Module 5		Unit		5
FOCUS ON ACTION - DETAIL				
The Overall Project Logic				

The hypothetical logic between the elements of a project extends from inputs to development objective, and includes relevant preconditions and assumptions.

The presentation of the project in a logical structure serves various purposes:

- It allows discussion of logical consistency and comprehensiveness of the project, also by people who did not participate in the design of the project.
- When properly presented, it provides an easy overview of the project.
- During project implementation, it maintains the content of the project clearly formulated, forcing changes in project elements to be visible.

My notes

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Project Elements, Assumptions and Preconditions				
The Development Objective				

My notes

The development objective is often conceived of as a wider goal (in scope), or a long-term goal (opposed to immediate goals). Further, a development objective is often required to be an end in itself, and not (only) a mean to other ends.

The best way to decide which kind of development objective to select is to analyze the function of the development objective for decision-making or for project work. This function differs for different stages of the project cycle and for different projects:

- In early, preparatory stages, the development objective serves to underline the broader rationale of the project, or to put the specific objective in a context. The development objective has no direct operational function, but serves to inform decision-makers.
- For a project that is implemented in a temporary institutional structure without a solid "anchor" in a permanent institution, the development objective can serve as a guiding star for the team, to maintain overall sense of direction in daily work. If a project is part of a wider programme, the development objective can serve to remind the project team that it is part of a broader undertaking (see chapter 14 for more details on projects/programme-relations).

- For a permanent institution defining and implementing a project (for example, increasing capacity to prepare and monitor adherence to environmental standards), the development objective would normally be the institution's general, institutional objectives (the mission statement of the institution).

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			Focus on Action	
			Example of Project Logic	

Development Objective: Pollution of Lake Nathla from all-important sources reduced.	
Immediate Objective: By 1998, Nathla Environmental Agency (NEA) regulates most important economic and domestic activities affecting Lake Nathla by an appropriate, mostly accepted and efficient mix of instruments.	**Assumptions:** From immediate objective to development objective Regulation does not stimulate behaviour leading to new types of pollution. Bylaws are grossly respected and sanctions effectively followed up by judicial system.
Outputs: 1. Reference standards for discharges established. 2. Bylaws for gradual introduction of norms, permits, incentives, sanctions and inspection procedures prepared. 3. Staff and management skilled in environmental management. 4. Monitoring programme established. 5. Credit fund for mitigating measures functioning.	**Assumptions:** From outputs to immediate objective Polluting interest groups accepts dialogue and compromises. Transparency and standards for civil servants performance maintained.
Activities: 1.1 Collect and analyse international and regional standards. 1.2 Prepare national norms for effluents. 2.1 Prepare and approve regulatory strategy. 2.2 Prepare draft bylaws. 3.1 Define staff development policy and training plan. 3.2 Identify and use external training courses. 3.3 Organise internal seminars and On-the-Job training. 4.1 Establish database on pollution sources and recipient quality. 4.2 Subcontract laboratories and universities to perform field monitoring. 5. I Define credit fund objectives and mechanisms. 5.2 Prepare legal and procedural basis. 5.3 Promote fund and finance pilot schemes. 5.4 Seek additional funding based on pilot experience.	**Assumptions:** From activities to outputs Bylaws and norms are approved by Ministry of the Environment. Civil Service reform provides sufficient incentives for continuity of staff in NEA. Laboratories and universities willing and able to cooperate. Polluters willing to make use of Credit Fund.
Inputs: NEA staff (half-time), NEA Director is Project Manager. Additional operating budget for 1995-1998. 24 workmonths technical assistance financed by.... Initial funding for Credit Fund.	**Preconditions:** National Assembly approves General Environmental Law giving NEA sufficient legal faculties.

Module		Unit		5
The Immediate Objective				

The formulation of Immediate Objectives is extensively discussed in earlier modules , Focus on Objectives. Only one issue will be discussed further: whether and when Immediate Objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Realistic, Time bound).

In this manual, it is argued that Immediate Objectives must be SMART when implementation is upcoming. In earlier stages, a directional formulation may serve for overview purposes or initial decision-making.

The insistence on SMART objectives is based on the experience from many projects, where a specific vision of the future situation to be achieved was never discussed. Many projects - not least in international development cooperation - have had vague immediate objectives like "strengthening institutional capacity", "improving health services", "reduce pollution" etc.

Such projects may have delivered the defined outputs. It has, however, been impossible to assess afterwards whether the impact of these outputs was actually the desired impacts.

The inability to evaluate project impact is maybe not the worst consequence of vague immediate objectives in project work. It is perhaps even worse when project management and project stakeholders simply disregard the vague objectives and concentrate on the tangible outputs.

Taken to an extreme we can imagine this leading to the construction of the world's largest bridge, where all responsible parties are focusing on the technical wonders of the bridge, and no one is able to explain what the purpose of building the bridge actually is.

Opposed to the argument in favour of SMART objectives is the viewpoint that being too specific too early will mean that a strait-jacket is forced on the project, reducing the necessary room for flexibility.

This is certain, if bureaucratic approval procedures makes it cumbersome or even impossible to modify an immediate objective, once defined. The problem, then, is the bureaucratic procedures rather than the SMART objective!

My notes

A specific statement in a planning process - an objective, a result, a time-table - will always be a strait-jacket if plans cannot be changed when the situation so warrants. **We advocate specificity in planning because this allows for transparency and communication as regards the constant modifications of forecasts or plans which form the essential feature of planning with complexity, uncertainty and conflicts.**	

Module		Unit		5
			Focus on Action - Detail	
			The Outputs	

Outputs or results are the tangible, specific and direct products of activities which largely are within our control, under given assumptions about the context the project will operate in.

The difference between objectives and outputs is difficult to handle. An example:

"Five tanneries reduce discharge of chrome by 85%"

Could that be an output of a project managed by an environmental authority, who would maybe - as activities - perform inspections, establish norms and, if necessary, apply sanctions, and facilitate conversion of technological processes in the five tanneries? These activities could be performed under the assumption that the tanneries would cooperate.

Or should it be considered an objective, expected to be achieved by outputs like: 3 inspections in each tannery performed, seminar held for industry on technological options, norms and sanctions established and published?

Since the actual behaviour of the industry can be influenced indirectly by the project only - the industry being a stakeholder (and target group) outside the project - then the reduced discharge should be an objective. It is not the direct result of the activities performed, i.e. the difference in level between the means (the activities) and the end (the output) is too big.

The problem that may arise if outputs are not the direct result of activities, is that the if-then hypothesis between activity and output becomes too complex and too dependent on factors in the context. This will, in operational terms, tend to make the responsibility and accountability of project management unclear, since it will be nearly impossible to determine whether they delivered the required results or not.

To see whether an output can become an objective, study the example:

"Seminar held for industry on technological options"

For a staff member entrusted specific preparatory tasks - producing invitations, inviting speakers, hiring seminar facilities - the objective may be that the seminar is held under perfect logistical arrangements. For the organisation hosting the seminar, the objective could not be to hold the seminar, but rather to produce some behaviour or awareness change among participants, or even some more ambitious objective.

My notes

Module		Unit		5
			Focus on Action - Detail	
			Activities	

In the very early stages of the project cycle, it may not be necessary for overview or decision purposes to list the activities required to produce the outputs.

When major resources are about to be committed to a project, then the activities should be outlined to a level of details that allows an appreciation of the methodology to be applied.

> *The design of a extension of a water supply system may for example be done with or without involving the inhabitants in the area. The activities should indicate to the reader how the design will be done.*

Work planning for implementation will require further details and use of tools like bar-charts, work breakdown structure etc. This should not be included in overview presentations.

My notes

Module		Unit		5
			Focus on Action - Detail	
			Inputs	

The resources required for the performance of the activities must be available - that is, project management must be able to manage the human resources, the money, equipment and premises as required.

This does not always mean that the resources are available to the project on a full time basis. A commitment of these resources for an agreed duration of time must, however, have been given.

Simple as these principles may be, they are often violated when projects are designed, leading to major problems during project implementation. Two errors are common:

- Resources are included as input without checking their availability and seeking a specific commitment with regards to their participation.
- Commitments are given vaguely and verbally only.

My notes

Module		Unit		5
			Focus on Action - Detail	
			Assumptions	

Critical assumptions are included in project design to enable assessment and monitoring of important external factors. Two types of critical assumption should be included:

- Assumptions, which - to the best of our judgement - will **prevail**, but, which - if they contrary to expectations should fail - would have **serious** consequences for the project's ability to produce outputs or achieve objectives.

- Assumptions for which the risk that they may **not prevail** is deemed fairly high, but which would **not** imply **serious** consequences if they fail.

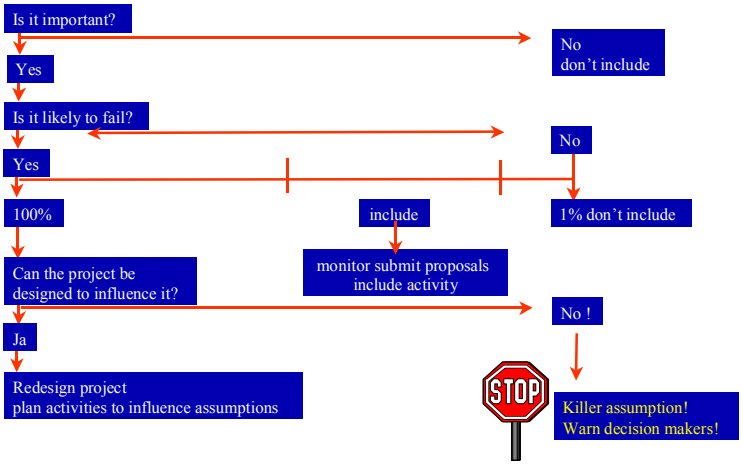
Finally, assumptions for which the risk that they will not **prevail** is high and where consequences are **serious** if they fail are so-called killer assumptions.

By definition, killer assumptions cannot appear in a project presentation, since the identification of such an assumption must lead to the modification or abandonment of the project.

Whether an assumption should be included in the project presentation or not can be checked by following the flow chart below.

My notes

Module		Unit		5
			Focus on Action - Detail	
			Assessment of Assumptions	



Module		Unit		5
			Focus on Action - Detail	
			Verifiable Indicators	

A project with directional objectives and loosely described outputs cannot be monitored for progress and impact compared to planned progress and impact.

But even SMART objectives and results may be difficult to monitor. Take the objective:

By June 20058, the water utility of Nathla is autonomous, with a Board consisting of a majority of water consumers; is financially and technically sustainable; supplies uninterrupted safe water (average consumption 30 litres pr. capita per day) of 2230 households in Nathla by June 2005; has a capacity to expand network by 300 connections annually thereafter; and conducts regularly successful campaigns for appropriate water use as part of the its normal operations".

Part of this objective may be fairly easy to verify (the existence of a Board, for example). But other parts - like technical sustainability - may be difficult, since it is not clear precisely what it means and how it can be determined whether this technical sustainability has been achieved or not.

This is where indicators serve. They are agreements made before the project starts on how to verify the achievement of objectives and results. They are *indicative* - to verify uninterrupted supply of water it would not make sense to monitor water supply 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Instead, the reporting system of the Water Utility would be checked for possible breakdowns of supply.

My notes

Module		Unit		5
			Focus on Action - Detail	
			Indicators	

My notes

A set of indicators for the above mentioned objective could be:

For autonomy and Board composition:

- *Board Meetings Minutes reflect composition of Board; budgets, tariffs, investment and operation plans are approved at Board level.*

For financial sustainability:

- *2005 audited accounts show positive net profit after depreciation, disregarding possible extraordinary incomes or other abnormal elements.*

For technical sustainability:

- *Sample performance observation of 2 work shifts, 2 planned pump maintenance jobs, and the installation of 2 new connections, confirm adequate adherence to standards as described in Operations and Maintenance Manuals of the Utility.*

For uninterrupted water supply to 2230 households, and capacity to expand the network:

- *Records confirm min. 2230 households connected, with min. 200 added in 2005, and average consumption of 120-150 l per day per connection, and stock of tubes, valves and meters for min. 200 additional connections.*

For successful campaigns on water use:

- *60% of people from 40 connected households can, when interviewed, state main content of at least two messages regarding water use propagated by the water utility during the last year.*

It may seem quite elaborate to prepare verifiable indicators in this level of detail. And, in practice, it is often not done even though LFA is claimed to have guided project design.

But if it is not done properly, there will be no yardsticks enabling us to learn precisely how far we got. For a project worth maybe 1 million US$, it represents a small effort to become measurable so that outsiders can check what is going on. Indicators have been used extensively in engineering project work for centuries. Whether constructing a bridge or an aeroplane, work is performed according to detailed specifications, and conformity to specifications is tested in various ways - from test of concrete quality to X-ray tests of welding. The concept of verifiable indicators in LFA introduces this well-known and well reputed practice in relation to projects in socio-economic areas.	

Module	5	Unit		5
			Presentation of the Project	
			The Logical Framework Matrix	

The LFA matrix was, in early versions of the Logical Framework Approach, nearly synonymous with the approach itself.

In this manual, the matrix is only a way of presenting an overview of the project. Therefore, it is not essential whether the matrix has 3 or 4 columns, and 4 or 5 rows: the essential thing is that the relevant information for a given decision is presented as clearly as possible.

An alternative matrix that is frequently used is the following: See Next Page

My notes

Module	5	Unit		5

Project Element	Verifiable Indicator	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Development Objective			
Immediate Objective			
Outputs			
Activities			
Inputs			

Module	5	Unit		5

The column for "Means of Verification" is used to indicate where to find a specific indicator defined in the Verifiable Indicator-column.

The matrix is simpler compared to this and other versions. This simplicity is based on the experience that too many cells in the matrix tend to reduce clarity, and that the cells tend to force people to write something - even though there may be nothing relevant to write (this goes for verifiable indicators-, means of verification- and assumption-cells).

Whenever a matrix is used, it should be supplemented by text. The limitation of the matrix is that it does not allow all the necessary details to enter without loss of overview.

If no detailed, written text is added, then the project may most likely end up being unspecific in all aspects. If decision-makers are willing to approve such projects, there might be very little incentive for project management to seek specificity.

If there is a risk that the use of a matrix could lead to such an outcome, then it should not be used at all. The LFA as a tool for project management is not dependent on the matrix.

My notes

Simplified matrix

Project Elements	Indicators	Assumptions
Development Objective: Incidence of water-borne diseases in Nathla South-East Area decreased by 50% in June 1998 compared to present situation.	Health clinic records study in 1998 shows min. 50% reduction of treated water-borne diseases compared to this year study. Registered infant mortality rate in area attributable to waterborne diseases shows min. 50% decrease.	Health authorities conduct hygiene awareness campaigns. Approximately 1000 latrines installed before June 1998.
Immediate Objective: Financially and technically sustainable, uninterrupted supply of safe water of 2230 households in Nathla South-East Area by June 1998.	Uninterrupted supply confirmed by company records for 2. quarter of 1998. Review in June 1998 confirms technical system quality and financial balance. Staff performance assessment (interviews, tests) in June 1998 confirms human and managerial capacity to run utility.	Continued ability and willingness to pay for piped water.
Outputs: 1. Piped system rehabilitated and extended. 2. Tariff and debtor policy, adequate for full cost recovery, implemented. 3. Operation and maintenance, finance, administration and customer service performed according to standards defined in internal procedures.	1. Engineers certificates by end 1997 have no major snags. 2. Utility operates from 1998 with min. 2% net contribution. Accumulated debtors owe less than 10 % of monthly turnover. 3. Performance according to standards confirmed in report to board by mid-1997. Standards and procedures approved by management end 1996.	Tariff Proposal approved by National Water Tariff Board. Public customers accept cut-off policy.
Activities: 1.1. Detect and repair leakages. 1.2. Design and install extension, drill 2 new wells and install clorification equipment. 2.1. Analyze existing cost structure and prepare budget forecasts, incl. depreciation costs. 2.2. Prepare new tariff proposal. 2.3. Implement new tariff and effective cut-off policy towards debtors. 3.1. Prepare standards and internal procedures. 3.2. Train staff in standards and procedures. 3.3. Define and introduce performance assessment of staff, and other staff policies stimulating performance.	**Inputs:** Water Utility Management (1/3 time). Water Utility Staff (1/3 time). Funds for contracting of local plumbers for minor repairs. Funds for rehabilitation (engineer and turnkey contract). Funds for consultancy services (procedures-staff development).	**Preconditions:** The Water Utility is given autonomous legal status.