	No
Adaptable: Making use of relevant and feasible (low-cost), sustainable, local solutions, strategies, and approaches	Yes
	No
Protective: Designed to do no harm to people and nature/climate, and to enhance the safety of marginalised target groups, e.g. women and children?	Yes
	No
Socially sustainable: has social justice been integrated in the strategic approach?	Yes
	No
Environmentally sustainable: Has the strategy considered and mainstreamed relevant climate and environmental concerns?	Yes
	No
Creating lasting improvements (project sustainability): Is the design supporting the local partner and target groups in maintaining results after the completion of the project?	Yes
	No
Manageable: Is the project based on a concise and coherent framework that serves to plan, monitor, and evaluate the outcome of the project?	Yes
	No
Cost effective: Has the budget been reviewed to ensure cost effectiveness, seeking a maximum impact at the lowest cost?	Yes
	No
Affordable: Possible to implement within the given budgetary framework and possible to continue (partially or in full) by locally mobilised resources?	Yes
	No

If you have ticked 'yes' to all of the above questions, you have a strategy to bring forward. If not, look at the elements of the strategy again – reconsider or reframe the strategy.



Designing the project – summary

By the end of the design phase, you should have the following elements:

- A Theory of Change (ToC)
- A results framework
- A detailed target group analysis
- A budget
- A risk assessment, and
- An implementation strategy

The tools presented in part 1 and 2 should enable you to prepare a solid project document and an application to a relevant donor or fund. Once funds have been granted, the next step is commencing implementation of the project. The following chapter presents inspiration on how to prepare for implementation of the project: the so-called inception phase.



Part 3: Inception

– preparing for implementation



Once you have designed your intervention and secured funding, it is time to make detailed preparations for implementation.

The inception phase is the phase where partners and other stakeholders build consensus on the scope of the project and the implementation process. This involves detailed planning and collecting the remaining necessary data.

Part 3: inception, consists of five sections:

- 1 Preparing for project implementation and developing an activity schedule
- 2 Developing the project's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan
- 3 Creating a MEL framework incl. identifying tools for monitoring change and results
- 4 Financial monitoring
- 5 And lastly, tools and thoughts on ensuring accountability in project implementation.

Monitoring is the process of collecting, analysing, and using information to track progress and project results, to guide management decisions and learning as well as to ensure accountability and systematic documentation of evidence for advocacy purposes.

Definition

3.1 Planning the activity schedule

The project management tools applied in the design phase (ToC and results framework) give you an overview of the theory of change, the results expected to be delivered, and clusters of activities. The aim is therefore to prepare a detailed plan for the activities necessary for the project to succeed.

If there has been a time lapse between the project design and project implementation phases, you will need to update your project design (ToC, results framework, and budget) taking any changes that may have occurred into account – before making the activity schedule.

An activity schedule outlines and organises project activities and provides a timeline of when activities will take place. The most common format for such a schedule is a Gantt Chart but consult your partner whether they have their own format for making an activity or implementation plan which they would prefer to use.

When planning the activity schedule, it is important to involve all project staff and volunteers, including the staff/volunteers responsible for making decisions about the project and those responsible for finances.

3.1.1 The Gantt Chart

The Gantt Chart is a tool for making a detailed activity schedule for implementation and for regular checks whether on track. To complete a Gant Chart, you will need to go through the following 3 steps:

Step 1:

List your clusters of activities under each expected output in the results framework as well as any cross-cutting activities needed to support project implementation and grouped under the headline “supporting activities”.

Step 2:

Break down the clusters of activities into manageable tasks. The breakdown needs to provide sufficient details to estimate the time and resources required and sufficient instructions on what must be done for the person assigned as responsible for the tasks.

Step 3:

Estimate start-up, duration, and completion of activities through the time columns in the Gantt Chart. Below, the plan has been divided into quarterly timeframes.



Activity schedule/ implementation plan

Project title:				
		Activity	Tasks	Person responsible
Outcome 1	Output 1.1			
	Output 1.2			
		Activity	Tasks	Person responsible
Outcome 2	Output 1.1			
	Output 1.2			
		Activity	Tasks	Person responsible
Outcome 3	Output 1.1			
	Output 1.2			
		Activity	Tasks	Person responsible
Cross-cutting activities				

When making the detailed activity schedule, make sure to double-check the budget.

3.2 Developing a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan

Another important tool to develop during the inception phase is the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan which will help to monitor progress, track, and document results, and capture learning throughout the project.

When preparing the MEL plan, you must decide on which elements to include, what to monitor, how to monitor, by who, and how often. In general, the plan should enable you to:

- Analyse the current situation, identify emerging issues, and find solutions to the challenges that arise.
- Measure progress against planned outputs, expected outcomes, and indicators.
- Identify needs for adjustments to the ToC, activity schedule, implementation strategy, and/or the results framework.
- Account for results and systematically collect lessons learned for the purpose of institutionalising and passing on essential learning.

A MEL plan can consist of different elements and methods for monitoring the project's intended and unintended results, learnings, and the evolving risk environment.

The following are some of the more common MEL elements which can act as inspiration when designing your MEL plan:

Commonly used Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) methods

Elements	Purpose	Means / methods	Frequency
Baseline “study”	To establish baseline data for project indicators. A baseline makes it easier to monitor change.	Survey, statistics, questionnaires	Once, in the inception phase
Activity monitoring	To assess if the project is on track.	Activity plan	Regular (monthly) through e.g., staff-room meetings
		Participant registration / participant activity evaluations	Activity-based
Regular (status/ progress)	To facilitate communication and accountability of results and key learnings between partners and as reference point for monitoring	Report template	Regularly (quarterly/biannually)
Theory of Change monitoring	To examine if the theory remains valid: if chosen pathways are effective in creating change and if assumptions hold true.	The ToC pathway and assessment of key assumptions	Annually (reflection workshop) or mid-term (review) and end of project (evaluation).
Results monitoring	To assess if the project is on track, measure and document intended and unintended results, collect learnings, and adjust the strategy.	Reflection and assessment of progress of elements in the results framework	At output level; regularly (e.g., biannually). At outcome level; annually (reflection workshop) or mid-term (review) and end of project (evaluation).
		Outcome Journals (both intended and unintended outcomes)	Ad hoc – developed by project staff, field workers when they notice/experience changes and results related to the project
		Outcome Harvesting	Throughout the project or at the end of the project.
		Participatory feedback methods such as Most Significant Change Stories, Community Scorecards, ranking and scoring methods, etc.	Ad-hoc / related to specific activities or studies
		Monitoring visits / online monitoring	Annually or midterm
Risk monitoring	To identify emerging risks and find solutions to the challenges	Risk matrix	Annually (reflection workshop)
End-line evaluation	To assess and account for results and to learn from experiences.	Results framework, ToC, end-line survey, Outcome Harvesting. Remember evaluation standards such as the OECD’s criteria.	Just prior to (a few months before) the completion of the project.
		Impact study	After completion of the project (e.g., 2 years after).

The above list is not exhaustive. When selecting your MEL elements, consider which elements are relevant to your project and make sure that the plan is manageable when considering the nature, resources, and scope of your project. Seek to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies and try to differentiate the sources and techniques as much as possible with a view to triangulate information.

Also, make sure to allocate the necessary time and resources for completing the MEL elements and appoint a specific person (preferably a trained MEL person) to manage the task of MEL.

Definition

Triangulation (or 'cross examination') is a term used in social sciences to indicate the process of using different methods to investigate an issue in order to check and validate the results.

A MEL plan provides a basic overview of how the project will be assessed in terms of progress, results, and learnings.

When designing the MEL plan, you must involve relevant project staff in the partner organisations. The best monitoring results are achieved if target groups are actively involved in specific monitoring exercises and feel ownership of the process. Consider therefore to include participatory monitoring activities and complaints mechanisms (see section 3.5) that can involve the target groups.

Discuss and agree on which MEL elements and methods to use. Information collected through monitoring is only useful if used. Therefore, be selective in terms of how much data to gather and put in place regular review and planning meetings to analyse, learn, and agree on necessary adjustments.

Discuss also:

- What **MEL elements** should we include? Think about what kind of information you need to be able to assess the results and changes your project has contributed to, and then think about what methods will help you get that information.
- How often will data be collected (**frequency**) and when during the year (**timing**)? Remember to align the frequency and timing with reporting requirements so you have up-to-date information for report inputs.
- Who will be responsible for collecting and processing the data (**person(s) responsible**)?
- Who will **data be shared** with? This is to ensure accountability and transparency of information and sharing of learnings.

The template below can be used to create an overview.

MEL ELEMENTS	METHODS USED	FREQUENCY AND TIMING	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR COLLECTING AND PROCESSING DATA	DATA TO BE SHARED WITH

Please note that monitoring and documentation take up a lot of time and resources, and that accountability for results and learning is not a one-way relationship from the implementing partner to other partners and back donor. Accountability includes regular feedback between partners AND accountability for results and learning towards the rights-holders and duty-bearers.



Example

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan - Safe in the City

MEL ELEMENTS	METHODS USED	FREQUENCY AND TIMING	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	DATA TO BE SHARED WITH
Baseline	Survey questionnaire and focus group discussions	Project inception	YDC-SL M&E Office	Dreamtown, youth groups, duty-bearers
Activity monitoring	Activity schedule, observations, field reports	Weekly staff meetings/ monthly field visits	Project Officers	YDC-SL project manager
	Participant registration / participant activity evaluations Photos and video	Activity-based	Project Officers	YDC-SL project manager and management
Results monitoring	Youth and community impact stories	Ad-hoc	YDC-SL M&E Officer, Project Officers	Dreamtown, YDC-SL management, YDC-SL audiences, and network
	Log of duty bearers' and youths' dialogues, actions, and initiatives	Ad-hoc	YDC-SL M&E Officer, Project Officers	Dreamtown, YDC-SL management
	Narrative and financial report	Quarterly	YDC-SL	Dreamtown
	Assessment of results framework	Bi-annually	YDC-SL M&E Officer, Project Officers, Dreamtown	Dreamtown, YDC-SL management
	Monitoring visits/online monitoring	Bi-annually	Dreamtown	CISU (donor), Dreamtown audiences and members
Risk monitoring	Assessment of risk environment with community using risk matrix	Ongoing	YDC-SL project officers	YDC-SL management, Dreamtown
Mid-term review	Internal mid-term review workshop / status report	Halfway in the project	YDC-SL project manager Dreamtown	CISU, Youth groups, duty-bearers
Project evaluation	External end of project evaluation based on OECD criteria for evaluations	Just prior to the completion of the project	YDC-SL Dreamtown	Dreamtown, CISU, youth groups, duty-bearers, other stakeholders
	End-line survey: questionnaire and focus group discussions	At the end of the project	YDC-SL M&E Officer	Dreamtown, youth groups, duty-bearers
	Final project report	By deadline for final reporting	Dreamtown (with input from YDC-SL)	CISU

3.3 Creating a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework

When you have a MEL plan in place, the appointed MEL person will be responsible for putting together a MEL Framework consisting of the specific tools and templates that will be used to collect data. Inspiration for tools and templates can be found in the following sections.

3.3.1 Monitoring the project's Theory of Change – critical reflection

The ToC pathway (section 2.2) is in itself an essential tool for monitoring and evaluation. The ToC is used to examine if your theory and strategy remains valid when tested; if the chosen pathways are in fact effective in creating the desired change, and if assumptions hold true. If not, the pathways need to be adjusted and assumptions revised, which possibly has an effect on the activity schedule and implementation strategy as well as the results framework.

In order to use the ToC for monitoring and evaluation purposes, arrange a reflection workshop (e.g., annually) between partners to assess if the theory and pathways, and key assumptions are still valid. To be able to assess if the theory is still valid, the following questions can guide you:

Step 1:

Go through the pathway from the lowest level and discuss; has one level in the ToC contributed to change at the next level (e.g., from the lowest level of preconditions to the next level of preconditions)?

Step 2:

In what way have we seen this change? What/who has changed?

Step 3:

If there hasn't been any change, is the assumption false or maybe incomplete? Do we need to do things in a different way?

In this way you can discuss whether or not your pathways and theory still hold true and, if not, update the ToC, strategy and results framework accordingly.

Please note that a reflective learning approach includes embracing mistakes and linking knowledge and action, and therefore a need to explore how and why certain interventions succeed or fails. This will help you improve both the current project as well as future projects.

3.3.2 The results framework as a monitoring tool

Results monitoring is used for the purpose of accountability and supports partners assess project progress throughout implementation and use data to make the necessary adjustments to the project.

Different tools can be used for the ongoing task of monitoring and documenting project results. We have chosen to present how to use the results framework for monitoring intended results. The results framework (see section 2.4) constitutes a natural framework for the systematic monitoring, evaluation, and documentation of the project's intended results.

To be able to use the results framework in the best possible way for monitoring purposes, make sure there is relevant baseline information available for each indicator (see section 2.4, step 6). Most baseline values have probably been established as part of the project design phase, but it can be necessary to also collect baseline data (typically at outcome level) as part of the project inception phase.

Please note that the baseline data must be current, consistent, and as accurate as possible, and also disaggregated (e.g., by sex, age, profession) when appropriate.

By adding some extra columns to the results framework, the responsible person(s) will be able to systematically assess and document progress against the indicators and targets. And to identify actual or potential problems at an early stage in order to mitigate risks and facilitate timely adjustments of the activity schedule, implementation strategy, and potentially also the results framework.



A template for monitoring the results framework could for example consist of the following **monitoring and documentation table**, specifying how the indicators from the results framework will be monitored; including Means of Verification for the individual indicator and the frequency of measurements. Often, outcome indicators will be monitored at longer intervals and for a longer period.

On the right side of the table, the partners can specify progress against the indicators and targets. The template is a living document as it accumulates data gradually. The figurative (smiley) assessment of the level of achievement is thus expected to pass from a red to a green smiley over time.

The monitoring and documentation table is a management tool for the implementing partner, but the information gathered is ideal for use in progress/status reports between partners and/or donors.

Monitoring and documentation table

Outcome level	Outcome indicators	Baseline	Milestone [optional]	Target	Frequency (how often/ when will the indicator be measured?)	Current level of achievement	Outcome status	Comments
		[year]	[year]	[year]		😊 😞 😡		
1							Assessment of progress against targets	Challenges affecting progress towards achieving the outcome targets
	Means of Verification (MoV)							
	Means of Verification (MoV)							
2							Assessment of progress against targets	Challenges affecting progress towards achieving the outcome targets
	Means of Verification (MoV)							
	Means of Verification (MoV)							
3							Assessment of progress against targets	Challenges affecting progress towards achieving the outcome targets
	Means of Verification (MoV)							
	Means of Verification (MoV)							

3.3.3 Tool for monitoring and managing risks

Monitoring also involves regularly assessing the context to identify emerging risks and find solutions to any challenges that may arise.

When preparing for monitoring and management of risks, you can use the risk analysis matrix (see section 2.7.1) and/or the risk register (see section 2.7.2) as tools to assess whether the original risks are still relevant, if the risk levels remain the same, and if new ones need to be added.

To summarise your risk assessment, consider also including a brief context analysis in your annual reporting, for example by using the following template:

The external environment: Rate the civic and political conditions for civil society by indicating whether the environment is highly enabling, generally enabling, somewhat disabling, or strongly disabling. Please justify and explain your rating and highlight the three most significant factors, which led to the rating.

	HIGHLY ENABLING CONTEXT	GENERALLY ENABLING CONTEXT	SOMEWHAT DISABLING CONTEXT	STRONGLY DISABLING CONTEXT
CRITERIA	Space for civil society is unrestricted and there is a high level of political support to our agenda and absence of negative political interference. No disruption of our project due to external factors.	Space for civil society is generally not restricted and there is political support for our agenda, but a risk of interference or restrictions that may affect the project and its results, but no significant disruption.	Space for civil society is somewhat restricted and there is some political opposition to/interference with our agenda, which somewhat disrupt the operations and results.	Space for civil society is restricted and there is strong political resistance/interference which significantly disrupt the project and prevent operation and results.
RATING	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JUSTIFICATION:				

3.4 Financial monitoring

Monitoring a project's finances is just as important as monitoring results. In the inception phase, it is essential to develop a detailed budget, forecast the money needed (a cashflow forecast), as well as prepare expenditure reports.

First and foremost, it is important to ensure that your budget has enough details for it to be operational for all parties involved. One way to structure a detailed budget is by using unit costs, where you specify unit type, number of units, and unit costs.

Next, compare the activity plan with the budget to forecast the amount of money needed for the coming period, for example by dividing the detailed budget into phases or periods (e.g., quarters or six months periods).

During project implementation, track expenditure in order to know how much has been spent and the amount of money still available. You need to track your actual expenditure against your budget for the specific phase or period. A report can be drawn up by adding columns to your working budget.

The variance will be the difference between the budget and actual spend shown as a percentage:

Financial monitoring - Safe in the City

Example

Line ref.	Description (activity, item etc.)	Total budget (period x)	Actual spending (period x)	Variance %	Comments
1. Activities					
Outcome 1					
1.1.1	Participatory safety planning	78.500	79.856	-2%	The materials for the planning ended u being a bit more expensive
1.1.2	Micro-projects	50.000	71.236	-42%	We had the opportunity to support 4 other youth group's projects that had a lot of potential. We agreed to find the funding from what was saved on developing the curriculum
1.2.1	Co-design of SGBV curriculum	53.000	32.00	40%	Developing the material dad not take as much time as firstly estimated

$$\frac{\text{Budget} - \text{actual expenditure} \times 100}{\text{Budget}} = \text{variance}$$

Remember to use the comments column to explain the variances, i.e., why there has been overspent or underspent on the different activities. This can be used for financial reporting as well as to discuss project progress between partners.

3.5 Accountability in project implementation

Accountability in project implementation has many facets. You are accountable to participants, partners, stakeholders, and your donor. Putting specific policies and practices in place is a good idea for accountability purposes. The policies can be combined into a Code of Conduct, which can be used more broadly than just a single project. In the following, we touch upon three essential aspects of accountability in project implementation: safeguarding, complaints mechanisms, and anti-corruption.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of organisations to make sure that their staff, operations, and projects do not expose project participants to abuse and/or exploitation of any kind. Target groups are generally at risk in situations where power imbalances provide an opportunity for project staff or volunteers to harm or exploit them. Safeguarding is taking notice of external risks and prevent the abuse of authority/power, including sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse by those who implement the intervention. This entails maintaining a zero-tolerance policy and reacting promptly in cases of suspected or documented abuse of authority. Thus, to ensure safeguarding, your organisation and partners should put in place policies, procedures, trainings, and practices to prevent and manage abuse or exploitation.

Anti-corruption is to prevent the misuse of entrusted power and resources for private gain. This can take many forms; fraud in connection with audits, deliverables not covered by an agreement, incorrect prices or faulty equipment, incorrect invoicing of staff or equipment, bribery or acceptance of gifts, misuse of resources, theft, etc. Abuse of entrusted power can also take many forms; psychological, physical, or sexual harassment, discrimination, unauthorised access to privileges or arbitrary/unauthorised grants of privileges, abuse of power and relationships in recruitment processes, etc. It is therefore essential to have policies and practices in place to prevent any type of corruption. Practices that support anti-corruption are often described in an organisation's administrative procedures.

Complaints and feedback mechanisms are formalised mechanisms for project participants and witnesses to file complaints in direct relation to cases of misconduct and provide feedback in relation to the implementation of the project. The mechanisms should encompass a method to file a complaint and procedures for organisations to deal with such complaints in a structured manner.

To prevent any harm or misconduct from happening during project implementation, the inception phase can be used to:

- Prepare or update policies, guidelines, and/or codes of conducts on safeguarding and anti-corruption.
- Conduct training of project staff on Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (SHEA), safeguarding and anti-corruption.
- Establish secure and accessible complaints or whistle-blower mechanisms (see below). How a complaint can be filed should always be adjusted to the specific context of the project.
- Share information about how to complain to project participants. Explain also that they are not obliged to give anything other than their time and attention in return for participating in the project and make clear what is unacceptable behaviour from project staff.

You should also ensure that thorough background checks are made when recruiting project staff and volunteers.

In preparing for the implementation of Safe in the City, partners put up a physical complaint box at the community centre in Bonga Town. In addition, contact information for staff and volunteers at YDC-SL will be made available to the right-holders, and Dreamtown has set up a complaint form which can be filed anonymously on their website.

3.5.1 Tool for complaints/whistle-blower mechanisms

Complaints and whistle-blower mechanisms must be secure and easy for anyone to use, and should consider culture/tradition, literacy levels, and the target group's experience, and opportunity to provide critical feedback. Examples of complaints/whistle-blower mechanisms are:

- Complaints/feedback forms (accommodated to target group needs)
- A suggestions/complaints box
- Verbal complaints to staff or others related to the project
- Community dialogue meetings
- A dedicated email address or toll-free telephone number

Ideally, complaints/whistle-blower mechanisms should make use of a combination of options appropriate for different types of target groups. Due to the sensitivity of some topics, a complaints mechanism should always include a possibility to file a complaint anonymously. Also make sure that you establish a good practice where complaints are acknowledged and processed, and where necessary actions are taken.



In preparing for the implementation of Safe in the City, partners put up a physical complaint box at the community centre in Bonga Town. In addition, contact information for staff and volunteers at YDC-SL will be made available to the right-holders, and Dreamtown has set up a complaint form which can be filed anonymously on their website.

Inception – preparing for implementation – summary

This concludes the guide. You are hopefully now well prepared for putting the project plan into action and commencing implementation. Remember to make both project implementation and evaluation inclusive to all partners and target groups. By adopting and continuously applying the different tools and methods in this guide – as well as others – you have a solid foundation for implementing a successful project. Have fun implementing your project, which will hopefully contribute to significant changes around the world.

Glossary

CONCEPT	EXPLANATION	IN DANISH	SIMILAR CONCEPTS
Accountability	The responsibility of organisations to operate in ways that are transparent and liable to the people and communities they work with and to partners (and back donors). The answerability of duty-bearers towards targeted rights-holders.	Ansvar, ansvarlighed	
Activities	Actions taken or work performed to create the planned outputs. The activities should relate to specific outputs and be realistic in terms of time and resources available and be appropriate to the situation in the partner organisation/country in terms of institutions, technology, culture etc. Activities should be stated in terms of actions being undertaken rather than completed outputs.	Aktiviteter	
Advocacy	Strategic initiatives or actions aimed at influencing political, economic, cultural, or social conditions, practices as well as mal-practices with the goal of improving the living conditions for rights-holders - positively and permanently.	Fortalervirk-somhed	
Assumption	Something that is accepted as true or certain to happen without proof or the expectation about how one thing leads to another. Uncertainties in the ToC or results framework are explained by assumptions, which are external conditions, events, or decisions outside the direct control of the project and expected to hold true for the development process to succeed.	Antagelser	
Baseline	Information describing a point of reference/starting point used for comparison later on. Baselines are often created to illustrate the status of a chosen indicator at the beginning of a project.	Udgangspunkt	
Desired change	The change that is desired to be considered the long-term effect of a project. The desired change should be informed by the agreed focal problem and formulated as the changed situation. The desired change is the starting point for the Theory of Change (ToC) and is similar to impact	Ønsket forandring	Development objective, overall objective, long-term objective, impact
Development issue	The social problem or structural inequality that you want to address with the project.	-	-
Do no harm	The do-no-harm concept aims at ensuring that project actions are not causing injury or injustice to people, communities, or the environment. Special emphasis is put on understanding the context and the two-way interaction between project activities and the context, and by adjusting activities to avert harmful outcomes and reinforce opportunities to maximise positive impact.		
Duty-bearer	The actors in society who have an obligation and a responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfil the human rights of rights-holders.	Magthaver, den ansvarlige	Powerholders, authorities

CONCEPT	EXPLANATION	IN DANISH	SIMILAR CONCEPTS
Evaluation	A systematic assessment and documentation of an intervention's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, which is used for learning and accountability.	Evaluering	
Focal problem	The specific problem or human rights violation that you want to tackle with a project.	-	-
Human Rights-Based Approach	The Human Rights-Based Approach recognises the equality of all human beings and emphasises our legal and moral obligation to promote human development and justice among people sharing the same fundamental and universal human rights.	Menneske-rettighedsbaseret tilgang	Rights-based approach
Impact	The overall, long-term desired change in society that the project is envisioned to contribute to. It is not intended to be achieved by the project alone or within the timeframe of the project. It should consequently be formulated as a visionary but realistic changed state of affairs which reflects the identified problem or rights violation, and which is logically linked to the project's output and outcome.	Langsigtet effekt	Development objective, overall objective, long-term objective, desired change
Indicator	The indicator tells you what is to be measure, not what is to be achieved, in relation to the intended outcome/output.	Indikator, succeskriterie	Progress marker, success criteria.
Inputs	Financial, human, and material resources used for the project.	Input	-
Key assumption	A key assumption is an assumption that is particularly relevant to one or more elements in your theory of change.	Nøgle antagelse	Core assumption, critical assumption
Milestone	A significant point of time in the project lifecycle. Milestones set at appropriate intervals will help track project progress at specific points in time along the predicted path. Milestones can also be used as a planning tool to break complex projects down into smaller phases.	Milepæl	Benchmark
Monitoring	The continuous process of assessing and improving implementation and accounting for performance and results to partners, back-doors, stakeholders and beneficiaries.	Monitorering	
Narrative	A compelling case as to how and why the project expects to make a difference. The ToC narrative supports the content of the visual ToC model and is used to explain the pathways of change, highlight some of the major assumptions, and, thus, justify the project. The narrative can be used as a first step towards a broader strategy description.		
Outcome	The change anticipated as an immediate effect of the outputs of the intervention. Outcomes are within the sphere of influence; meaning that they cannot be controlled by the project but should likely materialise from the project outputs. A project can have multiple outcomes, and all should be relevant contributions to achieving impact. An outcome must be formulated as the changed behaviour, practice, or state of affairs which the target group(s) realistically is/are expected to experience as a result of the project's output.	Forandring, effekt, resultat	Immediate objective, specific objective, purpose, short-term objective.
Output	The specific and verifiable deliverables of the project such as goods, services, capacity, tangible products or changes in knowledge and skills etc. Deliverables that can be controlled by the project and are likely to materialise/be realised as a direct consequence of the activities.		Result

CONCEPT	EXPLANATION	IN DANISH	SIMILAR CONCEPTS
Pathway	A visual sequence or hierarchy of changes that map the theory of how change will happen at different levels.	Forandringsbeskrivelse	
Preconditions	A condition that must exist or be established for something else to be realised.	Forudsætning	Beneficiaries
Primary target group	Persons actively participating in project activities.	Primær målgruppe	
Project sustainability	Whether changes and improvements are likely to be maintained beyond the lifetime of a project.	Projektmaessig bæredygtighed	
Results Framework	A planning and management tool that in a structured manner shows how the project is expected to lead to results at different levels, and how changes can be measured. The framework presents the desired results at impact, outcome, and output levels, as well as the indicators, targets, and means of verification used to detect change. The results framework emphasises a focus on results – as opposed to activities – in project design and monitoring.	Resultatrammeværk, resultatramme	Logical Framework Approach (LFA), Logframe
Rights-holder	By the virtue of being born human, every adult or child living in poverty, oppression, or suffering the consequences of conflicts and disasters is a rights-holder, not a passive object or recipient of charity.	Rettighedshavere	
Risk assessment	The process of identifying and assessing the potential hazards and risk factors that can obstruct/jeopardise the implementation of a project and impact the expected change. The assessment can help analyse the potential negative impact and determine ways to mitigate the risks.	Risikoanalyse	Risk analysis
Secondary target group	Persons affected by project activities without having participated.	Sekundær målgruppe	Beneficiaries
Stakeholder	Any institution, organisation, or person with a significant interest in and/or influence on the particular development issue addressed by the project.	ktør, interessent	Actor
Target	The tangible and measurable targets/goals of the desired output or outcome of an intervention.	Mål	
Theory of Change (ToC)	An approach to designing projects that gives a visual summary of the logic of change in a project. A Theory of Change explains the desired change and the assumptions about how that change is expected to happen in a particular context.	Forandringsteori	





This project guide assists practitioners in analysing, designing and preparing for the implementation of a civil society project.

