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Technical Intervention Area Summary Notes: TIA-D

Participatory Project Design to combat trafficking in children and women

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Objective Oriented Project Planning (OOPP) as design tool

1 Introduction

Participatory approaches are crucial to the success of the TICW-project in terms of identifying meaningful and effective solutions that are context based, and implemented and monitored by stakeholders including officials (that need to create an enabling environment), partner agencies, and children/families/villagers. Only with their engagement, understanding, support, and commitment will there be chances for real change and sustainability.

Objective Oriented Project Planning is one of the tools to design a project in a participatory manner. It was developed – and adapted for the project - by Management for Development Foundation SA (MDF-SA).

2 OOPP: Theory and concepts

Objective Oriented Project Planning (OOPP) is a participatory planning technique, in which all parties involved identify and analyse the problems to be addressed in the project, and prepare a concrete and realistic project plan together.

OOPP brings together representatives of all project stakeholders and can be particularly effective in a community setting. By discussing the problems and possible solutions, the participants can come to a mutual understanding of each other's points of view. Once some form of consensus is reached, these problems are organised into a logical sequence. Subsequently, they are reformulated into objectives to be attained. Based on a number of criteria, a part of the objectives is selected to be the focus of the project. Subsequently, these objectives are translated into a Project Planning Matrix or *Logical Framework*. This planning matrix describes the objectives at different levels, referred to as Overall Objective, Immediate Objective, Project Outputs and Project Activities.

3 OOPP phases

Preparatory phase

- Determine the topic for the workshop (entity); a good guideline is 'sector', 'geographical area' and 'target group'.
- Identify and select all relevant parties who have a relationship with the entity.

Analysis phase:

- Bring together representatives of the most relevant parties;
- Determine the topic for the workshop (entity);
- Discuss problems related to the entity;
- Build a problem tree organising the problems in cause-effect relation to one other;
- Build an objective tree by reformulating problems into objectives and checking the means-end relations;
- Select objectives based on predetermined criteria, and determine the project focus.

Planning phase:

- Prepare a Project Planning Matrix (Logical Framework) using information from the analysis phase;
- Determine means and costs;
- Draft time schedules of activities;
- Indicate the responsibilities of all parties in implementing activities.

4 Identifying problems

Information about particular problems can be collected from surveys, interviews, reports, statistical data and other sources. The objectiveness, reliability and completeness of these data are often doubtful. Bringing together representatives from all parties is an additional opportunity to gather information.

In an OOPP workshop, the participants anonymously write their problems on cards, which are then displayed on a wall. This way, difficulties some people feel in expressing problems in front of others with conflicting interests can be overcome. Subsequently, the session moderator leads a group discussion to clarify the issues. Sometimes, problems mentioned need to be further specified in order to uncover more underlying difficulties. The moderator avoids linking what is written on the cards with either the originator or the source of the problems.

Usually it is not possible to represent all stakeholders in the workshop, but attempts should be made to have a representative of each of the main stakeholder groups.

All workshop participants identify problems as they perceive them in relation to a clearly described 'entity', e.g. problems of low productivity or problems of effective functioning. Problems of stakeholders that are not represented in the workshop have to be considered and discussed as well.

5 'Building' trees

The next step is to select a starter problem, for which both causes and effects can be identified. The causes are identified from the cards displayed on the wall, and placed in a cause-effect relationship underneath the starter problem. Problems identified as an effect are placed above the problem causing it. A problem tree will gradually emerge as each problem is related to other problems. The logic is rechecked later and problems that were not mentioned yet can be included. Lines are drawn to show the relationships between problems, and arrows mark the direction of effects.

Participants are then assisted to reformulate the problems into realistic objectives. These objectives are displayed on another sheet. The sequence is checked, and some reorganisation may be needed. Once the sequence is acceptable to all participants, lines are drawn to visualise the means-end relationships. Groups of related objectives dealing with a similar topic are clustered and labelled.

5 Planning Matrix

The first step in the Planning phase is to make an initial selection regarding the clusters of the Objective Tree that can and will be included in the intervention strategy of the project. These selected clusters, on the basis of set criteria, will eventually determine the Overall Objective(s), the Immediate Objective and the Project Outputs of the project plan and will be included as such in the Planning Matrix.

The Planning Matrix, also known as the Logical Framework, is used in the planning phase as well as throughout the implementation phase. It is square in format, with four columns and four rows. The Overall Objective(s) and Immediate Objective are transferred to the first vertical column of the matrix; the *Intervention Logic* (shaded). Next, objectives directly leading to the Immediate Objective on the objective tree are entered into the matrix as Outputs. Indicators for the Immediate Objective and each Output are formulated in measurable terms: qualitatively, quantitatively, time, target group and place.

Planning Matrix:

Overall Objective			
Immediate Objective	Indicators	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Project Outputs	Indicators	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Activities	Inputs	Costs	Assumptions
			Pre-conditions

Clusters of objectives, also leading to the Immediate Objective but not to be addressed by the project, are written on cards. Other additional conditions are identified, and then assessed as to whether they are important or likely to cause problems/ risks during implementation. If the project is not in a position to address these crucial conditions/ risks, they become Assumptions and are placed in the fourth vertical column at the respective levels in the matrix. Assumptions may become additional Outputs if acted upon during the project. In that case they are moved to the first column.

Pre-conditions need to be added at the bottom of the last column. They address 'killer'-assumptions that may prevent the project from operating if not dealt with prior to the start of the project.

In a brainstorming session ideas for activities to reach the various Outputs are formulated, also based on the means-end relationship that has become apparent from the Objective Tree. Participants discuss these ideas and put them in order of priority under the respective Outputs. Possible donor input can be estimated initially by marking the respective activities. A rough estimate of costs and inputs can be added to the matrix.

6 Time frame

Only the 'biggies' - the activities requiring considerable resources - are listed and their duration estimated. The activities are shown on a bar chart covering the total project period, taking resource availability into account. The type of participation by the various stakeholders is indicated in the schedule. It is essential that the various responsibilities set out in the time schedules are clearly understood and agreed upon. This is the way to mutual understanding and commitment of different actors to project implementation.

7 Some OOPP limitations

OOPP poses several practical problems. The visualisation method and the intensive interaction between participants call for specific seating and room arrangement. This limits the optimal number of participants to fifteen to twenty. This means that often not all stakeholders can be represented in the workshop, thus creating a bias in the problem identification. It may be possible sometimes to organise more than one workshop and integrate the findings in one plenary session.

It could also be difficult for illiterate people to participate, as visualisation is the core of the OOPP method. Other ways of gathering information may then be more applicable. Also the environment of such a workshop and the presence of senior officials may make people feel uneasy. Although OOPP tries to assure an anonymous presentation of points of view, discussion on problems may still be difficult. A similar constraint may arise in cultures where strong adherence to hierarchical order inhibits open discussion.

Approval by the decision-makers who did not participate in the workshop is a more serious constraint. They may refuse their support for the plan developed by the participants. Open discussions before the start of the workshop or even during the workshop may be needed to identify the project mandate.

The success of OOPP also depends on the moderator, who has the task to guide participants through each stage. Bringing together people from different social, cultural, economical, technical, organisational and hierarchical backgrounds gives the opportunity to share views and perceptions. A good moderator should stimulate those who keep a low profile, and control the more dominant participants. Participants are encouraged to listen, to hear the reasons behind one another's perceptions. A feeling of mutual understanding can be created. The bond established between participants in a workshop would most probably also result in improved communication and co-operation during the implementation phase. Open-minded communication is a complex process, requiring a strong and determined, but flexible, creative, objective and independent person. It should preferably be an outsider, adequately trained to conduct a successful OOPP workshop. Mismanagement of an OOPP workshop could create chaos, conflicts, disappointments and demoralise participants.

Conflicts about individual views, and aspects of the project's future are not unusual either, because OOPP is about what people really think. All too often in projects, people fail to take a stand on what they really feel about a situation. This can lead to hidden agendas and chronic dormant conflicts. OOPP channels these emotions into functional discussions, at the end of which some form of consensus can be reached. Participants often feel a sense of relief after such sessions. They have been able to discuss pressing issues in an open atmosphere, often for the first time.

Many people working at implementation level think planning is only for senior planning officials. They are used to receive directives, not to participate in planning. Yet, co-operative planning will considerably enhance the commitment of the project staff, target groups and related organisations as they begin to understand the WHAT, WHY, HOW, WHO, WHERE, and WHICH of projects. Perceptions and working cultures hence need to change.

Reference(s)

For further reading – in particular the guide to OOPP - please see *'Project planning, project design and logical frameworks. A guide to objective oriented project planning and logical framework analysis'*, By MDF-SA for ILO TICW-project (November 2000) - available at www.ilo.org/asia/child/trafficking.