Capacity building concept for Participatory Project Planning and Self-Evaluation

Target Group: Beginners in **Participatory Project Planning** (PPP) and **Self-Evaluation** (SE) with some experience in workshop moderation and/or facilitation experience.

Outcomes: Following the training program, participants should be able:

- to appreciate the use of the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) for participatory planning,
- to use the LFA in planning projects,
- to facilitate a participatory LFA workshop,
- to use technology in moderating planning,
- to write project proposals based on planning process,
- to create a monitoring plan and carry out a monitoring process,
- to recognize different types of evaluation,
- to appreciate the use of SE in order to participate and/or facilitate a learning/ development process,
- to facilitate a self-evaluation workshop and its follow-up,
- to develop an evaluation culture and foster it the organizations as a result based management tool.

Outputs: The direct products of the capacity building are:

- Each participating organization delivers a complete and real project proposal planned according to LFA. (incl. monitoring plan)
- In each of participating organizations a SE session has taken place.

Action:

1. Define enrolment criteria
2. Initial training on PPP with LFA/Monitoring (2-3 days)
3. Coaching participating organizations in participatory planning (max. 3 days for each)
4. Coaching participating organizations in completing project proposals (max. 2 days for each)
5. Initial training on SE (2-3 days)
6. Coaching participating organizations in preparing and carrying out a SE (2-3 days)
7. Wrap up activity (1 day)

Pre-condition:

A funding scheme/opportunities available

1. Enrolment criteria

Participants come from organizations with some experience in project management, but do not necessarily plan systematically or do not produce good quality proposals. In order to assure a multiplying effect, the preference should be given to participants who have the ability to train others. It has proved to be an effective strategy to train 2-3 persons from the same organization in order to have results and build sustainable organizational capacities.

2. Initial training on PPP with LFA/Monitoring

A 3-day training on PPP with LFA and monitoring will be organized. If participants come from different organizations, the training will be built on a simulation project previously agreed among participants. In case of participants coming from the same organization, or from organizations with similar interests, the training can be built on a real project.

The learning outcomes of the initial training are:

- to appreciate the role and the importance of the problem analysis as starting point for project planning;
- to define the objective system of a project by transforming problems to success;
- to understand the logical framework approach and be able to utilize it as a tool for participatory project planning and evaluation;
- to apply effective and transparent monitoring tools;
- to facilitate a participatory planning process.

Although there is no "one-size-fits-all" training program for PPP with LFA/Monitoring, a sample agenda is given in appendix 1. Participants should be encouraged to use technology in facilitating the planning process as means to record the inputs during the planning process.

A syllabus may be developed based on the PPP/monitoring IM.PACT manual. Also, various presentations, forms and templates developed within the framework of the IM.PACT project can be used.

However, it is necessary to develop a format for project proposal (application), which contains essential elements of the logical framework approach, or adopt a format which is in use in a given context.

3. Coaching participating organizations in participatory planning

Three pre-conditions must be met in order to use the PPP in an involved organization:

1) There must be a preliminary project idea

2) A decision maker within the organization must decide to use the LFA for project planning,

3) Resources for financing the planning process must be available (unless it is about just one organization that would have a planning session within the organization, with very limited costs – just for coach).

Upon request, the training provider shall appoint a coach to the organization involved in the program. The coach shall cooperate with the organization in preparing a PPP workshop, which may or may not include preparation of a monitoring plan.

The following steps may be followed within the organization that wishes to use PPP to plan a real project:

1) Appointment of a "project promoter"

   The "project promoter" is the person responsible for the *planning process*. Proper project planning is a complex process which itself needs to be managed. This is the task of the project promoter. He or she may also be the source of the original project idea and/or the manager of the project itself, but this is by no means necessary: the director of an organization may have a brilliant project idea but no time to follow it up; and he may be able to delegate the organization of the planning process to one of his assistants – who again may have too many other tasks to be able to manage the project itself. Alternatively, the originator of an idea may know the ideal candidate for the position of project manager, who is also in a position to manage the planning process.
   What is important at this point in time is to clearly designate the person responsible for the planning process and to make sure that this person has enough resources to manage the planning process. By "resources" we mean *time*, *money*, and *necessary support* for questions of logistics and information gathering. For more complex projects it may therefore also be necessary to appoint / designate a "planning team".

2) Appointment of a "planning team" (if necessary)

   This team will help the project promoter gather all available information about the intended area of intervention, identify and contact possible stakeholders (target groups, partners, and opponents), and organize the logistics of the planning process. The project promoter, depending on the decision processes within the organization, may choose together with the project promoter or the team. It may also include people from partner organizations.

3) Gathering of information by the project promoter (and the planning team)

   Often initial project ideas are based more on hunches – on "intuitive insights" – rather than on an objective analysis of a situation. At this stage of the planning, however, it is necessary to give this initial idea a more objective position: to collect existing information about the problem or the area of intervention, which the project is intended to address. Analyzing existing documents should make it possible to define the idea more clearly and to see how it relates to social groups, organizations and institutions in the area of intervention. In more abstract forms of planning this may appear sufficient to develop precise justifications for the project. In PPP it leads to the (preliminary) identification of stakeholders who will then be invited to participate in the further planning.

4) Identification of possible partner organizations

Few – if any - projects do not go beyond the borders of a single organization: they can only be implemented in collaboration with one or more institutional partners. Since such collaboration cannot be planned by one partner alone (expecting the other partners' compliance to this plan), such partners should be involved in the planning of the project as early as possible. During the preparatory phase of a PPP workshop they are identified, contacted and invited to participate.

Identification of participants needed for the planning process

On the basis of the preliminary analysis of existing information it is almost always possible to immediately identify knowledge gaps and areas of expertise, which will be needed for good and realistic planning. It is often advisable to include such experts in PPP workshops. Also, it is necessary to identify participants from the project target group who are willing and able to be part of the planning process.

The planning sequence and the approach should be similar to the one used during the training workshop, but also, substantial changes may be made if deemed necessary. Depending on the complexity of the problem area, 2-3 days should be allowed for the planning workshop, the agenda should be flexible. The expected outputs of the planning workshop should be:

- Problem trees agreed among participants,
- Logical framework matrix checked for consistency.
- A draft operational plan.

The role of a coach is to assist a facilitator from the organization involved to facilitate the planning process by helping him or her to deal with problems common for beginners: difficulties in using the technology, problem formulations, analyzing cause effect relationships, transforming problem trees to objective trees, setting up an objective system, completing the logical framework matrix, etc. The coach should be prepared to take over certain parts of the planning workshop and should, therefore, be well acquainted with the project idea.

4. Coaching participating organizations in completing project proposals

Finalizing a project proposal often means to make it fit to one of many formats required by various donor organizations. In some cases those formats are simple, whereas in others they may be much more demanding or it is left to the applicant to choose the presentation format. Again, it is very difficult to define a "one-size-fits-all-approach", so we shall point out some major challenges "hidden" in various formats:

1. Problem definition (or situation analysis, or needs assessment)

In this section you should present the justification behind the project, clearly identifying the specific problems and/or needs on which the proposed project will focus and reasons why these have been selected. Usually, carefully designed problem trees are very helpful in writing this part of the project narrative. Please note that many funding organizations will not translate your narrative to problem trees and will not want to base their judgment on the situation on trees, so it is often important to prove the relevance of your conclusions by using information which is not necessarily part of problem trees.

2. The objective system

It is often required to translate the logical framework matrix into a narrative format in which case a different terminology for various parts of the matrix may be used. However, such project formats usually provide sufficient explanations that help us distinguish different levels of project objectives. Also, it is often required to provide extra arguments on relevance of project objectives. On the other hand, the logical framework matrix may be a part, or, at least, an annex of the project format.

3. Description of activities

Whereas the logical framework matrix contains very brief formulations of activities, most of the project formats require more detailed descriptions of activities: what will be done, where, when and how. Also, not all the project formats mean the same by Inputs. For example, in Tempus project inputs entail all resources (financial, human, material) needed to execute the activity.

It may be required to summarize activities in a table format demonstrating their implementation schedule.

4. The budget

Good and realistic budgets are always readable from project activities. Therefore, formulations of budget items should be consistent with project activities.

If the project format requires a monitoring plan, that is an opportunity to prepare one based on the knowledge acquired during the training.

This type of coaching can be organized on spot or on-line, or can be a combination of both. It may involve one or more coaches. Anyway, this must be a learning process for the beneficiary organization.

5. <u>Initial training on SE</u>

A 2-3 days training on SE will be organized, depending on the degree of familiarity with the Project Cycle Management (PCM). If the participants have already followed a PPP workshop and are familiar with the LFA logic, a 2 days training might be enough. But it is sometimes a very good way to start the capacity building process on Project Cycle Management (PCM) with a SE training workshop. Three days will then be needed, in order to clarify e.g. the levels of objectives and results and prepare a consistent SE session to be used in the participants' organization. If the participants are expected to train others on SE, three days will be needed for the participants to gain sufficient knowledge about the principles and the methodology.

The learning outcomes of the initial training are:

- To become familiar with SE principles,
- To understand the SE methodology and be able to use it as a tool for project cycle management,
- To appreciate the role and the importance of self-evaluation and be able to promote it;
- To be able to inform (or train) others on self-evaluation (if some adult education expertise already available),
- To facilitate a SE process (if some facilitation expertise already available).

Here too, there is no "one-size-fits-all" training program for SE and the best one will take into account the level of the participants, their needs and expectations. A sample for a 2 days training is given in appendix 2.

A training program may be developed based on the self-evaluation manual (http://www.impact-see.org/trainers.htm). Ideally, it should include, as much as possible, the preparation of a SE process, which the participants will be able to realize in their organizations (transfer).

Various sheets and presentations developed within the I.M.PACT project can be used as such or adjusted to the trainers needs. However, the principles and the methodology should be respected and participants should be made aware that self-evaluation needs as serious preparation as an external evaluation and that the process, as well as the reporting, should be consistent. They should also understand and share the understanding of the used terms (output, outcome, impact…) and be invited to check the "logic" and the used terms by the various donor organizations.

6. <u>Coaching participating organizations in preparing and carrying out a SE</u>

A first SE experience should have a simple objective, like e.g. to review a project's results and should have a limited number of participants (maximum 16 participants). The coaching of participating organizations in preparing and carrying out a SE might take 2-3 days, according to the demand and the complexity of the project.

The pre-condition in order to carry out the SE is:

1) Appointment of a "self-evaluation" promoter
2) A team willing to cooperate according to the SE rules and principles and ready to have a critical look at the project's results;
3) Some resources to realize the SE process.

1) Appointment of a "self-evaluation responsible"

The "self-evaluation promoter" is the person responsible for the *self-evaluation process*. We have seen that it needs thorough preparation and respect of the deadline established in the operational plan. This person can be the project responsible or any other collaborator. If the SE responsible is not the project responsible him/herself, he/she should have its support.

2) A team willing to cooperate according to the SE rules and principles

A cooperation climate is necessary for the self-evaluation success. In case of severe conflict within a project team, an external evaluation will be more adequate. The project responsible and organization should also be ready and ready a) to have a critical analysis of the project's results and b) to consider the self-evaluation results, learn out of them and open to bring changes if necessary (learning organization).

3) Some resources to realize the SE process

Self-evaluation is usually less costly than external evaluation. Still, the "self-evaluation responsible" – or team for a complex project- should have the necessary resources, i.e sufficient time for the preparation of the SE (development of the tools, information collection, etc…), some budget e.g. for the participants of the SE session (travel expenses and meals, salary for the coach or facilitator, etc.) It is usually not possible to invite all the stakeholders for a SE session but there are other ways to include them in a SE process (interviews, questionnaires, etc).

The person who is coaching the preparation and realization of a SE will support the self-evaluation responsible for the preparation (advice for tools, needed information, coherence of the SE project…). If needed, he/she might facilitate the SE session and on demand, support the reporting of the session.

7. <u>Wrap-up activity</u>

A one-day wrap up activity can be organized at the end of this training program. The aim would be to share experiences and knowledge among participants on use of PPP and SE and identify lessons leant. Such events may represent a good opportunity to establish basis for networking, further cooperation between participating organizations and individuals and common activities like e.g. further training, conference on a precise topic, capitalization, etc.

APPENDIX 1

Participatory Project Planning and Monitoring

Agenda

<u>Day 1</u>

09:00-11:00:	Welcome and introductions Basic elements of strategic planning Simulation/Working topic Problem diagnosis Clustering problems
11:00-11:30:	Coffee break
11.30-13:00:	Clustering problems Cause-effect relationship analysis/Problem trees
13:00-14:00:	Lunch
14:00-15:30:	Cause-effect relationship analysis/Problem trees
15:30-16:00:	Coffee break
16:00-17:30:	Group work: Revisiting the problem trees Writing essays on problems Reporting back to plenary

<u>Day 2</u>

09:00-10:30:	Group work: Building the objective trees Reporting back to plenary Analysing options
10:30-11:00:	Coffee break
11.00-13:00:	The logical framework Intervention logic
13:00-14:00:	Lunch
14:00-15:30:	Intervention logic Success indicators
15:30-16:00:	Cofee break
16:00-17:30:	Risk analysis Operational plan

<u>Day 3</u>

09:00-11:00:	Putting bits and pieces together Developing a project proposal
11:00-11:30:	Coffee break
11.30-13:00:	Putting bits and pieces together Developing a project proposal
13:00-14:00:	Lunch
14:00-15:30:	Project monitoring
15:30-16:00:	Coffee break
16:00-17:30:	Project monitoring (continuation)

APPENDIX 2

Self-evaluation

Agenda

Day 1

09:00-10:30:	**Introduction** Welcome, expected results of the training Agenda and ground rules Presentation of the participants
10:30-11:00:	Coffee break
11.00-12:30:	**I.WHAT IS SE?** SE: a part of the project/program cycle management; definitions Why SE is also called empowerment evaluation The principles of SE
12:45-14:00:	Lunch
14:00-15:30:	**II. THE “WHEEL” OF SELF-EVALUATION (the methodology)** Eight points to be considered for a consistent self-evaluation preparation
15:30-16:00:	Coffee break
16:00-17:30:	**III. TRANSFER OF THE NEW ACQUIRED KNOWKLEDGE** • Group work I: What do I want to find out (Domain and objectives or the SE) • Reporting back to plenary - discussion

Day 2

09:00-10:30:	**IV. AN EXAMPLE OF REALISED SE** E.g. presentation of IMPACT project SE process Clarification questions
10:30-11:00:	Coffee break
11.00-12:30:	TRANSFER OF THE NEW ACQUIRED KNOWKLEDGE (follow-up) • Group work II: How do I wish to proceed? (Instruments, norms and standards); with whom do I wish to cooperate? (Participants, facilitator); what do I wish to avoid (time, resistance).
12:45-14:00:	Lunch
14:00-15:30:	• Reporting back to plenary (presentation by a participant form the group– questions and comments by the other participants – questions and comments by the trainer)
15:30-16:00:	Coffee break
16:00-17:30:	**V. PUT THE WHEEL IN MOTION** • Next steps to realize the SE Evaluation of the training session