

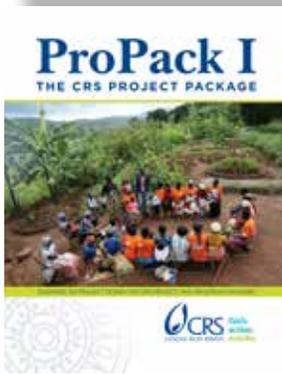
# ProPack I

## THE CRS PROJECT PACKAGE



GUIDANCE ON PROJECT DESIGN FOR CRS PROJECT AND PROGRAM MANAGERS





### ***PROPAC K I: THE CRS PROJECT PACKAGE***

A community group meets in Muhanga District in Rwanda's Southern Province to contribute learning from their current home garden cultivation activities to the design of a new project. CRS is committed to beneficiary accountability throughout the project cycle. At project design stage, this is reflected in participatory processes that involve relevant stakeholders, including the women and men most directly affected by a situation.

Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS

**Catholic Relief Services** is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. CRS eases the suffering of and provides assistance to people in need in more than 100 countries, without regard to race, religion or nationality. CRS' relief and development work is accomplished through programs of emergency response, HIV, health, agriculture, education, microfinance and peacebuilding.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### **User's survey respondents**

Over 200 CRS staff from all regions and headquarters responded to a survey on the 2004 *ProPack I*. Their responses laid the foundation for revising the manual.

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## FOREWORD

Project design is a core responsibility of CRS program staff and requires a significant investment of our human and financial resources. A high-quality project design process lays the foundation for developing a competitive project proposal that is more likely to be funded by donors. The quality of decisions and plans made during project design contributes to CRS' ability to successfully implement innovative and evidence-based projects at scale; projects that deliver positive and sustainable change in the lives of the people CRS serves. *ProPack I: The CRS Project Package: Project Design Guidance for CRS Project and Program Managers* has been written specifically for CRS project and program managers and the staff who support them. *ProPack I* helps these staff to work in a consistent manner with partners to ensure the quality of CRS' project design processes.

The first *CRS Project Text Format* was written in 1986, revised in 1993 and pioneered CRS' efforts to promote a consistent approach to project design. The *Project Proposal Guidance*, developed in 1999 in CRS East Africa and used agency-wide, included newly developed program quality standards and the Justice Lens. In 2000, CRS began to use the Proframe (Project framework) for project design, monitoring and evaluation. The first version of *ProPack I* was completed in 2004 and is one of CRS' most widely consulted resources.

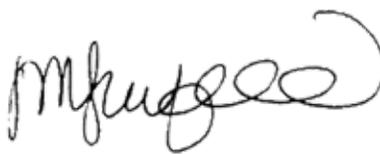
This revised *ProPack I* retains useful information and features from the 2004 version and includes many important updates reflecting lessons learned through field use of the manual, improvements in our project design practices and changes in the donor environment over the decade since *ProPack I* was first published. Changes and updates are detailed in the Preface.

We would like to thank all of the staff that were involved in the revision process of *ProPack I* over the past two years. This took significant effort and reflects their dedication to making a difference in the lives of the people that CRS serves.

With best wishes,



**Schuyler Thorup**  
Executive Vice President



**Shannon Senefeld**  
Director of Program Impact and Quality Assurance

**The quality of decisions and plans made during project design contributes to CRS' ability to successfully implement innovative and evidence-based projects at scale; projects that deliver positive and sustainable change in the lives of the people CRS serves**

## PREFACE

*ProPack I* was first published in 2004 and this update comes after a decade of use. A 2013 user’s survey found that *ProPack I* was appreciated as an important resource for project design. Many users requested that it be revised with a greater focus on how to conduct project design, including practical steps and tools. Users also suggested that the revised *ProPack I* better integrate gender considerations, align with complementary business development guidance—such as *Technical Application Guidance (TAG)* (CRS 2007b)  and *Cost Application Guidance (CAG)* (CRS 2013a) —and include specific guidance on budgeting and on planning for project management structures and staffing, among others.

**Many users requested that *ProPack I* be revised with a greater focus on how to conduct project design, including practical steps and tools**

The revised *ProPack I*:

- Reflects an updated project design process, including concept notes
- Provides guidance on how to analyze and interpret assessment data
- Considers the results framework and the project strategy together, with attention to the project’s theory of change
- Retains most of the original information on developing a Proframe – considered one of the most useful sections of the 2004 *ProPack I* – with updated monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) planning tools
- Highlights the importance of activity scheduling, budgeting, and management and operations planning as integral parts of project design
- Includes a chapter on cross-cutting issues to consider throughout project design. These issues reflect agency core competencies and include: Partner collaboration and support, gender integration, peacebuilding and governance integration, beneficiary accountability, and learning
- Highlights how project design steps and guidance apply in the context of an emergency

This table summarizes how these changes are reflected in the structure of this new, revised version of *ProPack I*.

### Changes in *ProPack I*’s outline

<b><i>ProPack I</i> (2004)</b>	<b>Revised <i>ProPack I</i> (2015)</b>
	Cross-cutting issues in project design
Concept note	
Planning the project design	Planning project design (including sections on stakeholder analysis and conceptual frameworks)
Stakeholder analysis	
Assessment	Assessment, analysis and interpretation
Analysis and objectives setting	Results framework and project strategy
Strategy review	
	Concept note and review
Results frameworks, Proframes and M&E planning	Proframe and planning for MEAL
	Organizational capacity and management plan
	Activities schedule and budget
Project proposal guidance	Project proposal format and review
	Post-design activities

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	after action review
BDS	business development specialist
CAF	Conflict Assessment Framework
CAFE	Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence
CAG	Cost Application Guidance
CaLP	Cash and Learning Partnership
CBO	community-based organization
CHW	community health worker
CI	Caritas Internationalis
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
CMM	Conflict Management and Mitigation
COP	chief of party
CP	country program
CR	country representative
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DCHA	Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
DCOP	deputy chief of party
DFAP	Development Food Assistance Program ( <i>see also</i> MYAP)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DIP	detailed implementation plan
DRD/MQ	deputy regional director/management quality
DRD/PQ	deputy regional director/program quality
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
EFOM	Emergency Field Operations Manual
EMMA	emergency market and mapping analysis
EOI	expression of interest
FANTA	Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FFP	Food for Peace (USAID)
FGD	focus group discussion
FTE	full-time equivalent
FtF	Feed the Future
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
HIV and AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome
HOCAl	Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument
HoOPs	head of operations
HoP	head of programs
HR	human resources
ICR	indirect cost recovery
ICT4D	information and communication technologies for development
IDEA	Institutional Donor Engagement and Advancement, formerly Resources Acquisition Department (RAD)
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IHD	integral human development
INGO	international nongovernmental organization
IPTT	indicator performance tracking table
IR	intermediate result
IS	institutional strengthening
ITN	insecticide-treated net
KII	key informant interview
LOE	level of effort
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MEAL	monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
MICS	Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MQAT	management quality assessment tool
MYAP	Multi-Year Assistance Program ( <i>see also</i> DFAP)
NICRA	Negotiated Indirect Cost Recovery Agreement
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDA	Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS (CONT)

OR	operations research
OverOps	Overseas Operations
PAL	pre-authorization letter
PDL	public donor liaison
PIN	project idea note
PMP	performance management plan
PMU	project management unit
PPG	Project Proposal Guidance
PPR	past performance reference
PRA	participatory rapid appraisal
Proframe	Project Framework
ProPack	Project package
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PVO	private voluntary organization
R&R	rest and relaxation
RF	results framework
RFA	request for applications
RFO	regional finance officer
RFP	request for proposals
RRA	rapid rural appraisal
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SILC	savings and internal lending communities
SitRep	Situation Report
SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound
SMILER	simple measurement of indicators for learning and evidence-based reporting
SO	strategic objective
SOW	scope of work
SRFM	sub-recipient financial management
TA	technical advisor
TAG	Technical Application Guidance
TDY	temporary deployment
TOC	theory of change
TOR	terms of reference
TOT	training of trainers
UFE	utilization-focused evaluation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAM	Vulnerability Assessment Mapping
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	UN World Food Program



## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO *PROPACK I*

### SECTION 1: PURPOSE AND PRIMARY AUDIENCE

*ProPack I* provides practical, step-by-step guidance and tools to help CRS staff improve the quality of project design. Project design is critical to project success. A high-quality project design process helps staff to:

- Make project design decisions that are based on evidence, learning from past projects, and agency and industry best practice
- Develop a competitive project proposal that is more likely to be funded by donors
- Implement responsive and evidence-based projects that deliver positive and sustainable change in the lives of the people CRS serves, and that bring successful innovations to scale (accountability to the people CRS serves)
- Clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities to deliver timely and quality results and ensure stewardship of donor resources

In sum, the quality of project design contributes to CRS' aspirations that people reach their full potential in an atmosphere of peace, social justice and human dignity.

*ProPack I*'s primary audience is CRS' country program, national and international staff that work with partners and project design teams. Within CRS, the most common titles for these staff members are program manager, project manager, project officer, or sector specialist.

Supervisors and technical support staff should also use *ProPack I* as they manage, support and mentor these primary users. Staff in this category include heads of programs, heads of operations, country representatives, deputy regional directors for program quality and for management quality, technical advisors and business development specialists.

Experienced partners may also make good use of *ProPack I* materials. In some cases, this will require training or coaching by CRS staff.

**The quality of project design contributes to CRS' aspiration that people reach their full potential in an atmosphere of peace, social justice and human dignity**

#### PRACTICAL TIP:

Throughout *ProPack I*, if there are project design terms you don't understand fully, click on the glossary icon at the top of each page to consult the glossary.

### SECTION 2: PROJECT DESIGN WITHIN THE PROJECT CYCLE

A project is a set of planned, interrelated actions that achieve defined objectives within a given budget and a specified period of time. These actions occur within roughly sequential phases, as illustrated in the CRS project management cycle, **Figure 1.1** below, which also shows how learning is generated and used in all phases of the project cycle to inform and improve ongoing and future projects.

#### PROJECT

A set of planned, interrelated actions that achieve defined objectives within a given budget and a specified period of time.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER II  
CROSS-CUTTING  
ISSUES

CHAPTER III  
PLANNING

CHAPTER IV  
ASSESSMENT

CHAPTER V  
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CHAPTER VI  
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CHAPTER VII  
PROFRAME

CHAPTER VIII  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
CAPACITY AND  
MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER IX  
ACTIVITIES  
SCHEDULE  
AND BUDGET

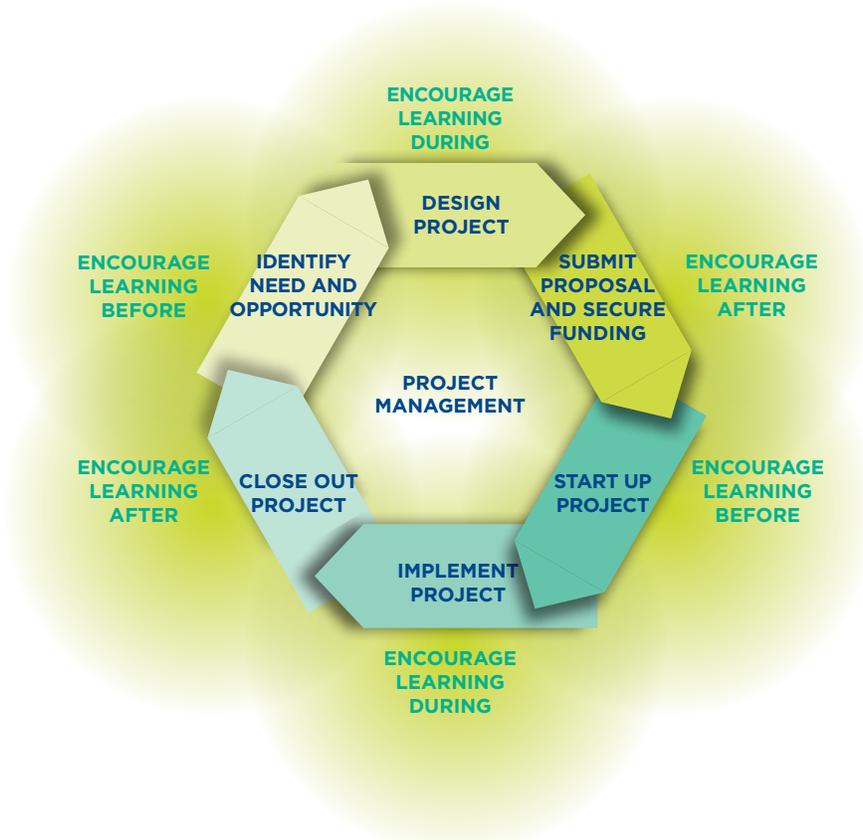
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PROPOSAL  
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CHAPTER XI  
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APPENDICES

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- CHAPTER III PLANNING
- CHAPTER IV ASSESSMENT
- CHAPTER V RESULTS FRAMEWORK
- CHAPTER VI CONCEPT NOTE
- CHAPTER VII PROFRAME
- CHAPTER VIII ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND MANAGEMENT
- CHAPTER IX ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE AND BUDGET
- CHAPTER X PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT
- CHAPTER XI POST-DESIGN ACTIVITIES
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Figure 1.1: CRS project management cycle



Successful project start-up, implementation and close-out depend on the clarity and quality of key project design decisions

Project design is a key phase within the project cycle. Some elements of project design typically begin when **a need and/or funding opportunity are identified** and a preliminary “go”/“no-go” decision is made. **Project design** launches at full speed once the project idea note, or PIN, is approved. Project design is tightly linked and interwoven with **proposal development** as the quality of project design underpins the quality of the proposal. Successful **project start-up, implementation and close-out** depend on the clarity and quality of key project design decisions, including the specific problems and opportunities to be addressed, the objectives to be attained and how to measure them, the project strategy and activities proposed to achieve these objectives, the management structure, partnership decisions, and required resources (staff and budget). Successful **project implementation** also depends on excellent communication between the project design and project management teams.

More information on making a go/no-go decision can be found in **TAG**



**Project design** focuses on project decision-making and plans. A project proposal documents these decisions and plans using a format determined by the donor or by CRS. The proposal presents a compelling rationale that responds to donor interests and requirements and demonstrates why CRS and its partners are the donor’s best choice to deliver proposed results.

*ProPack I* is part of a set of guidance documents developed by CRS for use across the project cycle: the CRS Project Package. *ProPack I* focuses on designing strong, relevant and successful projects. *ProPack II* focuses on project management, start-up, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and close-out. *ProPack III* focuses on setting up a MEAL system during project start-up once a project has been funded.

When responding to competitive funding opportunities, especially in the case of US Government submissions, also refer to CRS’ *Technical Application Guidance (TAG)* (2007b)  and *Cost Application Guidance (CAG)* (2013a) , which provide detailed guidance and templates for developing responsive and competitive project proposals and budgets, respectively. Other business development tools for competitive funding opportunities include CRS’ capture planning and intelligence management resources.

SECTION 3: MORE ON PROJECT DESIGN

CHAPTER I  
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CHAPTER IV  
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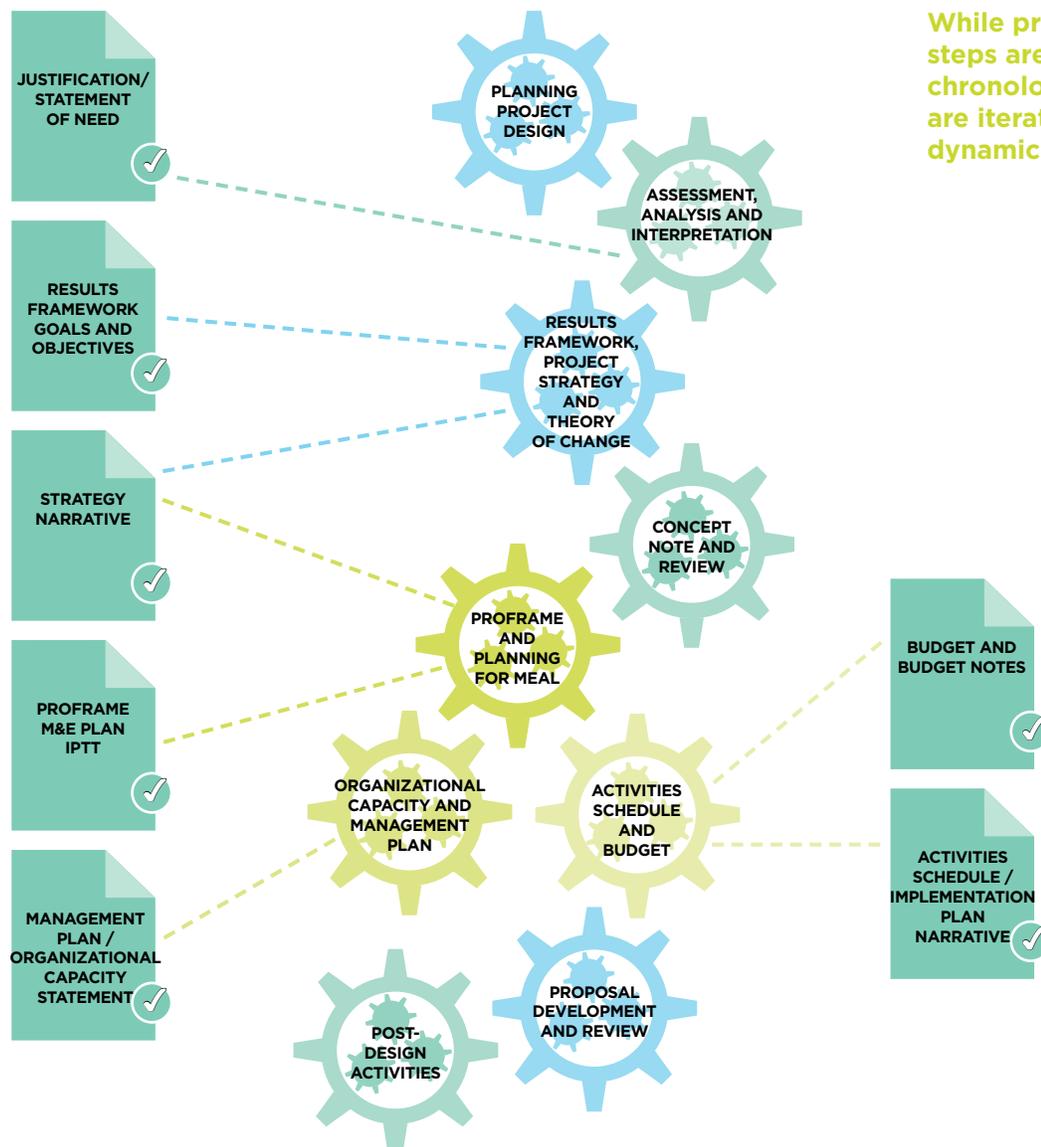
APPENDICES

Project design is a **process** and a **series of steps** that include:

- Planning the project design process and considering when and how to involve various stakeholders
- Planning and conducting an assessment
- Analyzing and interpreting assessment findings
- Setting project objectives, selecting the project strategy(ies) to achieve these objectives, and articulating the project's theory of change
- Constructing the project's Proframe
- Planning for project monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
- Listing and sequencing project activities
- Deciding on project staffing and management structures
- Developing a project budget
- Reviewing all project design decisions
- Learning from the project design experience

These steps are organized in *ProPack I*'s chapters. **Figure 1.2** illustrates the flow of these steps/chapters and shows how they link to elements of the project proposal.

**Figure 1.2: Project Design Process Map**



While project design steps are roughly chronological, they are iterative and dynamic in reality

While project design steps are roughly chronological, they are iterative and dynamic in reality. For example, a project design team will likely begin discussing a possible project strategy during the assessment. Preliminary budget work starts with project design planning and informs the project strategy selection. The staffing and management plan, activities schedule, and detailed project budget should generally be developed concurrently.

Following these steps of project design, and using other relevant guidelines such as CRS' MEAL Policies and Procedures, represents the “science” of project design. Adjusting these steps to the specific project context, fostering a spirit of inquiry and honest learning, ensuring broad participation, using astute judgment and applying knowledge gained from experience are the “art” of project design.

Project design steps and tools are largely similar across organizations, even if terms sometimes differ. **Appendix 1** includes a comparative glossary of project design terms, including those used by traditional CRS donors.

## SECTION 4: WHAT'S IN *PROPACK I*?

*ProPack I* provides practical guidance, tools and checklists for each step of project design. These steps are organized in **Chapters III to V** and **VII to IX**. In each of these chapters, you will find an **introduction** with:

- Standards of quality with clear measures of expected performance
- A brief discussion of why this particular step of project design is so important

The introduction is followed by “**how-to**”, **step-by-step sections** (indicated by a steps  symbol) with tools, tables, examples, lessons learned, practical tips and selected further resources and links. Internal CRS documents are marked with a key  symbol. These chapters end with two short sections highlighting how this project design step **links to the project proposal** (marked with a paperclip  symbol) and what, if anything, is **different in an emergency response** (marked with a  symbol)

### What is different in an emergency response?

In a rapid onset emergency, a quick response is often crucial to saving lives and assets, and restoring dignity. As a result, project design and proposal development are done under severe time pressure and decisions must often be made with incomplete information. Because of this, you may have to adjust project design steps for an emergency response - but you do not skip over them. In general, apply the “good enough” concept to project design in the early phases of an emergency response. “Good enough” does not mean settling for second best; rather, it means choosing simple, safe, quick, light and easy processes and methods to start with and improving them as needed over time (The Emergency Capacity Building Project 2007). *ProPack I* guidance on “What is different in an emergency response?” reflects [Sphere](#) standards and agency learning. These sections are relevant to the acute emergency phase of an emergency response, when time is short and the situation is fluid.

**Chapter II** focuses on five cross-cutting issues important to project design. It includes sections on: Partner collaboration and support, gender integration, peacebuilding and governance integration, beneficiary accountability, and learning. Each section includes standards of quality and a checklist with questions to help consider each issue across all steps in project design.

### ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

A schedule which breaks down the broad activity-level objectives into more specific actions, listing them in a Gantt chart (bar chart) that includes a timeframe, and names the person or organization responsible.

### PRACTICAL TIP:

Be sure to read the full chapter before consulting the last section “How is this different in an emergency response?” otherwise the information will not make sense.

### SPHERE STANDARDS

One of the most widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards for the delivery of quality humanitarian response. The standards are documented in *Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in humanitarian responses*, commonly known as *The Sphere Handbook* (The Sphere Project 2011).

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**Chapters VI and X** include concept note and proposal templates to be used when the donor does not have a preferred format. They also include checklists for internal reviews.

**Chapter XI** has guidance on how to conduct an after action review on the project design process.

**Blank templates** for all project design tools discussed in *ProPack I* can be downloaded [here](#) . Throughout the document, this cursor arrow symbol denotes internal CRS links where individual documents can be downloaded. The **appendix** includes comparative glossaries of terms, examples of participatory project design workshops, and brief descriptions of the most common conceptual frameworks.

## SECTION 5: HOW TO USE *PROPACK I*

### Navigate *ProPack I*

Capturing the dynamic, back-and-forth (iterative) aspects of real-life project design is a challenge in written guidance that presents topics in a linear narrative. View *ProPack's* step-by-step presentation as a way of providing information in bite-sized chunks. For example, when developing the project strategy (**Chapter V**), you will need to think about the project's budget (**Chapter IX**) at the same time. Flip back and forth between chapters and sections as needed.



#### NAVIGATING AROUND *PROPACK I*

In the printed version, the side tabs will guide you as you page through. In the PDF version, click on the tab to go to the chapter, or click on "Home" to return to the contents page.

### Telescope and adjust *ProPack I*

*ProPack I* is intended for use in all projects. *ProPack I's* project design guidance is appropriate whether CRS is the prime or sub-recipient. It applies to emergency response and recovery, development and advocacy projects. It is useful for designing projects for all donors, including those who issue prescriptive requests for applications (RFAs).

The idea of telescoping illustrates how *ProPack I* can be adapted to specific project contexts. A telescope can be adjusted in length, yet all the useful features of the instrument (e.g. lenses) remain. The person using the telescope is responsible for deciding how to shorten, lengthen or otherwise adjust it to get the best result in a given situation.

**Table 1a** lists a few examples of how project design can be telescoped for two very different contexts:

- A five-year Food for Peace Title II-funded multi-sector integrated project
- A one-year OFDA-funded emergency/transitional shelter project

#### TELESCOPE

The idea that project design steps should be suitably adapted to specific situations, but not skipped, in the same way that a telescope's tubes are extended or shortened to meet the user's needs, without losing any of the instrument's useful features in the process.

**Table 1a: Project design telescoping examples**

	<b>Title II Food for Peace Integrated 5-year Project</b>	<b>OFDA Shelter 1-year Project</b>
<b>Planning project design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six-month project design and proposal timeline</li> <li>• Stakeholder analysis</li> <li>• \$100,000+ project design budget approved by region</li> <li>• 10 staff from the country program, region and headquarters assigned to work on project design activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-week project design and proposal timeline</li> <li>• Stakeholder analysis</li> <li>• Modest project design budget approved by country representative</li> <li>• One shelter technical advisor leads project design activities; CRS and partner staff involved in project design team as needed</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment, analysis and interpretation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment plan spans 3 months</li> <li>• Three-person team collects secondary data</li> <li>• Primary data collection involves 30 hired enumerators in 50 purposively selected communities in one region</li> <li>• Two-day stakeholder workshop to further analyze and interpret data; conclusions validated in 10 communities with vulnerable subgroups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment plan spans 2.5 days</li> <li>• One person collects secondary data at cluster meetings</li> <li>• Primary data collection done by CRS staff and partners in three purposively selected communities in one district</li> <li>• Two-hour meeting to further analyze and interpret data with CRS and partners</li> </ul>
<b>Results framework, project strategy and theory of change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-day stakeholder workshop, led by CRS technical advisors, held to draft the results framework, assess project strategy options and develop an explicit theory of change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-hour meeting, led by shelter technical advisor and head of programs with partners, held to draft the results framework, assess project strategy options and develop an explicit theory of change</li> </ul>
<b>Concept note and review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal concept note reviewed by region and headquarters technical advisors; no concept note required by donor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept note reviewed internally and submitted to local OFDA representative for feedback and recommendations to proceed to full proposal</li> </ul>
<b>Proframe and planning for MEAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proframe drafted in a 3-day workshop</li> <li>• Plans for MEAL include an indicator performance tracking table, baseline, midterm and final evaluation, accountability mechanisms and operations research component led by a university partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proframe drafted in 2-hour meeting</li> <li>• Plans for MEAL include a real-time evaluation and accountability mechanisms</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational capacity and management plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With advice from deputy regional director/management quality, project design team develops a management and support structure for a consortium</li> <li>• Commodity technical advisor helps develop supply chain management plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With advice from the head of operations, the project design team develops a project organizational chart</li> <li>• Procurement manager helps identify best local sourcing, transport and costs for project goods and materials</li> </ul>
<b>Activities schedule and budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-day meeting to develop the activities schedule, budget and budget notes with help from regional finance officer</li> <li>• MEAL budget is 10 percent of total</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-hour meeting to develop the activities schedule, budget and budget notes with help from country program finance manager</li> <li>• MEAL budget is 3 percent of total</li> </ul>
<b>Proposal development and review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical leads complete drafts for assigned strategic objective; six-person country program, regional and HQ team writes the proposal</li> <li>• Proposal reviewed by region and HQ</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of programs writes the proposal with help from technical advisors</li> <li>• Proposal reviewed by region</li> </ul>
<b>Post-design activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After action review includes online survey followed by a 1-day meeting</li> <li>• Proposal binder with all meeting notes and internal documents; head of programs assigned responsibility for orienting chief of party if proposal successful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After action review includes online survey followed by a 1-hour meeting</li> <li>• Additional budget spreadsheet with detailed budget calculations and assumptions</li> </ul>

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As you can see from the table, both project design teams undertook the same series of steps to arrive at the proposal submission and learn from the process. What differed was the investment of time, human resources and funds for each step of project design. These two examples illustrate telescoping: how a project design effort is appropriately adjusted for each project situation and donor. Use your judgment and consult your head of programs, deputy regional director/ program quality and/or technical advisors when telescoping project design.

### Encourage the use of *ProPack I*

Good project design guidance alone does not improve project design – other actions are needed, such as supervisory support to address the “not enough time to design” syndrome. Moreover, dissemination of *ProPack I* alone will not strengthen knowledge, skills and attitudes for project design – especially if it stays on the shelf. Think about how you can encourage the use of *ProPack I* by its primary audience. A few examples follow:

- Project managers and project design teams consult *ProPack I* as a reference before and during a project design effort
- Trainers assign reading from *ProPack I* before a project design workshop/ orientation and use it as a learning support and resource during the workshop
- Project managers organize peer learning groups to read and discuss *ProPack I*; they compare guidance and standards with their own project design practices and then decide what needs to change in order to improve project design

Think about how you can encourage the use of *ProPack I* by its primary audience

## CHAPTER II: CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES IN PROJECT DESIGN

### INTRODUCTION

Chapter II is a special chapter, with checklists for five cross-cutting issues that apply to all steps of project design. These cross-cutting issues reflect CRS' guiding principles and industry best practice, respond to donor priorities and requirements, and further the agency strategy, including core competencies and the shift from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL).

This chapter includes the following sections:

- Section 1: Partner collaboration and support
- Section 2: Gender integration
- Section 3: Peacebuilding and governance integration
- Section 4: Beneficiary accountability
- Section 5: Learning

Use each section's checklists in two ways:

- Read them **when planning project design to anticipate** cross-cutting issues to consider at each step of project design
- Review them **during and after project design to evaluate** how well cross-cutting issues have been addressed

Checklist questions can be answered as “yes” or “no”. If the answer is “no”, use your judgment. Decide if the question is applicable, and if so, take action: review the relevant chapter or section for the step, get help from your head of programs or technical advisor, and consult suggested resources for more information. Key resources are listed immediately after the checklist.

**Five cross-cutting issues apply to all steps of project design**

**Get help from your head of programs or technical advisor**



### SECTION 1: PARTNER COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT

#### Standards of quality

- Project partner and consortium decisions are strategic, transparent, cost-effective and competitive, leveraging each partner's added value, and are made as early as possible, including before the release of a funding opportunity
- Findings from formal partner capacity assessments (including those done outside the project design context) inform project design decisions
- Partner involvement in project design reflects the principle of subsidiarity, each partner's capacity, and results of the stakeholder analysis
- Relevant capacity strengthening activities for partners (including CRS) are explicitly included in the project's activities schedule and budget. Projects with a special focus on capacity strengthening include a specific objective(s) and related project strategy

#### Importance of partner collaboration and support in project design

CRS' mission and partnership principles underpin partner collaboration and support within project design and across the project cycle. For CRS, partnership is a relationship based on mutual commitment and complementary purpose and values. These partnerships may be long-term in nature and go beyond one project or may be specific to a particular project.

CRS is committed to supporting local civil society actors (including Catholic Church and community-based organizations) and recognizes that strong collaborative relationships across civil society and the public and private sectors help achieve lasting positive change.

**SUBSIDIARITY**  
Catholic social teaching principle which holds that a higher level of government or organization should not perform any function or duty that can be handled more effectively at a lower level by people who are closer to the problem and have a better understanding of the issue.

**Strong collaborative relationships across civil society and the public and private sectors help achieve lasting positive change**

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Partner collaboration and support contribute to both project objectives and broader CRS goals. Project partner selection is often a key factor in the project’s ultimate success. And from a donor’s perspective, CRS’ strong relationships with local institutions often confer significant competitive advantages.

Project-related partnerships are context-specific. In some cases, CRS partners drive and own the project design process and CRS plays a supporting role. In other cases, CRS leads discussions and negotiations to select the most appropriate partners in the light of needed capacities. These decisions benefit from CRS’ ongoing dialogue with local institutions and knowledge of their strengths and challenges.

CRS has a long history of working in partnership with local organizations. More recently, CRS has been developing a greater diversity of partnerships. In particular, large funding opportunities often call for consortia that bring together partners with complementary strengths. A consortium may include local nongovernmental organizations that operate across a wide geographic area, technically specialized resource organizations, and/or organizations with global expertise. Some donors require a diverse and unique set of partners from the private sector, academic institutions and NGOs as well as local or national government.

As requested and needed by the partner, CRS is committed to providing capacity strengthening support which assists partners to function more effectively, work toward sustainability, and achieve their goals. Project-related capacity strengthening is based on organizational assessments, such as CRS’ Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument, or HOCAI, and others. Capacity strengthening within a project will vary based on partners’ roles and responsibilities in the project, strengths and areas for improvement.

During project design, key decisions are made related to partner collaboration and support. The most important are:

- Partnering decisions, which are discussed in **Chapter III** but may be made (or finalized) at later stages during project design, for instance once the assessment is completed or at strategy selection stage
- Project management roles and responsibilities of CRS and partners (**Chapter VIII**)
- Partner capacity strengthening needs and strategies (**Chapter VIII**)



**Consortia often bring together partners with complementary strengths**

**CAPACITY STRENGTHENING**  
A deliberate and continuous process that includes:

- Capacity building
- Accompaniment
- Institutional strengthening

**Table 2a: Checklist for partner collaboration and support in project design**

Project design step	Partner collaboration and support issues	Yes/No
<b>Planning project design</b>	<p><b>Determining project actors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you identified the most appropriate partners for this funding opportunity and its objectives according to added value and complementarity (e.g. technical capacity, sectoral expertise, local knowledge, reach, scale, network, reputation) or other criteria (e.g. donor preference for local versus INGO partners)?</li> <li>• Have you selected the optimal number of partners for this funding opportunity using a clear rationale?</li> <li>• Have you assessed partners’ eligibility for the funding opportunity?</li> </ul> <p><b>Building partner relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you engaged partners to discuss key funding opportunity information and implications should they wish to participate (e.g. eligibility requirements, proposal format)?</li> <li>• Have you shared each partner’s (including CRS’) vision, mission and values?</li> <li>• For projects with a consortium, have you discussed the <i>Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence</i> (CAFE)(CRS 2008a) standards for management, finance and administrative procedures?</li> </ul>	

Project design step	Partner collaboration and support issues	Yes/No
<b>Planning project design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For projects with a consortium, have partners agreed to the consortium structure, goals, roles and processes?</li> <li>If you have not yet finalized your decision to “team” with an organization, has a non-disclosure agreement been signed? If a teaming decision has been made, has a teaming agreement been signed? (competitive awards)</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussing and reviewing partner capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you vetted new partners in accordance with CRS guidance and protocols?</li> <li>In light of the funding opportunity requirements and findings from existing organizational assessments (partner profiles, HOCAI, sub-recipient financial management, intelligence or other sources), have you:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyzed the opportunities and risks related to partner capacity in order to make the partnership decision?</li> <li>Engaged partners to discuss their technical and organizational strengths?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Stakeholder analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you clearly determined the project partners’ involvement in each step of project design?</li> <li>Have you determined what support, capacity strengthening and resources (technical, financial, human) partners need in light of their involvement in the steps of project design?</li> </ul>	
<b>Assessment, analysis and interpretation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you determined how partners will lead, facilitate, and/or otherwise participate in assessment activities?</li> <li>If capacity strengthening is a key element of the project:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you conducted relevant partner organizational assessment, using HOCAI, sub-recipient financial management or another assessment tool?</li> <li>Have you involved partner leadership in identifying or confirming priority capacity strengthening needs for their organization?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Results framework, project strategy and theory of change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the proposed project strategy leverage CRS and partner experiences and added value?</li> <li>If capacity strengthening is a key project strategy:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does it respond to capacity assessment findings from HOCAI, sub-recipient financial management or another assessment tool?</li> <li>Have you involved partner leadership in developing this strategy?</li> <li>Does capacity strengthening require specific objectives and if so at what level (output, intermediate result, strategic objective)?</li> <li>Do you have a robust theory of change for expected outcomes such as civil society development, changed organizational practices, etc.?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Proframe and planning for MEAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you involved partners in developing indicators to measure capacity strengthening results?</li> <li>As relevant, do the indicators measure progress and outcomes in alignment with HOCAI and sub-recipient financial management capacities?</li> </ul>	
<b>Organizational capacity and management plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you negotiated and communicated partner roles and responsibilities for project management and implementation?</li> <li>Is the partner appropriately staffed given its proposed role in the project? If not, is this addressed in the staffing plan and budget?</li> <li>Are CRS’ project staffing plans appropriate for needed relationship management and partner capacity strengthening?</li> </ul>	
<b>Activities schedule and budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you engaged partner leadership to approve the activities schedule and budget as it affects their organization?</li> <li>If the project involves a consortium, does the activities schedule include start-up activities to engage partners, e.g. a launch workshop?</li> <li>Have you listed and budgeted for all capacity strengthening activities?</li> </ul>	

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## Lessons learned

- Build relationships with and knowledge of potential project partners through ongoing dialogue, networking, mapping and intelligence. This is important for many reasons, including managing tight project design deadlines.
- Consider hidden costs in selecting project partners. Lowered costs associated with a local partner's structure or practices, e.g. no expatriate staff costs and no full recovery of appropriate indirect costs<sup>1</sup> may be offset by additional oversight costs. Low staff salaries or administrative support costs may make a cost application more competitive but may reflect low implementation capacity and/or increased risks.

**Build relationships with potential project partners**

### Further resources, tools and links

- [Capacity strengthening sample results frameworks](#) (CRS 2013b)  Several examples of results frameworks for capacity strengthening projects.
- [Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence \(CAFE\)](#) (CRS 2008a) See in particular the pre-project discussion among potential consortium members (Pages 19-22).
- [Know Yourself - Intel Management Tool](#) (CRS 2012c) This tool from the CRS Intel Toolkit (available on the CRS Business Development Community site) helps CRS assess its strengths and weaknesses when considering consortium formation.
- [Institutional strengthening: Building strong management processes](#) (CRS 2011b)  Provides guidance and tools on a number of institutional strengthening topics. Chapter 2 includes the [Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument \(HOCAI\)](#) tool.
- [Sub-recipient Financial Management Policy](#). CRS policy POL-FIN-SFM-023 (December 2013).  The practical tools associated with it are available at CRS' [Global Finance Policy site](#).
- [Typology of relationships](#) (CRS 2014d)  Helps staff reflect on partnership relations that may be appropriate for different types of organizations in different situations.

## SECTION 2: GENDER INTEGRATION

### Standards of quality

- Men and women (and possibly boys and girls) are appropriately involved throughout project design.
- All project assessments include a gender analysis, and its findings inform decisions on the project objectives, strategy, sex-disaggregated indicators and other MEAL elements, activities and budget.
- CRS staff and partners design high-quality, gender-responsive projects; some may be gender transformative.

### Importance of gender integration in project design

Severe gender inequality and inequity remain throughout the world, including conditions leading to maternal mortality, unequal access to and ownership of land, gender-based violence, and forms and frequency of HIV infection. Gender integration is important to achieve integral human development (IHD) and gender equality. But it is also important to more effectively achieve project outcomes. If gender roles, norms and dynamics are not considered in project design, projects are likely to miss opportunities to engage both men and women in project activities and to improve the lives of women, men, boys and girls; worse, they may deepen existing gender inequalities.



**Men and women (and possibly boys and girls) are appropriately involved throughout project design**

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1. Proposed changes to US Government regulations will allow for a minimum 10 percent indirect cost recovery by local organizations.

**GENDER ANALYSIS**  
Examining the differences in women's and men's lives, including those that lead to social and economic inequality.

Many donors, including USAID, have enacted policies and procedures making gender analysis mandatory before projects can be approved. Other agencies require a gender checklist (e.g. Gates Foundation) or will only fund projects that achieve a certain score on a specific gender tool, such as the Gender Marker (UNICEF and OCHA). (See *Further resources* at the end of the section for more information on donor-related gender documents and tools.)

CRS highlights three different levels of gender integration: gender neutral, gender responsive and gender transformative, but these should be conceived as stages along a gender integration continuum. **Table 2b** below describes and contrasts these three levels.

**Table 2b: Levels of gender integration**

	Gender neutral	Gender responsive	Gender transformative
<b>Brief description</b>	Ignores gender considerations and power dynamics among men, women, boys and girls.	Identifies the gender roles, needs and realities of women, men, boys and girls. Takes these into account as relevant to project outcomes.	Examines and addresses women and men's gender roles and practical needs <u>as well as</u> the underlying structural and systemic issues that have created and sustained unequal power relations between women and men.
<b>Project strategy</b>	Project strategy does not affect gender norms, roles and relations.  In some situations, project strategies may unintentionally reinforce existing injustices.	Project strategy takes into account gender roles and responsibilities and recognizes different needs and abilities as a means to reach project objectives. Project strategy does not aim to change gender relations or injustices.	Project strategy aims to transform gender roles and to strengthen or create systems, norms and dynamics to promote more gender-equitable relations between men and women.
<b>Example</b>	Project aims to improve household food security. Strategies include improved seed and farmer training on improved techniques to increase crop yield. Project results in 50 percent increase in household production and 20 percent reduction in duration of hunger period. Project activities and MEAL targeted "farming households" without looking into male and female roles or benefits within these units.	Project aims to improve household food security. Separate trainings for men and women members of target households address their different roles and responsibilities in the agricultural cycle. Women's groups were engaged in homestead vegetable production and nutritional education. New practices increased household production and food security. The project did not alter traditional gender roles or decision-making.	Project aims to improve household food security by promoting more equitable division of workload and food resources within households. Strategy involved men and women in trainings on all aspects of the agricultural cycle, to promote sharing of workloads and mutual support. Separate awareness-raising sessions lead by male and female staff discussed workloads and nutritional needs of all household members. Project evaluation found that men's perspectives on women's roles had changed. The project resulted in increased women's influence in family and community decision-making.

**Table 2c: Checklist: Gender integration in project design**

Project design step	Gender integration issues	Yes/No
<b>Planning project design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the project design team (including those carrying out the assessment) include men and women?</li> <li>Will male and female stakeholders be involved in each step of project design?</li> <li>Do CRS and partners have the capacity and commitment to design gender-responsive or gender-transformative projects? If no, have you planned capacity strengthening activities for this?</li> <li>Have you considered donor policies, strategies and requirements for gender integration and the implications for project design?</li> <li>If your project aims to be gender transformative, have you chosen a relevant, gender-sensitive conceptual framework? (See <b>Appendix 3</b> for resources on these frameworks)</li> </ul>	
<b>Assessment, analysis and interpretation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do assessment methods allow you to collect sex-disaggregated data and information?</li> <li>Does primary data collection allow for hearing the voices of women, men, boys and girls (e.g. time and location of interviews/ focus group discussions are convenient and safe for all, especially if sensitive topics addressed)?</li> <li>Are there potential protection risks you should plan to mitigate?</li> <li>Is it clear how you will consult men, women, boys and girls about:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Gender roles and responsibilities</b> within households and communities, including productive and reproductive workloads and mobility?</li> <li><b>Access to and control of assets, resources and opportunities</b>, including livelihoods assets (health, education, income), and obstacles in seeking services?</li> <li><b>Decision-making and power relations</b> at household, community, regional and/or national levels?</li> <li><b>Needs, priorities and perspectives</b>, including practical needs and strategic interests of men, women, boys and girls and their ideas on appropriate and sustainable ways of addressing needs?</li> <li><b>Participation and leadership</b> in community activities and associations, leadership views on gender equity, preferred communication channels and barriers to women's leadership?</li> <li><b>Knowledge, cultural beliefs and perceptions</b> including access to knowledge and social, religious and cultural attitudes and norms which affect women, men, boys and girls differently?</li> <li><b>Legal frameworks, laws or other barriers</b> that prevent women and men, boys and girls from having equal opportunities?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Do analysis matrices compare responses from women, men, girls and boys?</li> <li>Do problem trees identify problems, causes, and effects specific to women, men, girls or boys?</li> <li>Has the analysis and interpretation identified priority issues and relative vulnerabilities of men, women, boys and girls?</li> </ul>	
<b>Results framework, project strategy and theory of change</b>	<p>Do project objectives reflect gender differences identified during the analysis of assessment findings?            If gender transformative, have you identified objectives that address gender differences and contribute to a more equitable distribution of benefits?            Is it clear how the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focuses on women, men, girls and boys?</li> <li>Addresses gender-based constraints and opportunities so that women, men, boys and girls participate, access and benefit equitably from the project?</li> <li>Considers and mitigates possible time and workload burdens that project activities may place on women, men, boys and girls?</li> <li>Promotes equity in participation, leadership and decision-making, as feasible and appropriate?</li> <li>Mitigates gender-related protection risks associated with potential project activities (e.g. women going to market)?</li> <li>Considers gender-related national or donor policies, as applicable?</li> <li>If intentionally gender transformative: Empowers women and transforms gender roles and relations?</li> </ul>	

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Project design step	Gender integration issues	Yes/No
<b>Proframe and planning for MEAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are indicators at each level disaggregated by sex (and other relevant characteristics)?</li> <li>In identifying critical assumptions, have you identified gender-related risks? If yes, have you made adjustments to project strategy or activities to mitigate these risks?</li> <li>Do plans for MEAL:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure male and female participation?</li> <li>Monitor for possible adverse gender-related outcomes or protection risks that may arise?</li> <li>Measure the effectiveness and ultimate impact of the project for women, men, boys and girls?</li> <li>Share and document experience with gender integration, such as lessons learned and success stories?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Organizational capacity and management plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do project staff have needed experience and competencies for gender-responsive programming?</li> <li>Is there an appropriate balance of men and women among project staff at all levels, especially for field-based CRS or partner staff?</li> <li>Is additional expertise needed for relevant project activities?</li> </ul>	
<b>Activities schedule and budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the budget take into account the need for balanced gender field or partner staff, including MEAL staff?</li> <li>Does the schedule of activities reflect possible differences in men and women's differing roles and availability to participate?</li> <li>Have you listed and budgeted for activities for project staff capacity strengthening in gender-responsive or gender-transformative programming, as appropriate?</li> </ul>	

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### Further resources, tools and links

#### CRS resources

- [Peacebuilding, governance and gender assessments: A basic guide for busy practitioners](#) (CRS 2015e)
- [CRS' global gender strategy](#) (CRS 2013d)
- [CRS Southern Africa guidelines for gender-responsive programming](#) (CRS 2010a) Includes a wealth of information and tools including detailed gender check lists for each phase of the project cycle and sector-specific guidelines.
- [A sample gender analysis: Abridged version](#) (CRS 2013f) Gender analysis case study of a food security program in CRS/Ethiopia, focusing on key findings and recommendations.
- [Getting to zero: Diverse methods for male involvement in HIV care and treatment](#) (CRS 2012a) Good example of male involvement in addressing gender barriers.

#### Donor references

- GSDRC's [Applied Knowledge Services site](#) Brief descriptions of different donors' perspectives on gender and links to specific donor resources.

The following documents outline the US Government's emphasis on gender integration:

- [Gender equality and female empowerment policy](#) (USAID 2012c) Provides a good overview of USAID's approach to gender.
- [Tips for conducting a gender analysis at the activity or project level: Additional help for ADS Chapter 201](#) (USAID 2011) Includes useful questions to guide gender analysis.
- [Gender checklist](#) (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 2008a)
- [Gender impact strategy for agricultural development](#) (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 2008b)

## Further resources, tools and links (cont)

### Other

- *A guide to gender-analysis frameworks* (Oxfam GB 2005) Includes the Harvard Analytical Framework, the Moser Framework, the Gender Analysis Matrix (GAM), the Women's Empowerment (Longwe) Framework, the Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis.
- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Sub-Working Group on Gender adopted the Gender Marker scoring tool. This tool is applied to proposals for all UN appeals and pooled funds. The *Gender Marker* (IASC 2012) helps check how well a humanitarian relief project has integrated gender. Using a scale, the tool assesses whether women, men, girls and boys will benefit equally from a project or if gender equality will be advanced. If the project has the potential to contribute to gender equality, the tool predicts whether the results are likely to be limited or significant.
- *Gender Analysis, Assessment and Audit Manual & Toolkit* (Meyers 2012) Developed for ACDI-VOCA staff, this resource helps in conducting three types of gender studies: assessment, analysis, and audit. Includes tools, field work and data analysis.
- *Toolkit: Gender issues in monitoring and evaluation of agriculture* (The World Bank 2012)
- *Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) Resource Center* Provides key resources for measuring the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agriculture sector, as well as women's empowerment relative to men within their households. Refer to the WEAI for any agriculture project, especially for the USG's Feed the Future (FtF) applications or in FtF priority countries.

## SECTION 3: PEACEBUILDING AND GOVERNANCE INTEGRATION

### Standards of quality

- All project assessments include "good enough" conflict and governance analyses
- All project strategies are conflict sensitive and reflect Do No Harm principles
- Projects that seek to transform conflict develop objectives and strategies based on a thorough conflict analysis

### Importance of peacebuilding and governance integration in project design

Cultivating just and peaceful societies is part of CRS' mission statement and an essential component of integral human development. CRS' IHD approach suggests that integrating peacebuilding and good governance into the design of development and humanitarian projects will help to produce more enduring positive impacts on people's lives.

Governance integration helps ensure that projects increase equitable and inclusive access to and influence on systems and structures that affect the lives of the people served by CRS (CRS 2013e). CRS projects may:

- Support civil society efforts to increase citizen demand for good governance
- Strengthen government capacities to provide more efficient and equitable services

Peacebuilding includes a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society to address causes of violence before, during and after violent conflict. Conflict is not always violent, however, and can be present whenever individuals or groups perceive their interests as mutually incompatible and act accordingly. Peacebuilding integration within project design depends on whether the project aims to be conflict transformative or conflict sensitive.

**Table 2d** below compares these levels of peacebuilding integration. **Table 2e** provides a handy checklist on how to integrate peacebuilding and governance into the various stages of project design.

**EQUITY**  
The fair and just management of institutions, distribution of public services and collective goods, and formation and implementation of public policy.



**Peacebuilding includes a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society**

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**Table 2d: Levels of peacebuilding integration in project design**

	Conflict sensitive	Conflict transformative
<b>Assessment, analysis and Interpretation</b>	“Good enough” conflict analysis (e.g. using 3P or Do No Harm framework). See Appendix 3 for more information on common conceptual frameworks.	Comprehensive conflict analysis.
<b>Results framework, project strategy and theory of change</b>	Objectives and strategy demonstrate attention to conflict, in particular how project activities or resources could worsen or diminish tensions (Do No Harm analysis).	Specific strategic objective(s) related to conflict transformation (integrated or stand-alone), reflected in project strategy and theory of change.
<b>Proframe and planning for MEAL</b>	Include light conflict and context monitoring to ensure the project does not have unintended adverse consequences on the conflict context.	Include indicators to evaluate how the project directly contributed to reducing conflict / building peace.

**Table 2e: Checklist: Peacebuilding and governance integration in project design**

Project design step	Peacebuilding and governance integration issues	Yes/No
<b>Planning project design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you considered donor expectations and priorities related to governance and/or peacebuilding?</li> <li>Have you chosen a relevant framework for governance and/or peacebuilding?</li> <li>Will stakeholders who represent perspectives of opposing sides of conflict be involved in project design?</li> </ul>	
<b>Assessment, analysis and interpretation</b>	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you collected and analyzed secondary data to identify:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political factors affecting how people and government interact to make decisions?</li> <li>The type of government in power and implications for the project strategy?</li> <li>Significant political trends and their implications for the project strategy?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Have you consulted key informants, partners and community members to gather information on:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degree of accountability of public institutions?</li> <li>Degree of inclusiveness of governance and decision-making?</li> <li>Strength of the rule of law?</li> <li>Stability of consensus on basic governance system and citizen’s rights?</li> <li>Degree and perceived fairness of political competition?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Peacebuilding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do assessment plans and questions consider:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where the conflict is taking place?</li> <li>The history of conflict in the locality and current trends?</li> <li>Conflict-related issues that people face?</li> <li>Key actors and supporters driving conflict, mitigating conflict, supporting peace, and their interests and motivations?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Did you use appropriate frameworks (e.g. Do No Harm) during analysis and interpretation?</li> <li>Does the analysis consider:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Causes of conflict, social divisions and violence?</li> <li>Triggers that could escalate conflict (dividers)?</li> <li>Windows of opportunity to address or respond to conflict (connectors)?</li> <li>Actors’ capacities for peacebuilding or conflict mitigation?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

Project design step	Peacebuilding and governance integration issues	Yes/No
<b>Results framework, project strategy and theory of change</b>	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you analyzed how project strategies or activities may reinforce or challenge existing governance structures, systems and policies (whether at grassroots, community, regional or national levels)?</li> <li>Does the project put in place mechanisms to ensure that project-created/ strengthened structures and systems are accountable to the people they represent or serve?</li> </ul> <p><b>Peacebuilding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are conflict analysis findings reflected in project targeting, objectives, strategies and assumptions, including risk mitigation measures as appropriate?</li> <li>Do project strategies consider Do No Harm and protection issues?</li> </ul>	
<b>Proframe and planning for MEAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do accountability mechanisms enable safe reporting of governance issues?</li> <li>Do plans for MEAL monitor beneficiary satisfaction with project delivery of services and outcomes?</li> <li>As relevant, do indicators measure changes in relationships, access to services and resources, and power and conflict dynamics?</li> <li>Do plans for MEAL monitor conflict risks that may arise?</li> </ul>	
<b>Organizational capacity and management plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do project staff and/or partners have required experience and competencies in peacebuilding and governance?</li> <li>Is there appropriate representation of contending groups among project staff and/or project partners?</li> </ul>	
<b>Activities schedule and budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As relevant, have you planned and budgeted for project staff capacity strengthening in peacebuilding and/or governance-related competencies?</li> </ul>	

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### Lessons learned

- Pay attention to conflict dynamics in all projects. When violence erupts, human lives are destroyed and development gains are lost.
- When improving service delivery through decentralized government structures, carefully investigate which level of government has decision-making authority over revenue generation and allocation.
- To ensure equitable access to service delivery, consider how CRS and partners can build a constituency for reform, i.e. mobilize citizens in support of proposed changes in unjust systems and structures.

**When violence erupts, human lives are destroyed and development gains are lost**

### Further resources, tools and links

- CDA's *Reflecting on Peace Practice program* aims to improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding practice and to strengthen program design, monitoring and evaluation.
- The "Do No Harm" framework for analyzing the impact of assistance on conflict* (CDA 2004)
- Peacebuilding, governance and gender assessments: A basic guide for busy practitioners* (CRS 2015e)
- How-to guide to conflict sensitivity* (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012) Practical guidance and tools for "good enough" conflict analysis, conflict sensitive programming (including in emergency responses) and institutional assessment and capacity building.
- Integrating peacebuilding into humanitarian and development programming: Practical guidance on designing effective, holistic peacebuilding projects* (Rogers 2010)
- Conflict assessment and peacebuilding planning: Toward a participatory approach to human security* (Schirch 2013)
- Peacebuilding: A Caritas training manual* (Neufeldt et al 2002)
- Theories of change and indicator development in conflict management and mitigation* (USAID, DCHA and CMM, June 2010)

## SECTION 4: BENEFICIARY ACCOUNTABILITY

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### Standards of quality

- Project design plans include specific activities and time for consultation with potential project participants at relevant steps in the project design process
- Project strategy, activities and MEAL plans enable the most vulnerable and marginalized people to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them
- Project activities and MEAL plans include mechanisms for transparent, two-way communication with the communities CRS serves

**Project strategy, activities and MEAL plans enable the most vulnerable and marginalized people to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them**

### Importance of beneficiary accountability and project design

Most NGOs have processes and activities that meet the accountability needs of more powerful stakeholders such as donors or national governments. Accountability to beneficiaries can be challenging in practice because of the imbalance of who controls and manages resources. Putting in place beneficiary accountability systems can help to correct this balance and create right relationships.

Participation and beneficiary accountability are interrelated; both align with CRS' principle of subsidiarity. Participatory processes encourage a variety of community voices to be heard, including those most affected by a project. In turn, this promotes ownership and helps ensure the project strategy is useful, relevant and sustainable. Beneficiaries in communities and institutions are more receptive when their voices are heard, when they help make decisions, when project information and decision-making are clearly communicated and transparent, and when their opinions and contributions are sought through formal systems.



**ICT4D**  
Consider how ICT4D can be used to increase beneficiary accountability, e.g. mass SMS messages, web portals, etc.

**Table 2f: Checklist: Beneficiary accountability in project design**

Project design step	Beneficiary accountability issues	Yes/No
<b>Planning project design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the project design timeline allow for a participatory assessment process (e.g. space and time for community entry and communication, time for verifying assessment findings with community groups)?</li> </ul>	
<b>Assessment, analysis and interpretation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you trained project design/assessment team members in participatory assessment and related attitudes and practices (how to demonstrate respect, how to communicate, etc.)?</li> <li>• Have you clearly communicated information to stakeholders about the assessment and the likelihood of project funding to avoid creating unrealistic expectations?</li> <li>• Do assessment methods allow communities, organizations and institutions to determine who is most vulnerable, has the greatest need, where assistance is needed and ways to triangulate this?</li> <li>• Does the assessment include participatory methods to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect data from identified vulnerable groups?</li> <li>• Analyze this data in a way that disaggregates findings by vulnerable groups, gender or other characteristics?</li> <li>• Communicate with and engage potential beneficiaries to validate assessment findings?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Results framework, project strategy and theory of change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the project strategy:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to the needs of the most vulnerable and affected?</li> <li>• Integrate expressed, felt, relative and normative perspectives on needs? (See <b>Figure 4.2</b>)</li> <li>• Include a clearly defined beneficiary selection process and targeting criteria (or plans to develop them?)</li> <li>• Encourage management by project beneficiaries and safeguard possible abuse of power by influential community members?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Is the project strategy formulated so that it can be adapted as per beneficiary feedback during implementation?</li> </ul>	

Project design step	Beneficiary accountability issues	Yes/No
<b>Proframe and planning for MEAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do plans for MEAL:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include consultation for project indicators that reflect male and female community member definitions of project success, as feasible and appropriate?</li> <li>Include indicators on community satisfaction with both project process (targeting, delivery mechanisms, staff attitudes, etc.) and results?</li> <li>Describe feedback and response mechanisms that are accessible and appropriate for the given context or plans to develop them with beneficiary input at project start-up?</li> <li>Describe how feedback will be addressed?</li> <li>Include mechanisms to respond to community information needs regarding project progress and results (e.g. use of participatory methods in monitoring, evaluation and learning)?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Organizational capacity and management plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do project staff have clear roles and responsibilities for beneficiary accountability across the life of the project, including management of the community feedback mechanism?</li> <li>Do project governance bodies include beneficiary representation either through relevant community-based organizations or individual representatives?</li> </ul>	
<b>Activities schedule and budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the activities schedule include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project staff training in accountability principles and practices?</li> <li>Development of a comprehensive communication plan and feedback mechanism with project beneficiaries at project start-up?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Does the project budget include costs related to communication and feedback mechanisms (e.g. toll-free phone line, notice boards, flyers/posters, SMS systems, etc.)?</li> </ul>	

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### Lessons learned

- Ensure that CRS and partner staff at all levels (from leadership to field staff) understand and value beneficiary accountability.
- Be intentional about communication procedures across the life of the project: train staff as needed before/during the project design phase and again at project start-up (for newly hired staff) and make a comprehensive communication plan that spans project start-up, implementation and close-out.

### Further resources, tools and links

- [CAFOD Accountability Framework \(CAF\)](#) (CAFOD 2012) Summarizes CAFOD’s internal and external standards, codes, guidelines, values and principles which ensure accountability to stakeholders and enable delivery of quality international programs.
- CRS [MEAL Policies and Procedures site’s Beneficiary Accountability page](#)  Guidance and tools to help implement Policy No. 6 on Beneficiary Accountability.
- The website of the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project, of which CRS is a member, has materials on beneficiary accountability for humanitarian projects, including [ECB key elements of accountability](#) (ECB 2010).
- [Impact measurement and accountability in emergencies: The good enough guide](#) (ECB 2007) Tool 14 helps develop accountability plans for project stakeholders that can be included in a project proposal and budget.

## SECTION 5: LEARNING

### Standards of quality

- Project design plans demonstrate systematic use of learning: Lessons learned, literature reviews, consultations with colleagues and technical advisors, etc.
- Project design processes make appropriate use of research partners to complement CRS capacity

- The project’s activities schedule and budget include time and resources for learning, including project staff orientation, regular (e.g. quarterly) participatory project reflections and other events

### The importance of learning in project design

Learning can be defined as a continuous and intentional process of analyzing a wide variety of information sources and knowledge. As illustrated in the project cycle diagram (Figure 1.1 in Chapter I) learning is both generated and used throughout the project cycle, including in project design. Donors, such as USAID, emphasize the importance of learning for adaptive management and want to see it integrated into projects that they support.

During project design, teams:

- Use learning to make decisions (e.g. examining lessons learned, conducting a literature review, talking to knowledgeable technical advisors to develop a project strategy).
- Generate learning (e.g. producing assessment and after-action reports and planning for learning within the project itself).

In this way, learning helps a project design team to develop an effective and efficient project strategy that produces the desired impact. Evaluative thinking (a process of critical inquiry and a belief in the value of evidence) helps a project design team carefully reflect, identify assumptions, ask thoughtful questions and pursue deeper understanding in order to make better decisions and plans.

**Table 2g: Checklist: Learning in project design**

Project design step	Learning issues: <u>Using learning during project design and generating learning from project design</u>	Yes/No
<b>Planning project design</b>	<p><b>Using learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you oriented the project design team in learning principles and practices and created a safe environment that promotes evaluative thinking within the team?</li> <li>• Have you collected and considered lessons from past similar project design processes (from reports and colleagues)?</li> <li>• Does the project design timeline include activities for identifying and reflecting on relevant lessons from past experience?</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the project design timeline include plans for an after action review after the process is complete?</li> <li>• If the donor requires an operations research (OR) component, have you:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified an appropriate research partner – or a process for doing so?</li> <li>• Clarified how the research partner will be involved in the project design process?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Assessment, analysis and interpretation</b>	<p><b>Using learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do assessment plans include time for a literature review, secondary data collection and consultation of expert informants?</li> <li>• Do assessment and analysis plans ensure that different voices, experiences and opinions are heard?</li> <li>• Do plans for analysis and interpretation allow time for collective, evaluative thinking to identify possible assumptions and beliefs?</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you planned how to document and share assessment findings more broadly after the proposal is submitted?</li> <li>• Have you noted surprising assessment findings that could contribute to developing a project learning agenda?</li> </ul>	

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING**  
A continuous process that enhances an organization’s collective ability to accept, make sense of, and respond to internal and external change.

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Project design step	Learning issues: <b>Using learning during project design and generating learning from project design</b>	Yes/No
<b>Results framework, project strategy and theory of change</b>	<p><b>Using learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the process for identifying the most appropriate strategy option include:</li> <li>Time to reflect and build on lessons learned from past similar experience?</li> <li>Consultation of relevant final evaluations, lessons-learned documents and/or people from other countries and regions?</li> <li>Did relevant experts, practitioners and others outside the project design team review the draft results framework, theory of change and strategy?</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the literature review reveals gaps in the evidence base, have you considered these in developing the project's learning agenda?</li> <li>Does the TOC generate any testable hypotheses that could be included in the project's learning agenda or operations research?</li> </ul>	
<b>Proframe and Planning for MEAL</b>	<p><b>Using learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do plans for MEAL reflect lessons learned from past similar projects?</li> <li>Do project indicators reflect relevant globally accepted indicators and those required by donors?</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the project include plans for all required learning activities as per <i>MEAL Policies and Procedures</i>?</li> <li>Have you planned how to use critical assumptions for the project's learning agenda?</li> <li>Do the plans for MEAL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe reflection and critical thinking processes (e.g. quarterly meetings to reflect on monitoring data, responses to beneficiary feedback)?</li> <li>Describe how project strategies may be adapted in light of learning during project implementation, especially for intermediate-result-level objectives?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Do plans for project evaluations explain how findings will inform project decision-making, strategic directions and subsequent project strategies?</li> </ul>	
<b>Organizational capacity and management plan</b>	<p><b>Using learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the management plan reflect best practices and lessons learned from previous consortia arrangements?</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do project staff and/or partners have needed competencies, support and time to implement the project's proposed learning activities? If not, have appropriate external research partners been identified to fill these gaps?</li> </ul>	
<b>Activities schedule and budget</b>	<p><b>Using learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the activities schedule (sequencing, time required) reflect lessons learned from previous similar projects?</li> <li>Does the budget reflect unit costs, actual spending and lessons learned from past similar projects?</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the activities schedule include dedicated time for structured learning activities, such as quarterly project meetings or operations research?</li> <li>Does the budget include funds for learning activities, as needed, including staff orientation, participatory meetings, collaboration with a research partner, etc.?</li> </ul>	
<b>After action review</b>	<p><b>Using learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do plans for the review incorporate relevant lessons from previous, similar efforts?</li> <li>Have you telescoped the review so that it is appropriate and relevant to the context and circumstances?</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you made plans to document and share review findings?</li> </ul>	

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## Lessons learned

- Learning does not happen by itself. Coach staff to be intentional about learning. Create time and space for reflection and dialogue to produce learning that is used to take action and adapt. Create a supportive organizational culture where it is the norm to share errors and say what went wrong and why.
- Be aware of the impact of intellectual property and donor requirements governing ownership of a project's learning products (reports, tools, etc.). Consult CRS award management and legal compliance experts to develop agreements with external research partners when needed.

**Create a supportive organizational culture where it is the norm to share errors and say what went wrong and why**

### Further resources, tools and links

- [CRS Agreements policy and procedure](#) POL-OOD-001.  For agreements with external research partners.
- [CRS MEAL Policies and Procedures](#)  Policy No. 8 - Learning
- [Guidance on how to improve our lessons learned practices](#) (CRS 2015d) 
- [Knowledge Solutions](#) (Asian Development Bank) Quick reference guides to tools, methods, and approaches that propel development and enhance its effects.
- [Learning with purpose: Adding value to program impact and influence at scale](#) (Sharrock et al 2015) 
- [Reflective peacebuilding: A planning, monitoring, and learning handbook](#) (Lederach et al 2007) See Chapters II, III, XI, XII and XIII.
- [Tools for knowledge and learning: A guide for development and humanitarian organisations](#) (Ramalingam 2006)

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## CHAPTER III: PLANNING PROJECT DESIGN

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes six sections:

Section 1: Prepare for project design

Section 2: Conduct a stakeholder analysis

Section 3: Develop the project design timeline and form a project design team

Section 4: Select conceptual frameworks for project design

Section 5: How is this different in an emergency response?

Section 6: Tables and examples

#### Standards of quality

- Project design teams appropriately involve identified stakeholders throughout all steps of project design
- In all circumstances, CRS staff develop a project design timeline when planning project design
- CRS staff consistently use conceptual framework(s) to inform relevant steps of project design

#### Why is this step of project design important?

The saying “Failing to plan is planning to fail” applies to project design. Some donors give only 35 days to develop and submit a proposal so it is important to initiate and rigorously plan project design as early as possible, and practice good communication with project design stakeholders.

As shown in CRS’ project cycle (**Figure 1.1 in Chapter I**), project design begins after identifying needs and funding opportunities and when a preliminary “go” decision is made.

In making a “go” decision, CRS has decided that the project is strategic and appropriate, that project design (and proposal development) is feasible and worth the investment of cost and staff time, and that if funded, CRS has or can acquire the human, technical and management capacity to implement the project as currently envisioned. Ignoring these factors can increase project management risks and possibly damage CRS’ reputation. If the “go” decision is tentative, project design plans must include one or more decision points (e.g. when the assessment is complete) to revisit this go decision and decide whether to stop or continue the project design effort.

Identifying and reviewing donor or other set parameters (e.g. budget envelope) is a key step when planning project design. Identifying these parameters early on will help focus project design planning and keep expectations in line with reality.

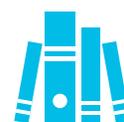
The purpose of a stakeholder analysis at the start of project design is to help identify:

- Who to involve in the process of project design
- When and how they should be involved

This ensures an efficient and strategic participatory process. Meaningful stakeholder participation in project design puts into practice CRS’ principles of subsidiarity and right relationships, enhances accountability, improves project ownership and, in turn, the likelihood of ultimate project success.



**In all circumstances, CRS staff develop a project design timeline when planning project design**



**Information on making a go/no-go decision can be found in TAG**

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A project design timeline is a planning tool for all projects that can be updated regularly and used to communicate with project stakeholders, including collaborating partners. For competitive projects, the project design timeline is done in conjunction with a proposal checklist. Both use stakeholder analysis findings about who should be involved and how, assigning specific roles and responsibilities to all members of the project design team who will lead the process and make key decisions.

Selecting an appropriate conceptual framework is another project design planning decision. Using conceptual frameworks in project design helps make sense of people's complex realities. Conceptual frameworks visualize the issue or problem, its key determinants, and their cause-and-effect relationships. Because conceptual frameworks are based on robust research by experts, using them can help overcome personal biases or preconceived ideas of what explains a problem (see **Appendix 3** for examples of common conceptual frameworks). When planning an assessment, conceptual frameworks help you to consider all potential factors to be investigated; then to organize and analyze situation-specific information on these factors. When developing the results framework, conceptual frameworks help make assumptions explicit; this will help the project design team make well-informed, confident project strategy choices and develop a robust theory of change. And this helps ensure that the project will effectively address core problems and bring about positive change. Selecting appropriate conceptual framework(s) at the start of project design helps promote coherence among these linked steps.

### The value of conceptual frameworks in project design

An agronomist may explain child malnutrition as a lack of food. By considering the UNICEF conceptual framework (see Figure 4.1), the agronomist will see that household food insecurity is only one possible cause of malnutrition. Other factors include disease (sanitation and hygiene, health services) and inadequate maternal and child care (e.g. breastfeeding, women's time and nutrition).

For more information on competitive proposal development process, consult *TAG*. Note that *TAG* also includes additional proposal development steps, such as key personnel recruitment or past performance references, which the proposal coordinator must plan for, even though they do not have corresponding project design steps.



## SECTION 1: PREPARE FOR PROJECT DESIGN

### When will you use this section?

- Before starting project design

### Steps and tools

#### 1.1 Review the proposal guidelines and estimate direct program costs

As you review the proposal or request for applications (RFA) guidelines, identify requirements with implications for project design decisions, plans and activities. For example, guidelines may stipulate:

- Donor eligibility requirements
- Funding limits
- Project objectives
- Required indicators
- Project timeframe
- Geographic or demographic targeting
- Types of partners required or strongly suggested (government ministries, private sector, etc.)

These kinds of requirements will ripple throughout project design and may affect partner selection, assessment, the results framework, the project strategy, activities, budget (including use of complementary private funding) and staffing. Many donor requirements do not include specifics, so there is plenty of project design work to be done. When the donor is prescriptive, adjust plans for project design accordingly. For example:

- If the geographic zone is prescribed, carry out primary data collection in that zone
- If the problem is already determined, focus the assessment on how the problem is experienced by the most vulnerable community members
- Even when **strategic objectives** (SOs) are prescribed, often the **approaches** to reaching those objectives are not. Your design should consider what approaches are proven and/or what innovations you can bring to achieve these SOs faster and more cheaply

Estimate the amount available for direct program costs for the project. Doing this now, when planning project design, will tell you early on what is available for program activities after all fixed and semi-variable costs are deducted from the total budget envelope. While the actual project budget will be driven by activities, making a rough estimate now will help you make realistic decisions on project scope and scale. This budget estimation can also generate ideas for your project’s potential value for money.

Calculate direct program costs as follows: Take the overall budget ceiling (total cash envelope) listed in the funding opportunity or request for applications, or estimate what is reasonable to request of the donor, subtract the indirect cost recovery (ICR), and subtract the estimated facility, support and vehicle costs (based on your country program’s shared direct costs rates). The sum remaining is the “direct direct” envelope for project activities.

### 1.2 Review conclusions from the “go” decision

A well-reasoned “go” decision will have been based on a number of factors including donor intelligence, the potential budget amount and project scope, a determination of CRS’ competitive edge and likelihood of success, strategic priorities (in the country, region or CRS as a whole), the level of unmet needs and the capacity of CRS and its partners to respond to them, and consideration of risks related to project management and implementation.

Review these conclusions and identify implications for project design planning and decisions. Examples are listed below.

**Table 3a: The “go” decision and planning project design**

Conclusion from the “go” decision	Implications for planning project design
CRS is weak in certain capacities needed for project implementation	Identify partners who have proven strengths in CRS’ technical or geographical areas of weakness.
CRS’ experience applying a technical method is a competitive advantage	Invite a CRS technical advisor to the project design workshop when discussing and selecting the project strategy and win theme.
Time for project design and proposal submission is feasible, but tight	Plan for alternative coverage for person playing technical lead role to allow them to focus exclusively on project design. Consider hiring consultants for selected tasks..
The “go” decision is tentative	Plan for a decision point to make a firm “go” decision after which the project design effort will stop or continue.

**VALUE FOR MONEY**  
The optimal use of resources to achieve intended outcomes.

CRS’ Fit and Competitiveness Analysis Tool in *pREPARE!* (CRS 2015f) is a useful tool to guide you in this analysis and decision-making process.



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### Further resources, tools and links

- [Designing Title II Multi-Year Assistance Programs \(MYAP\): A resource for CRS country programs](#) (CRS 2008b) How to decide whether to submit a Title II proposal. While specific to Development Food Assistance Programs, this manual contains useful advice for any large funding opportunity, including how to make a strategic go/no-go decision (Chapter 1, Section 1.5).
- [Introduction to the Business Development Cycle](#) module. A self-guided learning module that provides a general introduction to the three parts of CRS’ of business development cycle.
- The [Net-Map](#) blog and toolbox (Schiffer 2007) Guidance, and practical, visual methods to understand, visualize and discuss different actors, including their influence and relations.
- [pREPARE!](#) (CRS 2015f) Regional Proposal Review Guidance. Section 2, Making and documenting a go/no-go decision.
- CRS’ business development cycle and capture planning resources are based on [Shipley Associates Proposal Guide](#) (Newman 2006), considered the gold standard for these processes. The website [shipleywins.com](#) includes additional online resources.
- [Technical Application Guidance](#) (CRS 2007b) Reading the RFA and Making the go/no-go decision (Pages 2-5).



## SECTION 2: CONDUCT A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

### When will you use this section?

- When planning project design

### Steps and tools

#### 2.1 Consider partnering decisions

Project partner decisions may be final or tentative. See **Chapter II, Section 1** for a checklist on partnering decisions. The checklist includes determining the most appropriate partners, the optimal number of partners, confirming their eligibility for the funding opportunity, and reviewing their capacities and risks that need managing. Coordinating these decisions with stakeholder analysis allows time for partners' appropriate involvement throughout project design.

Not all partnering decisions are made at this time. It may be judicious to wait until preliminary decisions on geographical targeting or likely sectors and types of interventions are made, e.g. after analysis of secondary data or at concept note stage, to finalize decisions to partner with local NGOs or technical resource organizations, respectively.

#### 2.2 Clarify the purpose of stakeholder analysis and identify project stakeholders

At this point, the purpose of stakeholder analysis is to decide who to involve over the course of project design and how these groups or individuals will be involved.

Make a list of stakeholders who have an interest in or influence over the project. For project design, it is useful to consider both internal and external stakeholders, recognizing both the influence over and the possible vested interest that CRS staff may have in project design decisions. Below are categories of possible stakeholders:

- CRS staff (program and project managers, heads of programs, heads of operations, technical advisors, project officers or field-based staff, MEAL advisors, finance team members and operations team members at country, regional and/or headquarters levels, etc.)
- Existing and potential collaborating partners (international and local NGOs, faith-based organizations, civil society organizations, businesses, universities, etc.)
- Government (officials from relevant government ministries, local government offices, service providers, etc.)
- Other organizations (NGOs involved in the sector, university research institutes, donors, etc.)

List names of specific individuals whenever possible. For now, the list may be limited to national-level stakeholders. As project decisions are made (e.g. geographic targeting), you will identify more specific individuals and groups to involve in the process. Ensure that the list includes diverse representation (including gender balance) to reduce potential bias in project design decision-making.

#### 2.3 Analyze project stakeholders' interests and influence

Now that you have identified project stakeholders, assess and analyze their interests, influence, relationships and capacity with regards to involvement in project design. Discuss these questions for each stakeholder:

- What is their **interest** in the project?
- What is their potential **influence** on the project?
- What is their **relationship** with other stakeholders?
- What is their **capacity or motivation** for participating in project design?

CRS' *Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence (CAFE)* contains standards and a wealth of guidance and information to form effective consortia. Always consult *CAFE* for a project involving consortium arrangements



List names of specific individuals whenever possible. Ensure that the list includes diverse representation (including gender balance) to reduce potential bias in project design decision-making

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For example, in the context of an international NGO consortium, a small local partner may have a high interest in the project – it will be implementing it once funding is secured – but low influence. A busy government official may have low interest in the project, but strong potential influence. Two resource organizations may have strong capacity and motivation, but competitive relationships with each other. These findings have implications for when and how they should be involved in project design.

## 2.4 Decide when and how stakeholders should be involved in project design

Use findings from **Step 2.3** to decide when and how to appropriately involve identified stakeholders in the steps of project design. For each project design step and activity, think about:

- Who needs to be **informed**?
- Who needs to be **consulted**?
- Who needs to be **actively engaged** in that step or activity?

### General rules of thumb for these decisions:

- Confirmed collaborating project partners are, in most cases, actively engaged in all steps of project design.
- In contrast, potential collaborating partners are usually informed or consulted during project design, to avoid creating false expectations until partnering decisions are confirmed.
- Relevant government ministry officials may be informed about the project idea and/or consulted about felt needs, capacities and priorities.
- Primary data collection is a means of consulting potential beneficiaries about immediate and longer-term needs and interests, capacities, challenges, etc.
- CRS technical advisors may be actively engaged as project design team members, consulted for evidence-based project strategies, and/or involved in reviewing a concept note.
- CRS MEAL officers are actively engaged in analyzing and interpreting assessment findings, in selecting project indicators for the Proframe and in developing plans for MEAL.
- CRS finance managers will likely be consulted for early project budget estimates and then actively engaged in developing the project budget and writing the budget notes.
- CRS heads of operations and human resources staff are consulted for decisions related to project staffing and management plans.

If your project includes a research component, involve the research partner in appropriate steps of project design. Their advice will help ensure study validity (e.g. randomization, sample frame, use of control groups, ethical considerations, etc.)

For stakeholders who will be actively engaged in project design, check their interest, availability and capacity in light of your expectations. Project design workshops are an efficient and effective way to actively engage a wide range of stakeholders in consultation and decision-making. See **Appendix 2** for an example of how to schedule workshops over the course of project design.

Document your decisions in a stakeholder analysis tool, refer to it regularly, and revisit it as needed as you progress through project design steps. At the end of this chapter, you'll find an example of a stakeholder analysis. Download a blank template that you can adapt [here](#) .

### Lessons learned

Consult CRS and partner finance and operations staff when planning the project design process. This way, they will be prepared and ready when their active engagement is needed.

A CRS survey found that involving those who would eventually implement the project (if successful) in the project design and decision-making process was a significant factor in eventual project success.



**If your project includes a research component, involve the research partner in appropriate steps of project design**

### Further resources, tools and links

- *Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence (CAFE)* (CRS 2008a) Includes detailed information on management of consortium partners, including use of stakeholder analysis during project design.

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## SECTION 3: DEVELOP A TIMELINE AND FORM A PROJECT DESIGN TEAM

### When will you use this section?

- When planning project design, as soon as a preliminary “go” decision has been made.

### Steps and tools

#### 3.1 Develop a project design timeline

Use a timeline to schedule project design activities and to assign responsibilities. Consider lessons learned from past, similar project design processes as follows:

- What project design steps took longer than planned?
- Which project design activities were typically overlooked?
- What are the most efficient ways to coordinate technical, operations and budget staff inputs?

Use a timeline to schedule project design activities and to assign responsibilities

**Table 3b** shows headings for a project design timeline format. At the end of this chapter, you’ll find an example. Download a blank template in Microsoft Word [here](#) , or in Excel [here](#) .

**Table 3b: Project design timeline format**

Project design step/activity	Lead role (Assistance)	Week						Precise dates/notes
		1	2	3	4	5	6	

Complete the project design timeline following these guidelines:

- Fill in **Column 1** with project design steps and related activities, such as partner consultations, assessment planning, key informant interviews and field data collection, project design workshops, etc.
- Fill in **Column 2** with the name of the person responsible for leading that activity and, in parentheses, those who will assist or participate in that activity.
- Check the appropriate week(s) in **Column 3** and indicate the precise date when the activity will be completed in **Column 4**. When you have little time until submission, use days rather than weeks in Column 3. This helps clarify expectations related to review turnaround time and possible work during weekends. In this case, Column 4 may not be necessary.
- Work backwards from the proposal submission date to ensure that each activity and step can be completed on time.

#### 3.2 Prepare a proposal development checklist for all relevant submissions

For competitive funding opportunities, prepare a proposal development checklist in addition to the project design timeline. The proposal development checklist also serves as a planning and communication tool, but focuses on the proposal document, rather than the project design

process. The proposal checklist identifies all required proposal sections and attachments, the names of those responsible for completing each section, and completion dates. See *pREPARE!* (CRS 2015f), Annex 3, for a sample proposal development checklist that you can adapt to your donor template or request for applications.

Compare the proposal checklist with the project design timeline and make sure they align. The project design timeline must ensure information is obtained and decisions made by the time the proposal writer needs them. For example, analysis and interpretation of assessment data must be completed in time to inform the proposal section on problem identification and analysis.

### 3.3 Form the project design team

Consider the stakeholder analysis findings and the timeline information and form the project design team. Double-check proposed team member availability for the intense work ahead. Ensure project design team members have different and complementary skills and perspectives, and include men and women and relevant minority groups.

Select a technical lead who serves as manager for the project design team. He/she should have the expertise and authority to keep the process on track and make decisions. This is good practice for all projects and essential for large funding opportunities with multiple partners.

Orient project team members to the project design process and clarify their designated roles and responsibilities. Develop written scopes of work (SOWs) for any consultants who are part of the team.

### 3.4 Prepare a project design budget and obtain resources

Again, in light of the stakeholder analysis findings and the timeline, consider what resources are required for project design. You will need:

- **Staff time.** Some staff may be formally released from their duties to work part- or full-time on project design
- **Funds.** Estimate costs to conduct primary data collection, hold workshops, hire consultants or translators, etc.
- **Logistical support.** This includes vehicles for the assessment, workshop facilities and equipment, etc.

Prepare a budget for project design. If needed, request business development funds for specific project design activities (e.g. primary data collection costs) or technical support such as consultants and technical specialists.

### 3.5 Communicate roles, responsibilities and plans

Good communication makes expectations explicit and enhances transparency. Communicate with all stakeholders regarding their expected involvement (informed, consulted or actively engaged) in the project design process. Share the project idea note (PIN), project design timeline (and checklist as appropriate) with all project design team members as well as other relevant stakeholders. Keep stakeholders updated on any revisions to the timeline over the course of project design.

### Lessons learned

- Ensure that a key decision-maker (e.g. country representative or designee) is available throughout project design to make strategic decisions that go beyond the project design team leader's responsibility.
- Line up needed consultants early on and ensure that they are available when and for as long as you need them at a cost you can afford.

**Ensure project design team members have different and complementary skills and perspectives, and include men and women and relevant minority groups**



#### PRACTICAL TIP:

For a large project design team or consortium, consider designating an office or room to serve as an operations center for meetings and discussions.

#### PROJECT IDEA NOTE

An early opportunity for dialogue before investing time and effort in project design.

### Further resources, tools and links

- [TAG](#) (CRS 2007)  Details on proposal development planning (Pages 6 to 7). Details on proposal development team roles and responsibilities (Pages 7 to 12). While these may not reflect all project design steps or all project design team roles and responsibilities, they should be taken into account when planning the project design.
- [CAG](#) (CRS, 2013a)  Includes a cost application timeline that lists major cost application tasks (Page 2).
- [pREPARE!](#) (CRS 2015f)  Section 2 includes guidance and templates for project design timeline and proposal development checklist.



## SECTION 4: USING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PROJECT DESIGN

### When will you use this section?

- Before planning the assessment

### Steps and tools

#### 4.1 Select the appropriate conceptual framework(s)

Different conceptual frameworks are used in project design, depending on the project sector, donor or context. Select the appropriate conceptual framework(s) for your project context. For example, in a project focusing on maternal and child health and nutrition, you would generally use the UNICEF maternal and child undernutrition conceptual framework (see **Figure 4.1** on Page 39). **Table 3e** at the end of this chapter lists commonly used conceptual frameworks for food security, livelihoods, nutrition, peacebuilding, orphans and vulnerable children, education, WASH, and social and behavior change.

Always review donor requirements and/or the request for applications when deciding which specific conceptual framework to use. For example, Development Food Assistance Program projects require use of USAID/FFP's adapted food security conceptual framework.

CRS' work is grounded in the principle of integral human development (IHD), which promotes the good of the whole person and every person. CRS developed the **IHD conceptual framework** as a practical means of reflecting integral human development in its work. Like other conceptual frameworks, you can use IHD categories to identify and organize assessment information, and the links between categories to analyze relationships and synergies. When designing any project – whether single or multi-sector – using the IHD framework has many benefits. The IHD framework helps to:

- Promote holistic thinking, ensuring that even a single-sector project considers the wider context and links to challenges and opportunities in other program areas
- Consider household and community assets, gender inequalities in access and control of resources, and how to strengthen household and community resilience
- Highlight the interrelationship of relief, recovery and development activities; thinking about shocks and trends will help to develop risk reduction strategies
- Promote a better understanding of structures and systems: How national and global issues, policies and other macro-level actions affect individuals, families and communities
- Stimulate thinking on how to integrate peacebuilding, good governance, and gender equity concerns into all projects

Select the appropriate conceptual framework(s) for your project context

#### INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The principle – on which CRS' work is grounded – that promotes the good of the whole person and every person. The concept comes from a long tradition of Catholic social thought and reflects the aspiration of each individual to realize their full human potential in the context of just and peaceful relationships, a thriving environment and solidarity with others.

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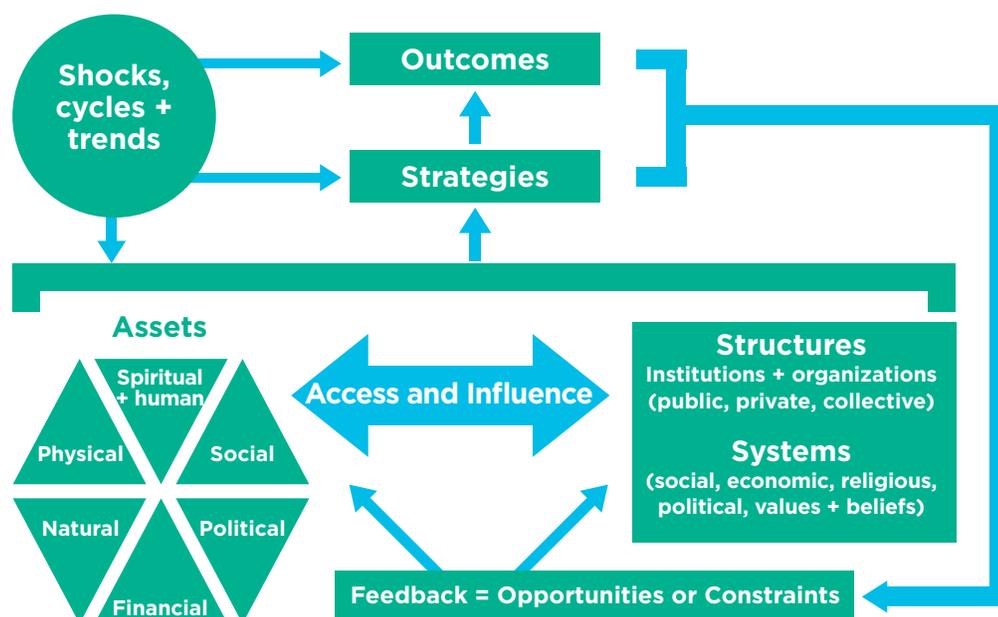
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Figure 3.1 Integral Human Development framework



Consider using the IHD framework alongside sector-related conceptual frameworks to ensure that even a single-sector project is consistent with the bigger picture, takes into account unjust structures, risks and shocks, and links to other sectors.

#### 4.2 Orient the project design team to the conceptual framework(s)

As needed, orient the project design team to the selected conceptual framework(s), to ensure that they use it appropriately at relevant steps in the project design process. Experience with staff and partner training on project design shows that conceptual frameworks are often one of the tools most highly valued by training participants once they understand their role and how to use the frameworks throughout the project design process.

#### Further resources, tools and links

- *C Modules: A learning package for social and behavior change communication* (C-Change/ FHI 360 2012) A comprehensive handbook for social and behavior change strategy development, including a table of theories, models and approaches, including social network, social capital, ecological models, community organization, integrated model of communication for social change etc (Pages 54-69)
- *Designing Title II Multi-Year Assistance Programs (MYAP): A resource for CRS country programs* (CRS 2008b)  Information on how to use the IHD and food security conceptual frameworks in Title II programs (Pages 22-34).
- *A user's guide to integral human development (IHD): Practical guidance for CRS staff and partners* (Heinrich et al 2008) More information on using the IHD conceptual framework in project design (Part II, Sections 1 and 3).
- See **Appendix 3** for illustrations and further guidance on the most commonly used conceptual frameworks, by sector.



## SECTION 5: HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

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### Section 1: Prepare for project design

Consult the *pPREPARE!* (CRS 2015f)  Emergency Response Proposal Development and Review Flow Chart, Section 5, for guidance when responding to a rapid onset emergency. The flow chart documents recommend communication processes between the country program, the region/HQ and donors, as well as simplified project design processes, to facilitate a timely response.

Project design and proposal development are interwoven differently in an emergency response, with project design steps often being conducted for the overall emergency response, rather than for specific proposals.

In an emergency, CRS often seeks funding from multiple donors under a tight proposal development timeframe: Plan to develop an overall emergency response strategy (one results framework, one Proframe), even if you will adjust and package it in different proposals for each donor based on their sector preferences, funding levels and timeframes. Nesting separate proposals within an overarching response strategy gives your team greater flexibility during project implementation and makes monitoring and reporting efforts easier. Having an overall emergency response strategy also gives a sense of the scope that could be managed if funding was secured (number of sectors, priority geographical areas, scale of interventions).



**In an emergency, CRS often seeks funding from multiple donors under a tight proposal development timeframe**

### Section 2: Conduct a stakeholder analysis

In an emergency situation, many different stakeholders have significant information needs, which can place a significant burden on emergency response teams. Situation reports (SitReps) are tools to manage these information needs. They are shared broadly within the agency, as well as with the Caritas Internationalis network and selected donors.

Within 24 hours of onset, the country representative or emergency coordinator will send a one- to two-page SitRep to the regional team and headquarters. The first SitRep includes initial secondary information, contacts made with partners or donors, and plans for a rapid assessment as applicable. Over the first few days and weeks, daily SitReps are generally required, providing updates on assessment findings, plans and initial results, including preliminary emergency response decisions, such as geographical targeting, sector priorities, partnership decisions and others.

If the situation warrants an immediate response, a small amount of CRS private or designated emergency funding can immediately be released upon submission of the first SitRep indicating the intent to respond.

To meet your own information needs in a rapidly changing environment, keep in regular contact with the UN and other humanitarian actors, through coordination meetings and on a bilateral basis. These will serve as an important source of secondary information. Gaps in coverage by other actors will play a significant role in informing CRS' response, and may be changing rapidly.

### Section 3: Develop a timeline and form a project design team

Most project design steps described in *ProPack I* are conducted for the overall emergency response strategy, rather than for every project. This emergency strategy itself is usually developed as an iterative process, until the situation has sufficiently stabilized so that medium-term decisions can be made with relative confidence.

In some cases, telescoped steps may need to be repeated for specific proposals, to adjust the overall strategy to specific donor priorities or probe further into specific issues.

Bring CRS emergency response staff together to develop (and revisit) the emergency response strategy, especially if they are deployed in different locations. These meetings will help them to share, learn and get field input about the evolving situation and how CRS should respond based on available information on needs, gaps and opportunities.

#### Section 4: Select conceptual frameworks for project design

In the early phase of an emergency response or for specific sectors, refer to the *Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in humanitarian responses*, commonly known as the *The Sphere Handbook* (The Sphere Project 2011), which reflects humanitarian best practice and provides strong guidance for assessment and response. Sphere includes relevant conceptual frameworks for selected sectors and/or equivalent guidance and tools.

Given its holistic nature, the integral human development conceptual framework is particularly useful for medium-term phases of a response that focus on risk reduction and building back better. It complements sector-specific conceptual frameworks with its attention to shocks and the dynamic nature of emergency situations.

#### Further resources, tools and links

- *pREPARE!* (CRS 2015f)  Section 5, in particular, the Emergency Response Proposal Development and Review Flow Chart.
- Emergency Field Operations Manual's *Situation Report template* (CRS 2015b) 
- *The Sphere Handbook* (The Sphere Project 2011), Core Standard 2



SECTION 6: TABLES AND EXAMPLES

**Table 3c: When and how to involve stakeholders in project design (Example)**

Use this table to capture decisions on who is involved in project design and how. Two rows include examples of these decisions. Consult **Appendix 2** on possible project design workshops and relevant chapters in *ProPack 1* to add more details on key activities for each project design step listed in Column 1.

Type of participation				
Project design step (add key activities)	Who needs to be informed? (Stakeholder is kept abreast through communication channels)	Who needs to be consulted? (Stakeholder is solicited for information for project design activities or decisions)	Who needs to be actively engaged? (Stakeholder actively participates in project design, e.g. member of project design team, has a voice in project decision-making, etc.)	
<b>Planning project design</b>				
Project timeline and project design team	Partner leadership informed of expectations for their staff as listed in the project design timeline	Patrick, the finance manager, advises Tony on who in the finance team will serve as budget lead	Tony, head of programs, puts together the project design team	
Proposal checklist				
<b>Assessment analysis and interpretation</b>				
Assessment plan	Government liaison informed of the proposed locations for field assessment	Ali, MEAL regional technical advisor, reviews plans and tools for primary data collection and advises on sampling size	Susan, MEAL manager and project design team member, leads the development of the assessment plan and tools	
Conduct the assessment				
Analysis and interpretation of assessment findings				
<b>Results framework and project strategy</b>				
<b>Concept note</b>				
<b>ProFrame / MEAL system</b>				
<b>Management plan and staffing</b>				
<b>Activities scheduling</b>				
<b>Budget</b>				
<b>After action review</b>				

**Table 3d: Project design timeline (Example)**

Download a blank template in Microsoft Word [here](#), or in Excel [here](#).

Project design step/activity	Lead role (Assistance)	Week						Precise dates/notes
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
<b>Due June 21, 12 pm local time</b>								
<b>Planning and partnership decisions</b>								
Finalize partner selection	Mamadou	X	X				April 20	
Hold planning meeting with program, finance, HR and operations staff	Robert	X					April 13	
<b>Assessment, analysis and interpretation</b>								
Meet with FAO and WFP	Robert	X					Apr 15	
Meet with Ministries of Agriculture and Planning and Development	Robert	X					Apr 15	
Complete secondary data collection and analysis	Marie	X					Apr 17 (See assessment plan, Chapter IV for details)	
Collect primary data, analyze and interpret	Marie		X				Apr 24 (See assessment plan, Chapter IV for details)	
Write assessment report	Marie			X			May 1	
<b>Results framework, project strategy and theory of change</b>								
Facilitate workshop with partners to validate assessment findings and conclusions, construct a problem tree and draft the results framework, project strategy and theory of change	Marie		X				May 3-5	
Meet with government stakeholders for information sharing	Mamadou		X				May 7	
<b>Concept note and review</b>								
Write the concept note	Susan			X			May 9	
Coordinate internal review of concept note	Susan			X			May 10	
Coordinate regional review of concept note	Robert			X			May 15	
<b>Proframe and planning for MEAL</b>								
Facilitate workshop to discuss outputs and activities and then construct the Proframe	Marie				X		May 17-18	
Complete MEAL planning documents	Moussa, MEAL TA				X		May 19-20	
<b>Organizational capacity and management plan</b>								
Meet with HR and operations staff	Robert	X			X		April 15 and May 10	
<b>Activities schedule and budget</b>								
Develop activities schedule	Marie					X	May 22	
Develop draft budget and budget notes	Bintou					X	May 23	
Meet with program and MEAL staff, and finance manager to finalize activities schedule, budget and budget notes	Marie					X	May 24	
<b>Proposal development and review</b>								
Write the proposal and finalize budget	Susan					X	May 25	
Meeting for internal review of proposal	Susan					X	May 26	
Regional and headquarters review of final proposal and budget	Robert					X	May 27-28	
Final editing and packaging	Susan					X	May 30	
Submission of final proposal	Robert					X	June 1	

**Table 3e: Common conceptual frameworks**(Please consult **Appendix 3** for illustrations of these and additional conceptual frameworks)

Project theme	Conceptual framework	References or links
<b>Food security and livelihoods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapted Food Security Conceptual Framework: Developed by USAID/FFP, this expands on an earlier food security framework with the three components of availability, access and utilization and takes into account risk and vulnerability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Designing Title II Multi-Year Assistance Programs (MYAP): A resource for CRS country programs</i> (CRS 2008b)  Page 27.</li> <li><i>A user's guide to integral human development (IHD): Practical guidance for CRS staff and partners</i> (Heinrich et al 2008) Page 21.</li> </ul>
<b>Nutrition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF's conceptual framework for maternal and child undernutrition shows immediate, underlying and basic causes for undernutrition and how these causes are linked.</li> <li>USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Conceptual Framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>UNICEF conceptual framework</i>, in Harmonised training package: Resource material for training on nutrition in emergencies.</li> <li><i>Multi-sectoral nutrition strategy 2014-2025</i> (USAID 2014) Page 13.</li> </ul>
<b>Peacebuilding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lederach's (2002) 3Ps model includes three organizing categories: People, process and problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Peacebuilding: A Caritas training manual</i> (Neufeldt et al 2002) Pages 61 and 69.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRS' Education Framework is informed by IHD. It shows the determinants of effective learning and their relationships. Immediate determinants are quality and relevance, access and community participation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Marginalized children and education analysis framework</i> (Sellers and Eversmann 2010) </li> </ul>
<b>Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRS' WASH sector uses two conceptual frameworks. The first displays three determinants of disease prevention: access to hardware, hygiene promotion and the enabling environment. The second is a WASH-adapted IHD framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See <b>Appendix 3</b></li> </ul>
<b>Social and behavior change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FHI 360's Social and Ecological Model for Change portrays social and behavior change communication theories and levels of analyses needed to identify a tipping point for changes concerning individual behavior, social norms, social movements, political will and/or policy. It can be used with all sectors to understand determinants of behavior change and is especially relevant for the theory of change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>C Modules: A Learning Package for Social and Behavior Change Communication</i> (SBCC) (C-Change 2012) Page 16.</li> </ul>

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## CHAPTER IV: ASSESSMENT, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes seven sections:

- Section 1: Plan the assessment
- Section 2: Collect, organize and analyze secondary data
- Section 3: Collect, organize and analyze primary data
- Section 4: Further analyze and interpret all assessment findings
- Section 5: Link to the proposal
- Section 6: How is this different in an emergency response?
- Section 7: Tables and examples

#### Standards of quality

- Assessment plans include clear objectives that guide development of assessment questions and selection of data collection methods
- Project design teams gather existing secondary data first and use this evidence base to guide the focus of primary data collection
- Primary data collection aims to consult and give voice to those most affected by the problem that the project aims to address
- Project design teams use assessment and analysis findings to construct the problem tree
- Assessment and analysis are conflict and gender sensitive
- Collaborative partners and other relevant stakeholders are appropriately involved in assessment, analysis and interpretation

#### Why is this step of project design important?

Assessment, analysis and interpretation are three distinct phases. While they are often iterative in practice, the sequence is important. The three phases provide a solid, evidence-based foundation for sound project design decisions concerning project objectives, the project strategy and the theory of change. These decisions affect poor and vulnerable people who have little margin of security. Moreover, a proposal grounded in a rich understanding of the local situation and its specifics helps demonstrate CRS' added value and competitiveness with other large organizations that often lack this level of field experience. Demonstrating local knowledge is important even when responding to a prescriptive call for proposals.

Donor deadlines and other pressures often cause project design teams to rush through assessment, analysis and interpretation. Primary data collection may be skipped. Project design teams may jump to conclusions without taking the time to carefully analyze assessment data and interpret the findings. These omissions increase the risk of superficial or even erroneous assumptions and conclusions. To address this, you telescope assessment, analysis and interpretation to available resources, including time, logistics, human capacity and money.

An assessment plan will help make this effort efficient. Without a plan, you risk collecting too much data that is not relevant to project design decision-making, wasting precious time and effort, and you risk missing key information needs. If well planned, quality assessments can be done quickly at low cost.

**Primary data collection aims to consult and give voice to those most affected by the problem that the project aims to address**

#### ASSESSMENT

An exercise, often using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, to gather information on priority needs and the current context in a particular area to inform project design.

#### ANALYSIS

A process of probing and investigating the constituent parts and their interrelationships of underlying causes and effects of selected issues to gain deeper insights.

#### INTERPRETATION

Explaining findings, attaching significance to particular results, making inferences, drawing conclusions and presenting patterns within a clear and orderly framework.

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## SECTION 1: PLAN THE ASSESSMENT

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### When will you use this section?

- Before starting any assessment activities. For competitive funding opportunities, this may be just before or after release of the donor solicitation.

### Steps and tools

#### 1.1 Review the timeline and adapt the assessment plan format

Start by reviewing the project design timeline, which lists activities for all project design steps, including assessment, analysis and interpretation. The assessment plan will flesh out these activities. In the process of planning the assessment, you may realize that some activities included in the timeline may need to be changed or adjusted. Do not forget to verify that assessment plans are feasible given the time available for this step of project design and to revise the timeline to reflect updated plans.

**Table 4a** below shows a format for planning an assessment that you can adapt to your project. At the end of this chapter, you will find an example of this plan (**Table 4j**) for a nutrition project in Haiti. A blank template can be downloaded [here](#) .

**Table 4a: Assessment plan format**

<b>Assessment objective(s):</b>		
<b>Use of data and findings:</b>		
<b>Conceptual framework(s) to be used:</b>		
<b>Time and resources available:</b>		
<b>What:</b> What questions will be studied for each assessment objective? What data or information needs to be collected?	<b>How:</b> How will the data be collected: What methods will be used? How will these methods be sequenced?	<b>Who and Where:</b> Who needs to be interviewed or involved? Where should data be collected?

Steps 1.2 – 1.5 below provide guidance to help you plan a quality assessment. The steps follow the assessment plan template and guide the project design team (including collaborative partners as appropriate) in making all necessary assessment design decisions. Then use the assessment plan template to document these decisions and to communicate them with relevant stakeholders.

#### 1.2 Set the assessment objective(s) and planned use of findings; document other key information (Rows 1-4)

Working with your MEAL advisor, align assessment objectives with the project's likely scope, donor requirements and available time and resources to complete the assessment. An example of an assessment objective for a child nutrition project is: *To understand the severity, the nature and the primary causes of child undernutrition in the Central Plateau region of Haiti.*

Clarify how assessment findings will be used. In general, assessment findings inform decisions concerning the project's objectives, strategy, theory of change and assumptions. For example, in the nutrition project, the team agreed that assessment findings would be used to make project targeting decisions (based on characteristics of villages and households worst affected by the problem) and determine relevant sectors and project strategies (based on causes of malnutrition found to be most significant in target locations). Defining use of information helps to refine the assessment objectives and to ensure that you identify all relevant information needs.

**In the process of planning the assessment, you may realize that some activities included in the timeline may need to be changed or adjusted**

**Defining use of information helps to refine the assessment objectives and to ensure that you identify all relevant information needs**

Identify the conceptual framework that was selected when you planned project design. If you had not selected one, work with your technical advisor to identify the most relevant conceptual framework given your assessment objective. In the nutrition project example, the team decided to use the UNICEF conceptual framework for maternal and child undernutrition (see **Figure 4.1**).

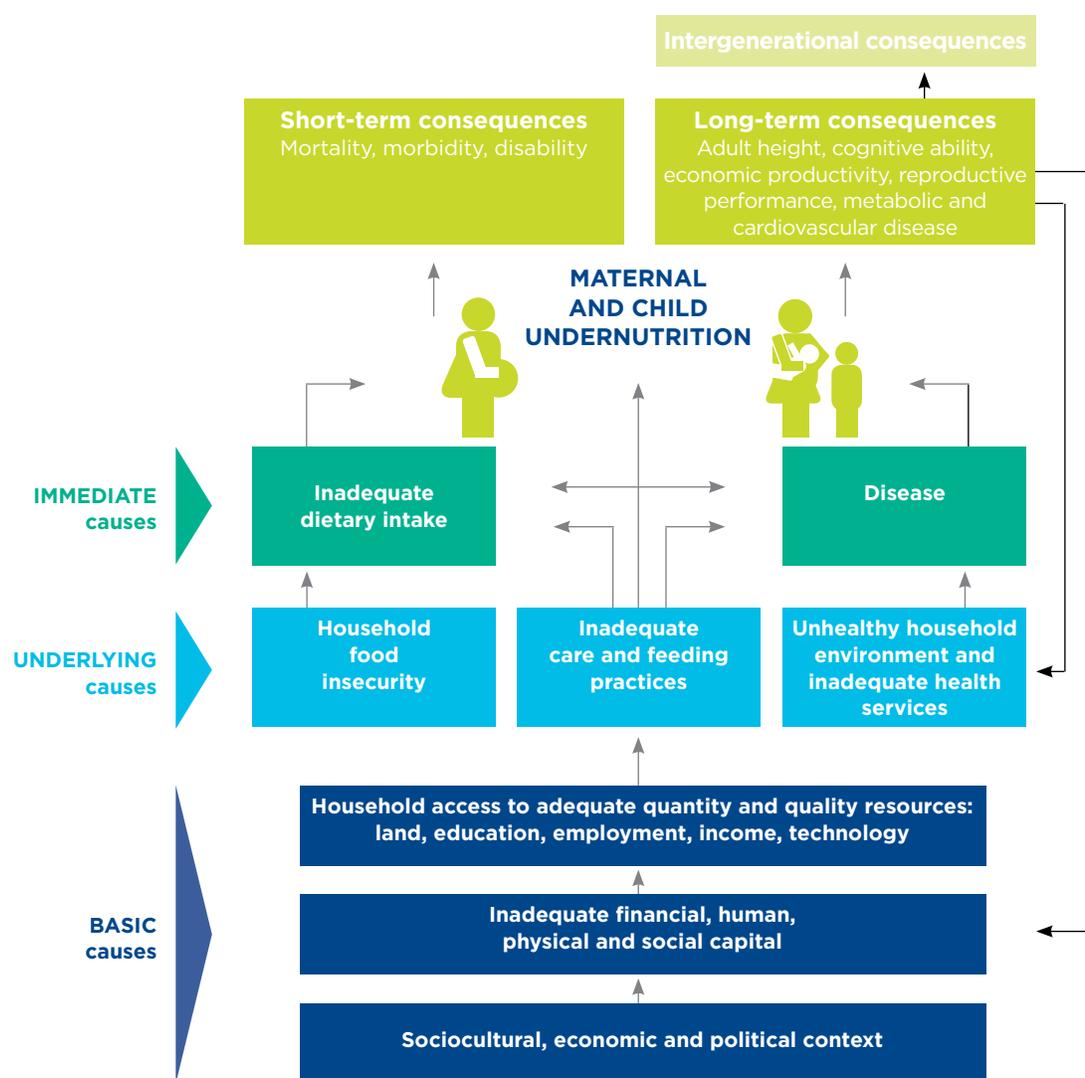
**Work with your technical advisor to identify the most relevant conceptual framework given your assessment objective**

Document in Row 4 the date by which the assessment needs to be completed, the time available to conduct the assessment, human and other resources available, and any other constraint that should be taken into account when planning the assessment.

### 1.3 List assessment questions and data needs (Column 1)

For each assessment objective, list major assessment questions or information needs related to the project context. Use the selected conceptual framework as a checklist, review donor guidance, and consult technical advisors to develop these questions.

**Figure 4.1: UNICEF Conceptual framework of the determinants of maternal and child undernutrition**



The black arrows show that the consequences of undernutrition can feed back to the underlying and basic causes of undernutrition, perpetuating the cycle of undernutrition, poverty and inequality.

Source: Adapted from UNICEF 1990 in *Improving Child Nutrition: The achievable imperative for global progress*, UNICEF, April 2013

For example, in a child nutrition project, assessment questions may include:

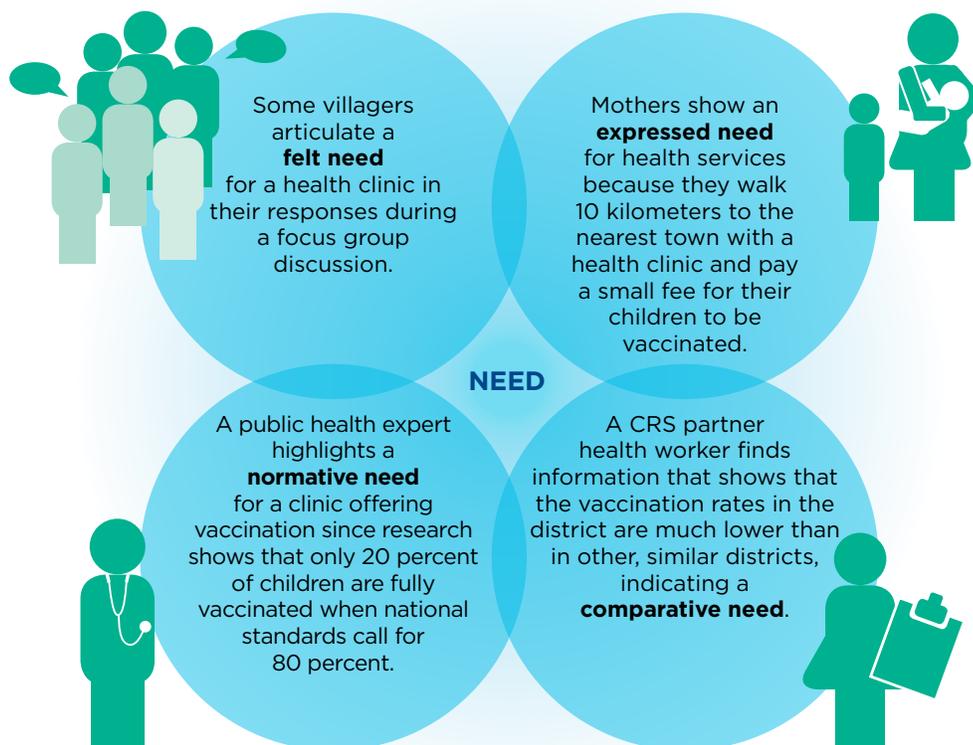
- What is the severity and nature of child malnutrition and do these vary across target areas?
- What are prevailing practices related to breastfeeding, complementary feeding and feeding during illness? (“inadequate care” factor from the conceptual framework)
- What are household members’ attitudes towards infant and child feeding practices? (social context factors)
- What government policies exist related to promotion of optimal infant and child feeding practices? (political context factors)
- What are existing household and community assets, strengths and resources that support optimal infant and child feeding practices? (social and economic factors)

Then, in light of these assessment objective(s) and questions, decide what data and information is needed. This may concern behaviors, local practices, knowledge, resources, assets, needs, problems, access, coverage, government services and policies, community norms, etc.

Assessments seek to understand the priority needs of those CRS seeks to serve, in addition to their strengths, resources and assets. However, perceptions of need often differ, for a number of reasons (who we are, our education and experience, first impressions, etc.) **Figure 4.2** below illustrates four types of needs. By investigating all four types, our assessments can help us mitigate our natural biases and ensure we have a strong evidence base for our project. **Felt needs** are what people say when asked. **Expressed needs** are evidenced by people’s behaviors, which demonstrate how much people care about something. **Normative needs** reflect expert opinion and national or global standards or policy. **Comparative needs** describe the level of need in one location compared to another (Bradshaw 1972). In our assessments, we want to identify all four types of needs, and focus our interventions where they overlap.

**Assessments seek to understand the priority needs of those CRS seeks to serve, in addition to their strengths, resources and assets**

**Figure 4.2: Four types of need**



### 1.4 Choose data collection methods and sequence (Column 2)

Decide how data will be collected. Most assessments use a combination of secondary and primary data collection methods. Secondary data is data that others (e.g. various government or UN bodies, other agencies, researchers) have collected; primary data is data that you have or are collecting yourself. Secondary data includes government or UN statistics, which can serve to document the scale of a problem or justify geographical targeting decisions (comparative needs). It can also include expert analysis and interpretation of the relative severity, nature or causes of different problems, which can be verified during primary data collection.

Use an appropriate mix of methods that will help you understand the four types of needs:

- **Felt needs:** Household surveys and other interviews, focus group discussions
- **Expressed needs:** Direct observation of actual behaviors; interview questions on practices
- **Normative needs:** Literature review; key informant interviews with experts
- **Comparative needs:** Review existing government or UN statistics disaggregated by geography or other socio-economic characteristic. Remember to also disaggregate other assessment data as appropriate (e.g. male/female)

Secondary data is most useful when investigating comparative and normative needs; felt and expressed needs usually require primary data collection.

Think about the most logical sequence in which to collect data. Gather secondary data first, before you collect primary data, to save time and money. Reviewing a report with solid survey findings is obviously less costly than doing a survey itself. More information on sequencing data collection methods is found in Section 3.

### 1.5 Identify who will be interviewed and where (Column 3)

Decide where you will need to conduct any primary data collection, which groups, subgroups and individuals will be involved or interviewed, and how you will consider gender and equity concerns. With help from your MEAL advisor, decide on the sample size and sampling method to ensure the data is valid. In practice, you will likely flesh out this section once you have collected and analyzed existing secondary data and conducted some initial key informant interviews. See **Section 3** for more guidance.

Decide who to involve and interview during primary data collection. Communities are not homogenous and there are many power dynamics at play. Outsiders are likely to hear first and foremost from powerful community members. Be intentional in your efforts to identify and hear from poor and marginalized people and groups who may have an important interest in the project and different opinions and perspectives than better-off community members.

To analyze power dynamics, start by discussing these questions:

- Which groups (related to gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, age, geographic location, disability, etc.) are more likely to be affected negatively or positively (interest/need) by a change in the current situation that a project might bring about?
- Which groups have more or less influence over community actions or decisions, i.e. over potential project activities and outcomes?
- How are relations among these groups? Cooperative? Conflictual?
- How easy or hard is it to speak with various groups? What practical issues may be involved in order to speak with them?

#### ICT4D

Consider use of GPS data, audio/video recordings and photographs as part of your primary data collection, for instance to record direct observations.



**PRIMARY DATA**  
Data collected first-hand.

**SECONDARY DATA**  
Data collected by someone other than the user.

**Decide on the sample size and sampling method to ensure the data is valid**



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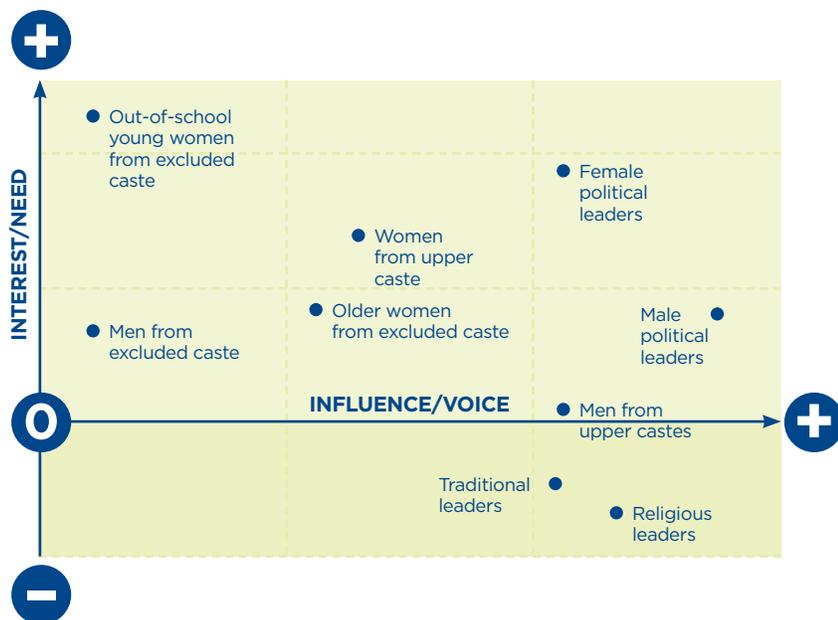
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Use a diagram like **Figure 4.3** below to summarize and analyze your findings. Place individuals, subgroups and groups in the appropriate box, depending on their level of interest/need and voice/influence. **Figure 4.3** has been completed with an example for a women's literacy project.

**Figure 4.3: Analyzing interest and need, voice and influence for a women's literacy project**



People and groups with high interest but low influence will need “safe spaces” to voice their ideas and opinions

People and groups with high interest but low influence will likely need “safe spaces” to voice their ideas and opinions so that more powerful people and groups will let them be heard. In this example, the assessment team will have to make a special effort to interview out-of-school young women from the excluded caste. Interviewing men and religious, traditional and male political leaders is needed to reveal assumptions (that men and leaders will allow women to participate in literacy classes).

### 1.6 Review and communicate the assessment plan

Ensure the assessment plan is aligned with available resources and roles and responsibilities listed in the project design timeline. Review the plan using **Chapter II's** checklists for gender, peacebuilding and governance, and beneficiary accountability to ensure that these cross-cutting issues are addressed.

Ask your MEAL advisor to check that the plan is likely to produce reliable data through triangulation and to discuss any relevant **ethical issues** related to information gathering. Countries have policies or standards that help ensure that assessments are conducted legally, ethically and with due regard for those involved in the study. Ethical considerations relevant to assessments include informed consent, confidentiality in data collection and confidentiality in data management.

Orient project design team members to the assessment plan, if they have not been involved in developing it. Share relevant elements of the assessment plan with other relevant stakeholders.

The assessment plan will evolve and become more detailed over time. For example, precise plans for primary data collection (e.g. specific location(s), assessment questions or sub-groups to be consulted) may depend on findings from secondary data collection. Update and communicate the assessment plan regularly.

**TRIANGULATION**  
Using several sources of data to reduce bias when collecting and analyzing qualitative data.



**Ethical considerations relevant to assessments include informed consent, confidentiality in data collection and confidentiality in data management**

## Lessons learned

Plan the assessment as early as possible to overcome time limitations of donor solicitations. Consider collecting secondary data before the solicitation is released, but bear in mind that the target geographic areas may change.

### Further resources, tools and links

- *Designing Title II Multi-Year Assistance Programs (MYAP): A resource for CRS country programs* (CRS 2008b) Chapters 4 and 6.
- *Guidance on participatory assessments* (Dummett et al 2013)
- *A user's guide to integral human development (IHD): Practical guidance for CRS staff and partners* (Heinrich et al 2008) An example of how the IHD framework is used to develop assessment questions for a food security project (Pages 61-63).



## SECTION 2: COLLECT, ORGANIZE AND ANALYZE SECONDARY DATA

### When will you use this section?

- As soon as you have intelligence on a likely funding opportunity and/or after completing the assessment plan

### Steps and tools

#### 2.1 Collect secondary data

Assign precise responsibilities to selected project design team members to gather and read secondary data. Orient them to the task to ensure that they use templates and record precise citations. If there is a lot to read, divide responsibilities to go faster.

Gather up-to-date articles, reports and studies. Do a web search and consult technical advisors and technical working groups. Meet with key informants at relevant government ministries, UN and USAID offices to get reports and studies that may be unpublished and not available online. Check that the documents and websites you consult are pertinent, valid and credible – especially for any data cited in the proposal. Consult **Table 4j** at the end of this chapter for a list of common secondary data sources.

#### 2.2 Organize secondary data

Use tables to summarize and organize data from secondary sources. **Table 4b** gives a simple template example.

**Table 4b: An example of a template to organize secondary data**

Assessment Question 1:	X, Y, Z (data from secondary sources and citations)
Assessment Question 2	X, Y, Z (data from secondary sources and citations)
Etc.	Etc.

#### 2.3 Analyze secondary data and make needed decisions

Analyze secondary data findings with the project design team and key stakeholders, possibly in a workshop setting (see **Appendix 2**). Compare findings from the review of different secondary data sources. If these differ, analyze why or decide which source is most reliable. Identify patterns and themes, what comes out strongly and clearly, what is most important, what is surprising, and what gaps were revealed?

**INTELLIGENCE**  
Information on a potential funding opportunity or initiative that could lead to programming opportunities, or information on other potential applicants who could become partners or competitors on that funding opportunity.

Make any needed decisions at this point. Usually, secondary data helps to confirm the geographic area(s) where primary data will be collected. You may also revisit the “go” decision (and stop further project design work) if secondary data findings:

- Do not match the donor solicitation’s assumptions (pointing to a fundamental disagreement on the problem and its main causes)
- Reveal the need to work in a geographic region where CRS and its partners are not present
- Require work in a sector for which CRS and its partners do not have and cannot build the requisite technical capacity

## 2.4 Document findings and analyses from secondary data

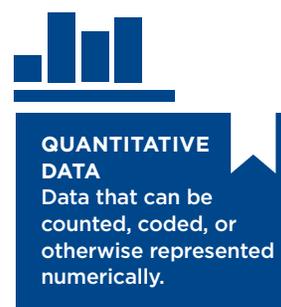
Write up findings for relevant assessment questions from secondary data. Include justifications and rationale for any initial project design decisions made using secondary data, e.g. selection of preliminary geographic areas.

### Further resources, tools and links

- Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) guidelines (World Food Programme 2009) *Chapter 3: Desk study: Literature review and secondary data*
- *A user’s guide to integral human development (IHD): Practical guidance for CRS staff and partners* (Heinrich et al 2008) A list of common secondary data sources related to elements of the IHD conceptual framework (Annex 1, Pages 57-58).
- See web sources in **Table 4j**.

### Lessons learned

While in rare cases secondary data may be adequate for decision-making in subsequent steps of project design, always consider the added value of primary data collection to give situation-specific information, and hear first-hand people’s views on problems and opportunities. While secondary data will likely provide useful quantitative data and macro- or national-level perspectives, it is unlikely that you will find adequate, recent data precisely on the assessment questions, in the locations and with the specific groups identified in the assessment plan. Decisions about the project strategy and implementation modalities will always be stronger if you can rely on location-specific and disaggregated data to analyze identified issues.

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## SECTION 3: COLLECT, ORGANIZE AND ANALYZE PRIMARY DATA

### When will you use this section?

- After collecting and analyzing secondary data and making decisions on where the project is most likely to be implemented.

### Steps and tools

#### 3.1 Prepare for primary data collection

Review the assessment plan, consider secondary data findings and further flesh out plans for primary data collection. Think about:

- What assessment questions were fully answered with secondary data findings
- What assessment questions or topics need further exploration or probing in the project setting
- Whether secondary data findings require adjustments to preliminary plans for where you will undertake the primary data collection or who you should seek to talk to

Add specific details to your assessment plan for primary data collection. Identify precisely what data is needed, where primary data will be collected, who needs to be interviewed, observed or otherwise involved, how many groups or individuals should be involved, and what methods are most appropriate in the specific situation.

### 3.2 Decide on purposeful sampling strategies and sample sizes

Review the assessment plan and consult your MEAL technical advisor for advice on purposeful sampling to help identify where, who and how many people or groups should be consulted in the assessment. Purposeful sampling identifies specific groups for whom data will be collected, allowing for comparison of perspectives on an issue (e.g. coastal/inland, rural/urban, most/least food insecure, etc). **Table 4c** below lists type(s) of purposeful sampling that are appropriate for assessments.

**Table 4c: Purposeful sampling strategies**

Purposeful sampling strategy	Description
Best- and worst-case sampling	Compares communities, individuals or facilities considered best or worst cases according to specific characteristics such as most and least vulnerable, best- and worst-performing facilities, etc.
Typical case sampling	Identifies those that are average or not markedly better or worse off than others according to specific characteristics
Critical case sampling	Identifies individuals, households or communities with particular characteristics critical to understanding a situation (e.g. community leaders, widows, neighborhoods of excluded groups)
Quota sampling	Samples individuals with particular characteristics in proportion to their prevalence in the community. For example, if an estimated 30 percent of households in a community are female-headed, 30 percent of respondents must be from female-headed households (while 70 percent will be from male-headed households).

If not yet determined by the sampling strategy, determine sample size. For qualitative data, no formula exists and there are trade-offs between depth and breadth (Patton 2008). Two rules of thumb for sample size follow:

- To minimize the bias inherent to any individual or group, plan to include two to three groups or individuals to represent each perspective of interest (e.g. for a project on girls' education, hold two to three focus group discussions with women, two to three with men, and two to three with teenage girls to compare perspectives)
- Interview to the point of redundancy - in other words, stop when the team realizes that they are not learning anything new by talking to more people)

### 3.3 Select and sequence methods and develop forms and instructions for each

Consult your MEAL advisor to make final decisions on methods in light of what data is needed and who you are interviewing or observing. Ensure that data collection methods provide **gender-disaggregated data** (See **Chapter II, Section 2** for more information.) **Table 4d** below lists common primary data collection methods.

#### PRACTICAL TIP:

While rare, if a population-based (statistically significant) survey is required for an assessment, consult your MEAL advisor and/or CRS' *Guidance on monitoring and evaluation* (Hagens et al 2012) on how to develop quantitative tools (Pages 43-49) and how to perform random sampling (Pages 54-60).

**For qualitative data, no formula exists and there are trade-offs between depth and breadth**

#### INTERVIEW

Interviews may be structured or semi-structured, following a list of open-ended questions or a checklist.

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**Table 4d: Selected primary data collection methods**

<b>Interviews or key informant interviews</b>	Interviews gather information from individuals who are usually selected based on particular characteristics. Interviews may be structured, using checklists or closed-ended questionnaires to generate quantitative data, or semi-structured, i.e. following a list of open-ended questions to generate rich, qualitative data.
<b>Focus group discussions</b>	A data collection method that involves groups of 6 to 12 people with specific characteristics who are invited to discuss a specific topic in detail. Participants' common characteristics may vary depending on the focus group topic, e.g. a particular problem, social status, gender, livelihood activity. The discussion is facilitated by a moderator, using a limited number of open-ended questions, to ensure maximum participation and in-depth discussion.
<b>Observation</b>	A data collection method in which the enumerator or staff person visually confirms and documents a context, characteristic, behavior, or action. Observations can be structured and use checklists of things to look for, or documented in narrative descriptions of what has been seen. Observation is often used to triangulate data collected through other methods.
<b>Transect walk</b>	A walk through a community or area to learn more through observation, informal interviews and discussions.
<b>Participatory mapping</b>	People or groups are invited to draw a map of their village, focusing on information relevant to assessment objectives, e.g. location of irrigated fields and rangeland, natural resources, infrastructure, social spaces, neighborhoods, markets, etc. The process of drawing the map serves to reveal divergences of perspective within the group and to probe issues that emerge.
<b>Venn diagrams</b>	A drawing of social relationships among groups, institutions, etc. that may be internal and/or external to the community.
<b>Seasonal calendar</b>	A participatory process of investigating how things such as agricultural activities, consumption, income, flooding, etc. change throughout the year. Seasonal calendars are usually conducted separately with groups of men and women and/or different food security groups, to compare results.
<b>Wealth/ Food security / Well-being ranking<sup>1</sup></b>	A process whereby community members identify three to five wealth, food security or well-being groups in their community and describe characteristics of each (in terms of assets, livelihood strategies, access to structures and systems, etc.) using stories, beans/stones, etc. For more information on participatory assessment methods, including participatory ranking exercises, consult <i>Guidance on participatory assessments</i> (Dummett et al 2013) Annex 5, Pages 17-19.

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When deciding on the **sequence** of primary data collection methods, consider the following:

- Move from the general to the specific
- Continually build on information that is already known (e.g. identify crops first, then do a market survey for these crops)
- With sensitive topics, start with questions to build rapport with interviewees, then ask more sensitive questions
- Use a logical order (e.g. identify livelihood groups first, then conduct separate focus group discussions to probe each group's coping strategies, access to services, and hopes for the future in order to disaggregate and compare responses)

Prepare interview guides, observation checklists and templates for note-takers for each method. When using visual methods (mapping, Venn diagrams, etc.) remember that the map is not the end product. Develop associated discussion guides to "interview the diagram." Translate all questionnaires and checklists into the appropriate language/s, and develop needed explanatory guidance for primary data collectors.



**With sensitive topics, start with questions to build rapport with interviewees, then ask more sensitive questions**

### 3.4 Hire and train staff and field-test methods

Identify primary data collectors (enumerators) and supervisors and clarify their roles and responsibilities. Ensure that the data collection team includes men and women to avoid bias, gain full access to male and female respondents and ensure the respondents feel safe. Orient primary data collectors and supervisors on the assessment objectives, information needs and methods. Have them review and practice the interview guides to become familiar with all questions. Train them in interviewing skills (e.g. how to probe, how to listen), transcribing and recording skills, and attitudes (e.g. the importance of respect, recognizing their own biases and gender sensitivity).

Field-test interview guides and other assessment tools, preferably twice before the assessment. During field-testing, check that questions are clear, unambiguous and yield the desired information. Also, check duration as interviews should not be longer than one hour.

### 3.5 Collect primary data

During data collection, ensure that supervisors frequently check on data quality. For example, they can observe interviews to see whether data collectors are probing to elicit the required depth of information and that data is consistently captured. Hold on-site daily debriefs to help:

- Identify preliminary findings while the information is fresh
- Identify any information gaps
- Refine the remaining sequence of methods

Ensure that respondents know who the data collectors are, the agency they represent and how the information will be used or if any is to be confidential. Ensure that respondents are not threatened or harmed and that you receive authorization to collect information from children. Ask permission before taking photos and recording interviews. Allow individuals to refuse to respond if they so wish. Over the course of data collecting, organize meetings and space to share findings with relevant community members and ensure that data is captured and documented.

### 3.6 Analyze primary data

Analyze quantitative and qualitative data separately. In each case, compare data among sub-groups and/or other characteristics, such as sex, location, wealth or food security ranking, and/or other appropriate characteristics, to highlight similarities and differences.

Enter any quantitative data into the relevant statistical program, for example, Microsoft Excel or SPSS Statistics. For qualitative data, organize disaggregated data using matrices, diagrams and lists. Qualitative data analysis matrices can be created in either Microsoft Word or Excel. If you have a large amount of data, use Excel to house the qualitative data so that you can use the COUNTIF function to identify where certain ideas or themes are mentioned.

**Table 4e.i** is an example of a matrix for organizing qualitative data for a food security project in Bangladesh according to three comparison groups (least, medium and most food insecure households by location. **Table 4e.ii** is an example of a matrix used to analyze focus group discussion results by gender and location.

#### BENEFICIARY ACCOUNTABILITY

Training of data collectors should include the need to inform the community of the assessment's purpose and methods and manage community expectations.



Ensure that respondents know who the data collectors are and the agency they represent

For more information on qualitative data analysis, consult the *Guidance on monitoring and evaluation*, Data Analysis and Interpretation standard, Annex B - Steps for Analysis of Qualitative data, Pages 96-98



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**Tables 4e: Examples of matrices for organizing primary data**  
**4e.i: By food insecurity and location**

	Least food insecure households		Medium food insecure households		Most food insecure households	
	Inland	Coastal	Inland	Coastal	Inland	Coastal
<b>Type of foods consumed</b>						
<b>Household assets</b>						

**4e.ii: By gender and location**

Type of focus group / location	How does the current level of water availability compare to this time last year?	How can you tell that the water situation is different?
Female focus group / Tacama Village		
Male focus group / Olindia Village		
Female key informant / Tacama Village		
Male key informant / Olindia Village		

Copy all relevant qualitative data into the corresponding matrix cell. Read through all of the data presented in the matrix: What phrases or key ideas are repeated in more than one data source? What phrases or ideas are unique to a particular subgroup? Once you have identified common phrases or ideas, code the data to determine how often and by which groups these ideas were cited.

Compare and contrast findings, highlighting patterns, themes, ranked or prioritized issues, gaps, trends and cause-and-effect relationships.

**3.7 Organize and document findings and analyses from primary data**

Following your assessment plan, organize the information collected according to your assessment questions. **Table 4f** below is the simple template used earlier to organize secondary data findings by assessment question. You can add primary data collection findings to this template.

**Table 4f: Template to summarize secondary and primary assessment findings**

Assessment Question 1:	X, Y, Z (findings from secondary data and citations) X, Y, Z (findings from primary data)
Assessment Question 2	X, Y, Z (findings from secondary data and citations) X, Y, Z (findings from primary data)
Etc.	Etc.

For each assessment question, write up findings and analyses from primary data. Start with quantitative data (numbers, average, mean, etc.), highlighting the range of answers by various groups and respondents. Follow this with findings from qualitative data (e.g. from focus group interviews and other methods).

### Further resources, tools and links

- *Guidance on participatory assessments* (Dummett et al 2013) Brief, practical guidance and tools for participatory assessment design, implementation and analysis. Includes an illustrative example.
- *A user's guide to integral human development (IHD): Practical guidance for CRS staff and partners* (Heinrich et al 2008) Guidance on data analysis using the IHD framework (Pages 38-43). A list of common primary data collection tools for each element of the IHD framework (Annex 1, Pages 57-58).
- *Guidance on monitoring and evaluation* (Hagens et al 2012) See in particular: Developing qualitative tools (Pages 50-53); Purposeful sampling (Pages 61-62); Training and field testing (Pages 64-69); Collecting qualitative data (Pages 70-88); Data analysis and interpretation (Pages 91-99).
- *ADS Chapter 205: Integrating gender equality and female empowerment in USAID's program cycle* (USAID 2013a)
- *Community peace and conflict mapping: A resource guide for community facilitators and peace partners* (CRS 2011a) 
- The *Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment (HOCAl)* tool in CRS' *Institutional strengthening guide* (CRS 2011b) should be used to guide assessments in projects that focus on institutional strengthening or that intend to improve quality of services.
- *Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): A manual for CRS field workers and partners* (Schoonmaker-Freudenberger 1999)

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## SECTION 4: FURTHER ANALYZE AND INTERPRET ALL ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

### When will you use this section?

- After organizing and analyzing secondary and primary data

### Steps and tools

#### 4.1 Prepare for further analysis and interpretation

Review the project design timeline to update who will be actively engaged in further analysis and interpretation and how this has been planned (e.g. in a workshop, meeting or some combination). Data interpretation can be influenced by people's perspectives and hidden biases, so consider gender and other characteristics when involving stakeholders. If possible, invite people who carried out the assessment, so that they can share their experiences.

**Data interpretation can be influenced by people's perspectives and hidden biases, so consider gender and other characteristics when involving stakeholders**

#### 4.2 Further analyze all assessment findings

Begin the workshop by reviewing the assessment objectives, the conceptual framework and assessment questions. Then present all secondary and primary data findings (**Steps 2.4** and **3.8**). Use the conceptual framework as a visual organizer. For example, write key findings on sticky notes and place these on the conceptual framework's boxes and arrows. Then workshop participants can analyze these relationships and linkages, e.g. how access to and the quality of government health services affect household behaviors in treating ill children or how possession of an asset such as small livestock reduces household vulnerability to shocks.

#### 4.3 Formulate a core problem statement

Drawing from assessment findings and analyses, identify one or more core problems that emerge from the assessment.

Describe the core problem: What is the nature of the problem, who is most affected by it, where and when is it most severe, how does it affect women, men, boys and girls? Summarize this description into a succinct core problem statement. **Table 4g** below contrasts a strong and weak problem statement.

**PROBLEM**  
A specific negative situation related to the human condition.  
*ProPack I (CRS 2004)*

**Table 4g: Strong and weak problem statements**

Strong problem statement	Weak problem statement
Fifty percent of children under 5 years of age living in Bangladesh's coastal areas are stunted and/or underweight.	Bangladeshi children do not get enough food to eat.

The weak problem statement does not specify precisely where this problem occurs, who (age group) is most affected or what the severity of the problem is. In addition, it states the problem as the absence of a solution: Its wording presupposes that the project should provide more food, which may or may not be the best strategy.

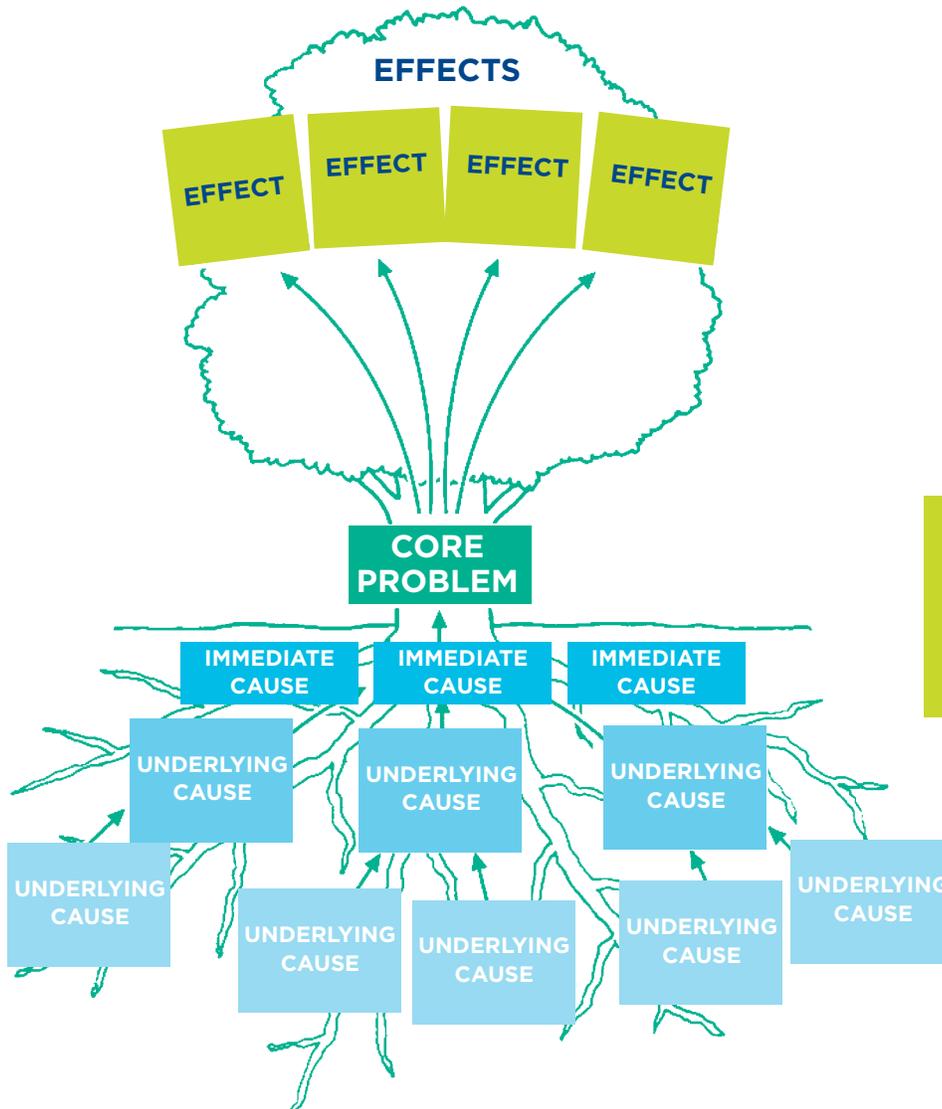
#### 4.4 Construct a problem tree

A problem tree is a useful tool for understanding cause-and-effect relationships. Effects are social, economic, political or environmental conditions that result from a problem. Immediate and underlying causes are factors in the household, community, organization or external environment that contribute to the problem. A problem tree helps the project design team and other stakeholders to further organize assessment data related to the immediate and underlying causes of the core problem. It provides a vital bridge to the objectives hierarchy in a results framework in the next step of project design.

##### Step-by-step guide to constructing a problem tree

- Make a problem tree diagram (see **Figure 4.4**)

**Figure 4.4: Problem tree**



**A CLEAR CORE PROBLEM** will help identify a clear project purpose (goal and/or strategic objective) and targeted beneficiaries.

**OBJECTIVES HIERARCHY**  
Together, the objective statements, all five boxes under the first column of the Proframe Matrix, make up the objectives hierarchy.

**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
Construct a problem tree using sticky notes that can be moved around as people discuss.

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- Write the core problem statement next to the tree trunk. (As appropriate, split a complex problem into several distinct problem statements and analyze each.)
- Using data from the assessment and analysis, populate immediate and underlying causes of the core problem (the “roots” portion of the problem tree). Use the conceptual framework to help organize these causes.
- Ask “But why?” or “What explains this?” to continue to identify other lower-level factors that contribute to a particular cause.
- Use arrows to show cause-and-effect relationships and links among these causes. These are called causal streams. They are linked factors that contribute to the problem and have high synergy with other causes (Fornoff 2014).
- Using data from the assessment, identify the effects of the core problem and populate the “leaves” of the problem tree.
- Ensure that the problem tree specifies how problems, causes, and effects impact women, men, boys or girls, as appropriate.
- Use assessment data to identify the relative importance of causal streams in assessed areas. Ensure that all potential determinants (or immediate causes) of the problem suggested by the conceptual framework are considered and discussed, but only include in the problem tree those determinants that have been shown by assessment data to be relevant in the specific context.

**PROBLEM TREES** are not brainstorming exercises! Use assessment data.

**CAUSAL STREAM**  
Linked factors that contribute to the problem and have high synergy with other causes.

Review the problem tree. Check that:

- The problem and causes are specific to the local situation where the assessment was conducted.
- The problem statement, causes and effects document who is most affected, where, and how.
- Causes and effects are based on solid data and findings from the assessment, not the project team’s biases or beliefs. The quality of a problem tree is not the number of causes and effects but rather the evidence base for them and the logical or hierarchical relationships between them.
- Causes are adequately described at different levels (immediate, intermediate and structural – or root causes).

**Check that causes and effects are based on solid data and findings from the assessment, not the project team’s biases or beliefs**

#### 4.5 Do a gap analysis

A gap analysis shows if other actors are already meeting identified, prioritized problems, needs and opportunities in a particular geographic zone and to what degree of quality. Information from a gap analysis is helpful for making geographic targeting decisions.

**Table 4h** includes a format to help organize assessment findings to analyze gaps. Consider mapping these findings to visualize who is doing what and where.

**Table 4h: Gap analysis**

Which are the other actors (NGOs, institutions, private sector, government, etc.) that address this problem?	What geographic areas do these actors cover?	How many people are reached? What kinds of people and subgroups are reached?	What are the actors’ current project strategies, approaches or activities?	What is the quality of their strategies, approaches or activities?

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#### 4.6 Use other analytical tools

As needed, use other analytical tools to interpret assessment findings. The integral human development framework (see **Figure 3.1**) is especially useful for:

- Analyzing findings related to capacities, strengths, assets and knowledge that can be leveraged in the project strategy
- Analyzing cause-and-effect linkages between household assets, strategies, structures and systems and shocks, cycles and trends

Gender analysis frameworks help to analyze how problems and causes are experienced differently by women, men, boys and girls and what explains this. Conflict analyses help identify causes of conflict, social divisions and violence, triggers that may escalate conflict, windows of opportunity to address conflict and actors' capacities for peacebuilding or conflict mitigation. See **Chapter II**'s checklists for more details.

#### 4.7 Interpret findings and draw conclusions

Review all the analyses. Determine the most essential, useful and meaningful findings and conclusions that have important implications for subsequent project design steps and decision-making. For example, identify key leverage points from the problem tree analysis. Key leverage points are causes that show the most important influence or are repeatedly identified across many causal streams.

In addition to the problem tree, draw conclusions concerning household assets and resources. These can be leveraged in the project strategy to help address identified needs and problems. For example, a project strategy can strengthen an existing, strong network of indigenous women's groups, representing a sustainable community resource.

Ask these questions to encourage critical reflection and synthesis of findings so that you can draw conclusions:

- What are the most important findings regarding the problem or problems to be addressed by this project? Why are these findings most important?
- What are the most important findings regarding resources and strengths to consider in developing the project strategy? Why are these findings most important?
- Where do findings converge and diverge?

Summarize the most significant findings and conclusions. Review these with all involved to ensure they have been captured accurately. As feasible, validate these findings and conclusions with key stakeholders, including representatives of project beneficiaries.

#### 4.8 Document and communicate assessment findings and conclusions

Document the assessment's key data, findings and conclusions in a written assessment report. The report can be used for communication with project stakeholders and also to write relevant proposal sections. If time allows, especially if the assessment was conducted prior to the opportunity release, consider sharing your report with the donor in order to influence the possible content of the call. If time is limited as well as in competitive environments, finalization of the written assessment report is usually done after proposal submission. Identify ways to communicate elements of this report with potential project beneficiaries. Signal any assessment findings and questions that may contribute to developing a project learning agenda.

**KEY LEVERAGE POINTS**  
Causes that show the most important influence or are repeatedly identified across many causal streams.

With qualitative data, do not refer to percentages. Use statements such as "7 out of 10 focus groups stated that improved hygiene practices were among their community's top priorities" *Guidance on monitoring and evaluation, Page 97*

### Further resources, tools and links

- *Designing Title II Multi-Year Assistance Programs (MYAPs): A resource manual for CRS country programs* (CRS 2008b)  Problem trees and key leverage points, Chapter 5 (Pages 50-54).
- *Guidance on monitoring and evaluation* (Hagens et al 2012) Data analysis and interpretation (Pages 91-99).
- *A user's guide to integral human development (IHD): Practical guidance for CRS staff and partners* (Heinrich et al 2008) Detailed guidance on data analysis using the IHD framework (Pages 38-43).



## SECTION 5: LINK TO THE PROPOSAL

Assessment, analysis and interpretation provide findings and conclusions that help you to write a rich, compelling and situation-specific problem analysis section of the proposal. Use both quantitative and qualitative assessment findings as sources of information to clearly describe the problem and its causes and effects in the specific project location and with the specific groups and sub-groups identified. When relevant, use the donor's preferred conceptual framework (see **Appendix 3**) to organize assessment findings and conclusions. Write this section so that it clearly links to subsequent proposal sections on the project objectives, project strategy, theory of change and assumptions.

**Assessment, analysis and interpretation ... help you to write a rich, compelling and situation-specific problem analysis section of the proposal**



## SECTION 6: HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

### Section 1: Plan the assessment

In general, the objective of an assessment in an emergency is to understand needs, capacities, coping mechanisms and priorities of the most vulnerable groups within the affected population. The IHD framework is relevant as it helps you understand how shocks affect assets, how households and communities cope, market disruptions, loss of government services, as well as new opportunities that the changed environment may provide (Heinrich et al 2008).

Because of time pressures, assessment steps are compressed and a good-enough approach is applied to sampling and data collection. Assessments are iterative, becoming more focused and in-depth as initial decisions are made. There are usually three phases: initial, rapid and in-depth. **Table 4k** (at the end of the chapter) describes and compares these three phases.

### Sections 2 and 3: Collect, organize and analyze secondary and primary data

Collect secondary data on the scale and severity of the situation from UN and government sources. As the situation remains fluid, consult these sources regularly. In the initial stages, communication with key informants and other actors in affected areas is particularly important given the dearth of reliable secondary data.

Use good-enough purposeful sampling during Phase 2 of the assessment (rapid) and collect information on the four types of need (see **Figure 4.3**) in order to triangulate. Use Sphere standards to define "normative need". Direct observation is one of the most important methods in a rapid assessment and field-based staff can provide first-hand information.

### Section 4: Further analyze and interpret all assessment findings

Analysis and interpretation of assessment findings is conducted more frequently, on a daily basis, given the immediacy of information needs as well as the fluid context.

Gap analyses are particularly important in an emergency response. Involve field-based staff who can compare findings from different locations and use coordination mechanisms (e.g. OCHA cluster meetings) along with one-on-one meetings to regularly collect information on who is doing what and where.

**The IHD framework is relevant as it helps you understand how shocks affect assets, how households and communities cope, market disruptions, loss of government services, as well as new opportunities that the changed environment may provide**

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## Lessons learned

- Due to time constraints, it is tempting to rely on secondary data from clusters or the government to make project design decisions. Resist this temptation as secondary data usually focuses on quantitative damage assessment and losses. Always gather information from the people most affected to understand their priority needs, coping strategies and resources.

### Further resources, tools and links

- [Guidance on emergency assessments](#) (CRS 2014b)
- [The Sphere Handbook](#) (The Sphere Project 2011) Core Standards 1, 2 and 3 and accompanying key actions, indicators and guidance notes.
- [Emergency needs assessment online game](#) in CRSLeans

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## SECTION 7: TABLES AND EXAMPLES

**Table 4i: Example of an assessment plan**

A completed assessment plan with detailed information for Objective 1.

<p><b>Assessment objective(s):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective 1: To understand the nature and causes of child undernutrition in the Central Plateau area of Haiti</li> <li>• Objective 2: To understand household practices, beliefs and community norms related to child nutrition and access to nutrition services</li> <li>• Objective 3: To identify which organizations are already providing nutrition services, their reach and quality</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Use:</b> Assessment findings will be used to select project areas, determine project objectives, develop a project strategy for social and behavior change, identify assumptions, decide how immediate, underlying and structural causes will be addressed and by whom.</p>		
<p><b>Relevant conceptual framework(s):</b> UNICEF conceptual framework for child undernutrition (see <b>Figure 4.1</b>)</p>		
<p><b>What:</b> What questions will be studied for each objective? What data needs to be collected?</p>	<p><b>How:</b> How will the data be collected? What methods are most appropriate? What is the best sequence?</p>	<p><b>Who and Where:</b> Who needs to be interviewed or involved? Where should data be collected?</p>
<p><b>Questions for Objective 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.1 What are the rates of low birth weight, child underweight, stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies in the Central Plateau?</li> <li>• 1.2 How do these rates vary in rural and urban communes and among households?</li> <li>• 1.3 What are the most significant underlying causes of undernutrition in each commune?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Secondary data:</b> Rates, national- and district-level data (if available). To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent Ministry of Health / UNICEF nutrition situation analysis</li> <li>• Recent USAID nutrition strategy for the country</li> <li>• District-level health center records</li> <li>• To be collected and analyzed before primary data collection</li> </ul> <p><b>Primary data:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Focus group discussions</li> <li>• Household interviews and observations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Secondary data:</b> USAID, UNICEF and Ministry of Health nutrition offices, MOH district health center statistics office, online data search</p> <p><b>Key informants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Plateau nutritionist</li> <li>• Commune-level health officers</li> <li>• CRS and SCF nutritionists</li> <li>• Community health workers, traditional birth attendants</li> </ul> <p><b>Focus group discussions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural mothers and grandmothers</li> <li>• Urban mothers and grandmothers</li> </ul> <p><b>Household level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to a small number of urban and rural households, best and worst cases identified by community health workers</li> </ul>

**Table 4j: Common sources of secondary data**

Source	Type of document with secondary data
CRS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other assessment reports and proposals</li> <li>Strategic plans</li> <li>Relevant baseline study reports</li> </ul>
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) reports</li> <li>Technical reports and studies from ministries</li> <li>Early warning system reports</li> <li>National policies and plans</li> </ul>
Donors (USAID, DFID, EU, CIDA, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studies and assessment reports</li> <li>Country strategies</li> <li>FEWS-net</li> </ul>
Technical support organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FANTA (Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project) studies and reports</li> <li>Cash and Learning Partnerships (CaLP) studies and reports</li> </ul>
UN (UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, WHO, UNHCR, OCHA, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and country-specific situation analysis of women and children (UNICEF)</li> <li>Human Development Index Reports (UNDP)</li> <li>Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) (UNDP)</li> <li>Vulnerability Assessment Mapping (VAM) (WFP)</li> <li>Coordinating mechanism reports, cluster notes and assessments (OCHA)</li> </ul>
World Bank, Regional Development Banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)</li> </ul>
University or government research bodies, e.g. Central Statistics Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studies published in academic journals</li> <li>Studies conducted for international organizations</li> </ul>
Peer-reviewed journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Lancet</i>, <i>Development in Practice</i>, <i>World Development</i>, etc.</li> </ul>
Other NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studies, assessment reports, baseline survey reports</li> </ul>
Web sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Google Scholar</a> (free peer-reviewed journal articles/abstracts)</li> <li><a href="#">Mendeley</a> (reference manager and academic social network)</li> <li><a href="#">Scopus</a> (abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature)</li> <li><a href="#">ELDIS</a> (online information service providing free access to research on international development issues)</li> </ul>

**Table 4k: Comparison of initial, rapid and in-depth assessments\***

	Initial	Rapid	In-depth
<b>Timing after onset**</b>	First 48 hours and as needed	1-3 weeks, depending on site access and as needed	Usually 1-2 weeks after the rapid assessment is completed and as needed
<b>Purpose</b>	Understand magnitude and impact; identify worst-affected area; help decide where to conduct rapid assessment	Determine priority needs for immediate response; sectors associated with the likely response; and preliminary targeting	Refine implementation strategy in each sector (sector specific in-depth assessment).  Reassess and adjust ongoing response; design follow-on response
<b>What information is needed</b>	Type of damage, estimate of those affected and where, trends, access, Do No Harm considerations	Who (numbers of people, what groups most affected), where, what needs and coping strategies and capacities, protection and vulnerability issues, identify gaps (who is doing what and where), political and security implications of response	In addition to information in <b>Chapter IV</b> , pre-disaster information on practices and access to services, available resources and coping mechanisms, attitudes to new practices or possible interventions, recovery trends
<b>How information is collected</b>	Secondary data review, phone calls to local partners or stakeholders and, if possible, quick site visits	Primary data collection through key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews of affected people, observation, transect walks, informal group discussions	See <b>Chapter IV</b> information and refer to <i>The Sphere Handbook</i>
<b>Decisions and use of information</b>	Go/no-go decision for response; determine where to conduct rapid assessment	Confirm “go” decision, start providing immediate life-saving relief, write emergency proposal for CRS funds, talk to donors, write concept notes for additional resources	Inform actual response (adjust immediate relief, initiate additional interventions)  Inform (subsequent) concept note and full proposals

Source: *Guidance on emergency assessments* (CRS 2014b)

\* For more information on participatory assessment methods, including participatory ranking exercises, consult *Guidance on Participatory Assessments* (Dummett et al 2013), Annex 5, Pages 17-19.

\*\* Access to the site is the primary determinant of timing. If physical access and security are not an issue, this reflects time required to put together the assessment plan, develop the tools, and organize and train an assessment team.

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## CHAPTER V: RESULTS FRAMEWORK, PROJECT STRATEGY + THEORY OF CHANGE

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes eight sections:

Section 1: Set a preliminary project goal and strategic objectives

Section 2: Identify and analyze possible strategy options

Section 3: Select and refine the project strategy

Section 4: Articulate and test the theory of change

Section 5: Determine the intermediate results and finalize the results framework

Section 6: Link to the proposal

Section 7: How is this different in an emergency response?

Section 8: Tables and examples

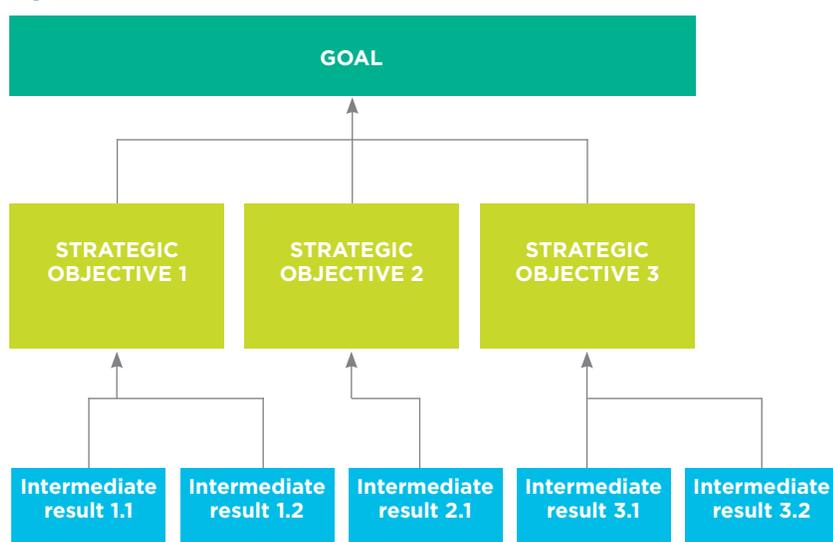
#### Standards of quality

- The results framework and its objectives reflect donor requirements, the relevant conceptual framework(s) and an explicit theory of change.
- Project strategy choices are based on evidence, tailored to the local context and informed by donor guidelines.
- The rationale for the selected project strategy reflects cost impact analyses of management plan options (see **Chapter VIII**).
- The process of developing a results framework and project strategy involves a broad range of CRS and partner staff and is informed by the voices and views of male and female beneficiaries, consulted during the assessment.

#### Why is this step of project design so important?

Setting higher-level objectives, selecting a project strategy and developing a clear and explicit theory of change are critical moments in the project design process. In essence, you are making choices about the overall purpose, approach and scope of the project. You decide which problems, causes and determinants to address, what strengths and opportunities to leverage, where you will work, with whom and at what scale. You specify what the project will do and what it will not do. You make explicit how you expect the project will lead to intended outcomes and impact.

**Figure 5.1: Results framework**



This step of project design is often done in a workshop setting, together with analysis and interpretation of assessment findings. See **Appendix 2** for more information.

**RESULTS FRAMEWORK**  
An easy-to-read diagram that gives a snapshot of the top levels of a project's objectives hierarchy (means-to-end relationship).

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A results framework (RF) (**Figure 5.1**) is an easy-to-read diagram that gives a snapshot of the top levels of a project's objectives hierarchy (means-to-end relationship). The RF describes the change the project wants to bring about (strategic objective or SO), why this change is important (goal) and what needs to happen (intermediate result or IR) for this change to occur.

Carefully constructing a results framework with an if-and-then logic ensures that there are no unjustified assumptions as to how project IRs contribute to each SO, and the SOs in turn contribute to the goal. A results framework makes the overarching purpose of the project clear and understandable, making it a good communication tool.

A project strategy describes what the project will do (how CRS and its partners will deliver outcomes and impact) and with whom (beneficiaries and change agents) to address identified problems and opportunities and achieve higher-level objectives, in particular the strategic objectives. Terms similar to "strategy" are "intervention", "approach" or "response". The project strategy may involve social and behavior change, service delivery, institution and systems strengthening, training, capacity building, facilitation of networks or processes, infrastructure, influence and advocacy, community empowerment, product distribution or some combination (Funnell and Rogers 2011). The project strategy may be integrated or focus on a single sector. Choosing the most appropriate project strategy requires an analytical and systematic process. You must consider evidence, costs, budget ceiling, value for money, donor requirements and priorities, partnership issues and organizational capacity, risks and sustainability. Balancing all these factors involves weighing pros and cons and making trade-offs.

A project's results framework and project strategy should all reflect an explicit theory of change (TOC). The TOC makes clear how and why you and others expect or assume that certain actions will produce desired changes (for individuals, groups, communities or institutions) in the environment where the project will be implemented. A TOC is a concise, explicit explanation of: "If we do X, then Y, because Z (Funnell and Rogers 2011, USAID 2013d). A TOC includes the "if-and-then" objectives hierarchy (which explains how) but also includes "because" (which explains why). A TOC is sometimes referred to as a "development hypothesis."

A robust TOC draws from research-based theories (such as diffusion of innovation, stages of change, self-efficacy, tipping points, etc.), conceptual frameworks and/or deep experience and lessons learned. The TOC builds on this general evidence base (the "because") to articulate a testable if-and-then hypothesis specific to the project context.

The TOC (see **Figure 5.2** on the next page) is not simply a narrative description of the results framework, because the RF only reflects the elements (the "ifs") that will be delivered by the project, whereas the TOC also states those actions or contributions critical to the project success but which CRS expects other actors to deliver. In other words, the TOC reflects both the RF and the project's critical hypotheses or assumptions.

When a TOC is not made explicit, it usually indicates unclear reasoning or hidden beliefs about how change is expected to occur in a specific project context. Articulating the TOC helps a project design team explore evidence of a project strategy's likely success, its fit in a particular socio-cultural context and its assumptions about people's or organizations' willingness and capacities. An explicit TOC helps ensure that decisions on objectives and the project strategy are clear, credible, defensible and responsive to the realities of the project environment (Funnell and Rogers 2011).

**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
Goal, SOs, IRs (along with outputs and activities in the Proframe) are all "objective statements", each describing a specific level of objective. Even if the SO is the only level to include the term in its name.

**SUSTAINABILITY**  
A concern with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.

**THEORY OF CHANGE**  
A concise, explicit explanation of: "If we do X, then Y because Z".

**When a TOC is not made explicit, it usually indicates unclear reasoning or hidden beliefs about how change is expected to occur**

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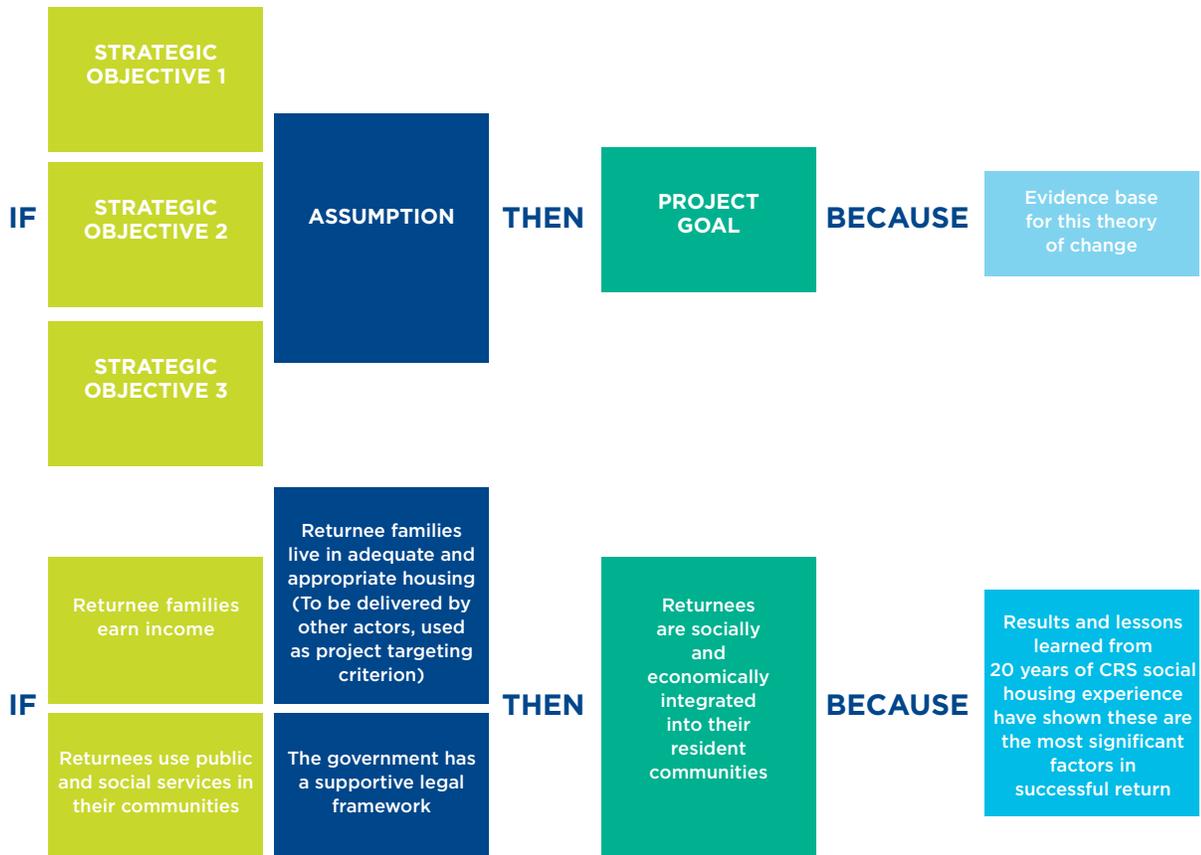
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Figure 5.2: Theory of change



Past experience shows that: **IF** returnee families live in adequate and appropriate housing, earn income, and use public and social services in their communities, and as long as the government has a supportive legal framework, **THEN** returnees will be socially and economically integrated into their resident communities. (Adapted from *Supporting sustainable reintegration of returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Proposal submitted by CRS/Bosnia and Herzegovina (CRS/BiH) to US Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrations (BPRM) in 2013)

**Exploring the theory of change**

A CRS project design team developed a project strategy of “model farmers” providing extension services in their own communities. The team’s initial theory of change was that if the best male and female farmers were trained in improved techniques of crop production and given bicycles, then these farmers would be able and willing to impart this knowledge to other farmers in the community. Then, agriculture production would increase, and food insecurity would be lessened.

While this TOC may have had merit – and may indeed have worked in some communities – the project design team realized that the evidence base was weak. Studies and lessons learned suggested that farmers (a) did not necessarily make good trainers; (b) had few incentives to impart new knowledge since keeping the knowledge to themselves gave them a competitive edge; and (c) may not have had time to conduct training. Meanwhile assessment findings revealed that in this specific project context, “model” female farmers could be reluctant to use bicycles due to gender norms.

Given these findings, the team explored other project strategy options. After careful analysis, they chose another project strategy: strengthening the capacity of government extension services and of existing indigenous farmers’ groups and facilitating linkages between these actors.

**THEORY OF CHANGE:** The definition and scope of “theory of change” can differ among organizations. Be sure to review and understand how the donor defines a TOC in your project design situation.

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SECTION 1: SET A PRELIMINARY PROJECT GOAL AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

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When will you use this section?

- After analyzing and interpreting assessment and analysis findings
- In some cases, after secondary data collection and analysis to determine tentative project objectives and targeting before starting primary data collection

Steps and tools

1.1 Review assessment findings and implications for the goal and strategic objectives

Review the problem tree, including the core problem and underlying causes, the gap analysis and all other assessment findings.

Assessment findings will help develop the goal and strategic objectives as follows:

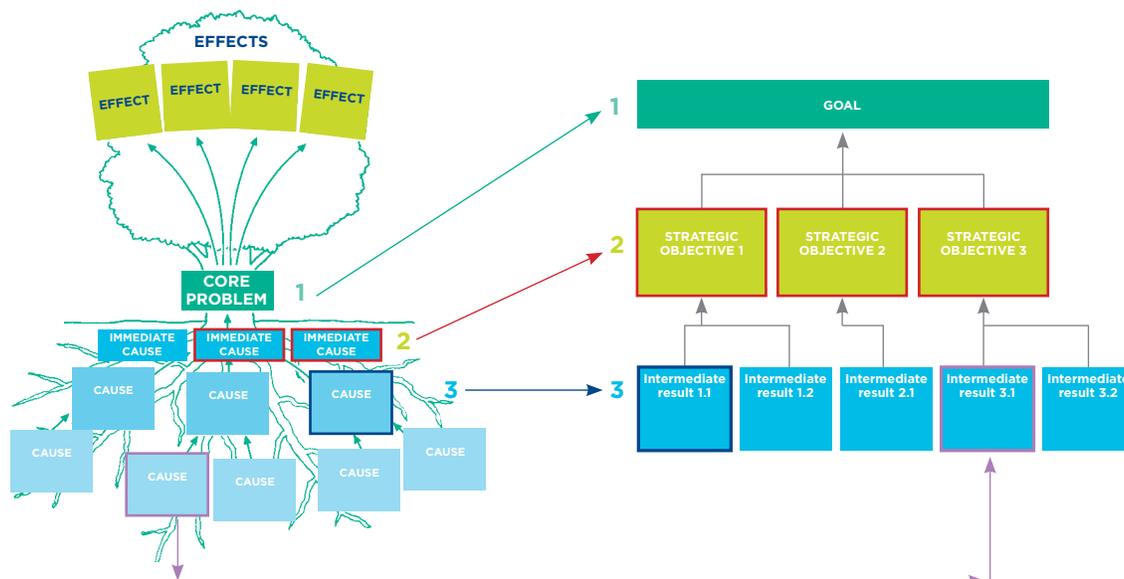
- The nature of the problem itself, including who is affected, when and how, highlighting gender differences: this is the context-specific situation that the project will aim to change.
- Where the problem and unmet needs are most severe. This often comes from secondary data and analysis of comparative needs and is used to justify targeting decisions.
- The problem tree “effects” and analysis of comparative and normative needs serve to document the importance of the problem and to justify why the project is addressing it.
- The problem’s most significant causes, key leverage points and causal streams revealed by the assessment, compared to the relevant conceptual framework or donor guidance. This will serve to justify the proposed project objectives and strategy, i.e. what causes the project will or will not address.
- Existing opportunities, resources and capacities that can be built on or strengthened as part of the project strategy.

Assessment findings will help develop the goal and strategic objectives

1.2 Transform the core problem and immediate causes into positive statements

To link assessment findings and evidence-based decisions for the project goal and SOs, flip the problem tree’s core problem (trunk) and immediate causes into mirrored, positive statements.

Figure 5.3: From problem tree to results framework



For example, if the problem tree’s core problem is: *“Poor rural households in remote districts of Ghor Province suffer from severe seasonal food insecurity (reduced quality and quantity of meals) for 4 to 6 months of the year”*, the mirrored, positive statement is *“Poor rural households in remote districts of Ghor Province enjoy year-round food security.”* If one of the immediate causes of seasonal food insecurity is *“low dietary diversity”*, then the mirrored, positive statement is *“increased dietary diversity.”*

In flipping the problem and causes, you have begun to map a “pathway of change” that will be refined in subsequent steps. The pathway of change identifies domains (relationships, behaviors, systems, institutions, laws, policies) where change must occur to reach a desired condition. Refine the positive statement tree into a pathway of change to show actions and outcomes that lead to a desired condition. At this point in time, do not limit the pathway to what CRS and its partners will eventually do. Depict the “whole picture” (Fornoff 2014). This is a first iteration of the project’s TOC.

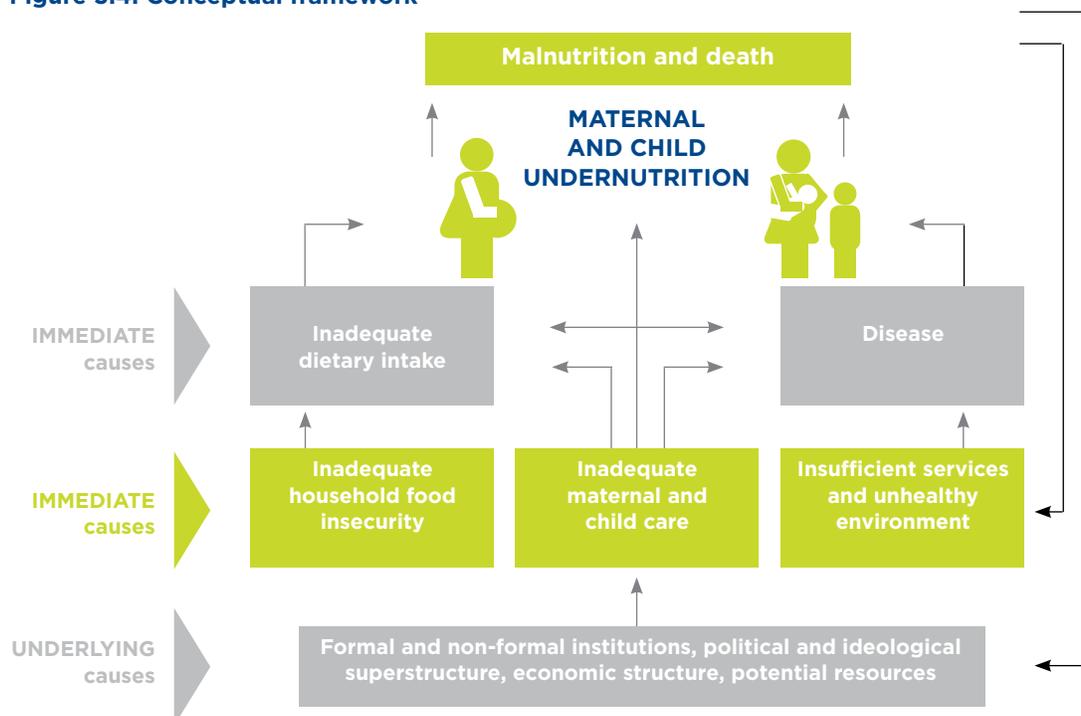
**The pathway of change identifies domains (relationships, behaviors, systems, institutions, laws, policies) where change must occur to reach a desired condition**

### 1.3 Draft the project goal and strategic objectives

Use the assessment findings and positive statements from **Step 1.2** to draft a preliminary goal and strategic objectives. In most cases, the goal relates to the core problem. For example, if the core problem is that girls in rural districts drop out of school in the 4th grade, a draft goal may be “boys and girls complete their primary education.” And in most cases, the SOs relate to the immediate causes of the core problem (which in turn usually reflect the conceptual framework’s immediate determinants). For instance, if the core problem relates to undernutrition, the goal will likely be about healthy, well-nourished children, while the SOs will likely reflect identified issues related to household food insecurity, inadequate care, and/or unhealthy household environment.

For now, do not worry about precise wording.

**Figure 5.4: Conceptual framework**



## 1.4 Decide on the appropriate number of strategic objectives and the project's scope and scale

Decide how many (one or more) SOs are appropriate. This is a critical decision. Considering the assessment's findings and conclusions, discuss these questions:

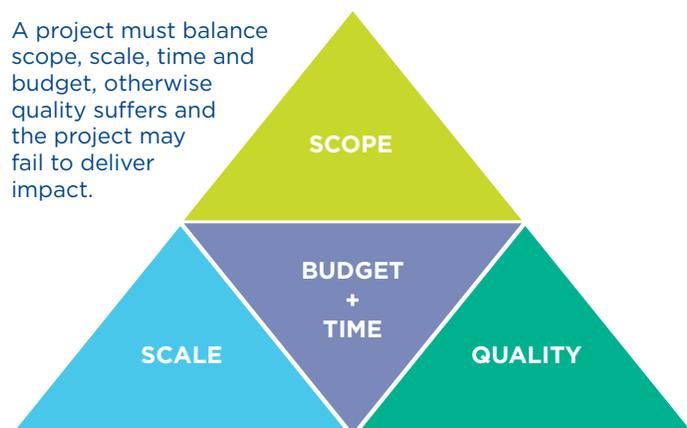
- What causes (or causal streams) from the problem tree and conceptual framework have significant influence (key leverage points) that if addressed, have the potential to bring about positive change for identified people and groups?
- Should the project address all or some of these important determinants/ immediate causes of the problem?
- What are important unmet needs and gaps? Of those, which ones is the donor most likely to fund?
- What can the project reasonably address given the project timeframe, the available estimated budget, and existing and potential capacities?
- What level of change can you realistically expect to achieve by the end of the project?
- What technical and management capacities are needed to address these problems and causes and attain the desired level of change? Of these capacities, which do CRS and its partners already have and which would need strengthening?

The conceptual framework can help you to clarify the project strategy scope and scale, and decide what the project will and will not do. For example, you may decide that a district nutrition project strategy will address two out of three underlying factors: household food insecurity and inadequate care. You have decided not to address the conceptual framework's third determinant because, in this case, assessment findings revealed that hygiene conditions at the household level were generally good (i.e. this was not evidenced to be a relevant cause in this context) and that the government was providing free, quality health services. The quality and accessibility of the government's health services will be a critical assumption of the project and reflected in its TOC.

Project success is dependent on balancing scope (e.g. number of potential sectors), scale (e.g. numbers of people, organizations, geographic reach), time and budget. An over-ambitious design often fails to deliver results if time or resources are not adequate. In most cases, the project timeframe and budget are predetermined, so your job is to identify the appropriate project scope and scale to ensure quality implementation required to achieve impact. Selecting project SOs requires making well-reasoned trade-offs.

**Figure 5.5: Balancing scope, scale, budget and time**

A project must balance scope, scale, time and budget, otherwise quality suffers and the project may fail to deliver impact.



Adapted from the project constraint triangle in *The Guide to the PMD Pro: Project Management for Development Professionals* (PM4NGOs, 2011)

**The conceptual framework can help you to clarify the project strategy scope and scale, and decide what the project will and will not do**

### CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Factors or conditions outside of the project design team's control yet the existence of which is critical to allowing the project to achieve its next-highest-level objective.

**INTEGRATION**  
The intentional effort to design and deliver complementary services that leverage synergies to empower people, transform institutions and advance integral human development.

Consider an integrated project in which structural “root causes” from the problem tree can be realistically addressed in light of the project’s scope, scale, time and budget. Integration is the intentional effort to design and deliver complementary services that leverage synergies to empower people, transform institutions and advance integral human development. Integration can be reflected in complementary SOs across technical sectors, or in the project strategy and IRs (see **Section 2** below). Integration may involve layering (linking a new project to existing programs in a geographic area), working across technical sectors (e.g. integrating agriculture and nutrition by providing a package of interventions to households) or sequencing interventions over time.

Don't forget to consider which problems may also be in the process of being addressed by others (government ministries, the private sector, other NGOs, etc.) or which are already being planned to be addressed within your project’s lifetime.

In general, the fewer SOs the better, as this suggests a focused project. One CRS study found that focused projects with fewer SOs and IRs were more successfully implemented.

**If the donor has prescribed strategic objectives, use these.** Analyze if and how these SOs are validated by the assessment findings. This demonstrates your knowledge of the project context. As appropriate, consider using a CRS cost share or other complementary funding for an SO that the donor will not support if the assessment suggests it is a significant determinant of the problem. In one project with a prescribed SO for antiretroviral medication, CRS used its own funds for a complementary food and nutrition SO. The subsequent success and positive impact of good nutrition alongside medication helped convince donors of the need to fund SOs related to food and nutrition as a part of antiretroviral therapy. In general, when SOs are donor prescribed, focus decision-making on selecting a project strategy, articulating the TOC, and developing lower-level objectives (intermediate results, outputs and activities) that achieve the prescribed SOs.

**If the donor has prescribed strategic objectives, use these**

**BENEFICIARIES**  
An individual, group, or organization, whether targeted or not, that benefits, directly or indirectly, from a development intervention or emergency response

**1.5 Refine the preliminary goal and strategic objectives**

Translate decisions and draft objectives into more refined goal and SO statements. Identify the project beneficiaries – the individuals who will benefit, directly or indirectly, from the change the project aims to deliver. For instance, the beneficiaries of a child nutrition project would be vulnerable children under 3 years of age. Beneficiaries of the education project mentioned in **Section 1.3** are girls aged 9 to 12 (primary school Grades 4 and above) in rural districts. Be sure that the goal and SO statements reflect how men, women, boys and girls experience the core problem differently.

The goal describes the longer-term, wider development change to which the project contributes – perhaps in a given region or the country as a whole. Think of the goal as a larger, longer-term hope or aspiration. Identify the general population of intended beneficiaries (individuals, groups or organizations) and where they are located.

**Examples of goal statements**

For an agriculture project	For a peacebuilding project	For a newborn health project
The families of poor women rice farmers in the most vulnerable regions of the country enjoy year-round food security	Inhabitants of the region experience greater levels of personal security	The country's infant mortality rate is reduced

Strategic objectives are the central purpose of the project. They describe the anticipated noticeable or significant benefits that are achieved or enjoyed by beneficiaries by the end of the project. Each SO expresses an aim that is realistic, specific to the project and measurable.

### Example of SO statements

For an agriculture project	For a peacebuilding project	For newborn health project
Women rice farmers have increased the productivity of their rice crop in environmentally sound ways	The two faith groups have reduced tensions between them	Newborn mortality rates in two regions are reduced

#### Further resources, tools and links

- *Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Guidance for developing logical and results frameworks* (Levine 2007)



## SECTION 2: IDENTIFY AND ANALYZE POSSIBLE STRATEGY OPTIONS

### When will you use this section?

- After identifying the preliminary goal and strategic objectives – the focus and purpose of the project. You may need to apply this section for each strategic objective.

### 2.1 Identify possible strategy options

In any situation, there are often different, plausible approaches to addressing problems and opportunities and reaching objectives. For example, in a community where the assessment revealed a high prevalence of diarrhea in children, poor hygiene practices and limited access to sanitation, and one of the SOs is improved sanitation, strategy options could include:

- Linking the community development committee with government WASH services and private sector soap distributors
- Training community facilitators in the Community-Led Total Sanitation approach
- Delivering ready-made latrine slabs and handwashing stations

Each of these project strategies is potentially effective. Each strategy (or a combination of them) could result in achieving the project’s desired SO.

Consider evidence to identify relevant, appropriate and potentially effective strategy options. Evidence includes:

- Assessment findings about community needs, gaps and opportunities
- Best practices: Approaches that are internationally accepted as most effective or that have consistently shown superior results
- Lessons learned: Findings or generalizations from an analysis of problems, failures and/or successes that illustrate a strategy or process to be followed in the future

Information on best practices and lessons learned can come from experts and technical advisors, monitoring and evaluation findings, learning events, and/or literature reviews. If you need to conduct a literature review, consult:

- Relevant networks (e.g. community health or food security)
- Donor and technical support guidance
- Relevant CRS program quality standards, sectoral guidelines or other strategy documents
- Relevant UN reports
- Evaluation reports or abstracts for projects addressing similar problems in similar contexts

**Consider evidence to identify relevant, appropriate and potentially effective strategy options**

## 2.2 Analyze each plausible strategy option

Use a systematic process of weighing the pros and cons of each plausible strategy option. Answer the questions below for each strategy option. Use **Table 5b** (at the end of the chapter) to summarize your answers.

- 1. Who is involved:** Who does this strategy propose to work with (IR level) and who would benefit (SO level)?
- 2. Evidence of impact:** What do technical advice, literature and standards tell you about this strategy's likelihood to bring about the desired change (SO)? What made this strategy successful elsewhere? Do these factors of success exist in the current context?
- 3. Advantages:** What are the advantages of this strategy (e.g. cost, feasibility, value for money, leveraging opportunities, scale versus scope, sustainability, etc.)?
- 4. Disadvantages:** What are the disadvantages of this strategy (e.g. cost, feasibility, value for money, leveraging opportunities, scale versus scope, sustainability, etc.)?
- 5. Assumptions:** What assumptions does the strategy make about the interests and influence of project participants and beneficiaries? For example, is it assumed that community members will freely volunteer? That religious leaders will offer full support? What negative responses might be anticipated, given these interests and influences? What assumptions does the strategy make about other factors in the environment (e.g. other actors, the government, etc.)?
- 6. Risks:** What are the risks associated with this strategy option (e.g. power or gender considerations, CRS and partner current or potential capacity, etc.)? How can the project strategy mitigate these risks?
- 7. Likelihood of impact in this project context:** In light of the assessment findings, how likely is it that this strategy can address problems, leverage opportunities and bring about desired change (SO) equally well in this project's context?

## 2.3. Conduct further assessment and analysis

If assessment findings do not provide the level of detail required to analyze and compare the strategy options identified, you may need to gather more information at this time, e.g. by conducting a market assessment or a barrier analysis, reviewing service provider availability, assessing acceptability of the different strategy options by intended beneficiaries, etc.

**Behavior change and barrier analysis:** Many projects address a problem by aiming to change sub-optimal behaviors and promoting “improved” behaviors or practices. To design an appropriate strategy, you need to understand what people do and why, and what may be required for them to adopt the new behavior. You may need to complement your assessment findings by conducting a barrier analysis. A barrier analysis or a shorter doer/non-doer analysis (where appropriate) are proven survey methodologies that can help you develop effective project strategies and apply an appropriate theory of change for behavior change. Gather and analyze data so that you understand whose behavior needs to change, who influences that group, what the determinants of the group's current behaviors are, and which determinants are most powerful.

When time is short, telescope this effort by gathering relevant secondary data, interviewing a limited number of households and doing a quick “orbit of influence” exercise (see **Figure 5.6**). If time is insufficient at project design and the donor does not require this level of detail in the proposal, you can also schedule and budget a barrier analysis at project start-up.



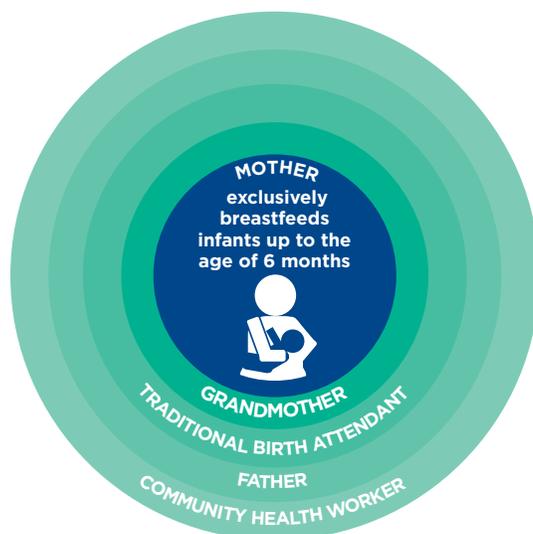
Use a systematic process of weighing the pros and cons of each plausible strategy option

What assumptions does the strategy make about the interests and influence of project participants and beneficiaries?

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Figure 5.6: Orbit of influence



When time is short, telescope this effort by gathering relevant secondary data, interviewing a limited number of households and doing a quick “orbit of influence” exercise

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## 2.4. Conduct a capacity analysis

Conduct a capacity analysis, using existing findings and knowledge of CRS and its partners' capacities related to proposed project objectives and strategy options. A capacity analysis is useful to determine which cause(s) of the problem can be feasibly addressed, to revisit decisions related to project scope and scale, and to help you select an appropriate project strategy.

Critically review CRS and partner technical, material, financial, human and managerial capacities related to the proposed sector(s) and complement of SOs, as well as the various strategy options identified. What are the implications of each possible strategy on required CRS and partner technical and management capacities?

For each strategy option, ask:

- Are existing capacities sufficient given the proposed technical focus (scope and depth of expertise), preliminary targeting decisions and anticipated scale?
- Will any capacity need strengthening before or during project start-up to ensure quality implementation?

### Further resources, tools and links

- [Literature review guidance](#) (Dummett and Hagens 2014) Detailed guidance on how to conduct a literature review. A comprehensive list of data bases, search engines and data sources (Pages 6-9).
- [A practical guide to conducting a barrier analysis](#) (Kittle 2013) Training curriculum that aims to build skills to plan and conduct a barrier analysis survey.



## SECTION 3: SELECT AND REFINE THE PROJECT STRATEGY

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### When will you use this section?

- After identifying and analyzing strategy options. You may need to repeat these steps for each strategic objective.

### Steps and Tools

#### 3.1 Organize project strategy options

Eliminate all strategies from the list (in **Table 5b**) that are obviously inappropriate, not feasible or that show little potential for impact in the project context. Then, regroup plausible strategies into mutually exclusive project strategy options, by considering whether some identified strategies can also be combined into a more integrated project strategy. For example, in Bangladesh, three possible intervention strategies for a food security project were identified as follows:

- Strategy 1: Improved practices for increased rice yields
- Strategy 2: Adoption of flood-tolerant rice seed varieties
- Strategy 3: Improved animal health and nutrition practices

Considering each strategy separately and in combination, there are seven mutually exclusive strategy options as follows:

- Option 1: Strategy 1
- Option 2: Strategy 2
- Option 3: Strategy 3
- Option 4: Strategies 1 + 2
- Option 5: Strategies 1 + 3
- Option 6: Strategies 2 + 3
- Option 7: Strategies 1 + 2 + 3

When deciding between options, balance considerations of scope and scale given available time and budget, along with other factors, such as capacity.



Consider the minimum package of interventions required to achieve the SO. In the above example, it may be optimal to implement Strategies 1 and 2 together as they are mutually reinforcing. On the other hand, Strategy 3 focuses on totally different livelihoods and most likely targets different households or participants, for instance, landless households that do not engage in rice cultivation but have a few small animals, or women rather than men. Consider the implications of focusing on either or both of these livelihood groups on the project's ability to deliver quality results at scale.

Consider another example: In a malaria reduction project, distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets may allow the project to reach a large number of people across a wide geographic area or even nationwide. Depending on the situation, however, mosquito net distribution alone may not be sufficient to effect positive changes in reducing malaria. If assessment findings reveal that the nets are used for many purposes other than protecting children at night, you may also need to change behaviors related to their use.



**Eliminate all strategies from the list that are obviously inappropriate, not feasible or that show little potential for impact in the project context**

**Consider the minimum package of interventions required to achieve the strategic objective**

This increase in scope is necessary to deliver the desired impact, but it will have implications on the project's scale; it is unlikely that the project will have the capacity to deliver behavior change nationwide.

### 3.2 Identify evaluation criteria to compare project strategy options

Agree on a set of relevant criteria to compare, rank and prioritize project strategy options. **Table 5c** (at the end of this chapter) provides a list of categories (Column 1), related sample criteria (Column 2) and an evaluation scale (Column 3). Adapt this table to the project context. You may want to:

- Reduce the list to the most essential, relevant criteria
- Add other criteria relevant to the project context
- Adjust the evaluation scale as needed

If appropriate, weigh criteria. For example, some criteria (addresses donor requirements and priorities, or gender responsiveness) may be so important that any strategy option with a score below 4 (meets most expectations) for these criteria will automatically be excluded.

### 3.3 Evaluate each project strategy option

Review assessment findings, in particular those from gap and capacity analyses and any additional information gathered on markets, beneficiary preferences, barriers to behavior change, etc. so that scoring is based on evidence. As needed, update the gap analysis now that project strategy options are better defined.

Using **Table 5c**, compare and rank all plausible strategy options. **Table 5c** includes a list of criteria organized into nine categories as follows:

- Responsiveness to assessment findings and beneficiary voices
- Potential for impact
- Donor considerations
- Government considerations
- Feasibility
- Value for money
- Sustainability
- CRS and partner capacity
- Cross-cutting considerations, including gender, governance and peacebuilding

Workshop participants evaluate each project strategy option against each category selected. For instance, one category is “government considerations” and one of its related criteria is “how well the project strategy option aligns with relevant government policies.” Workshop participants evaluate each project strategy option against this criterion. If project strategy option No. 1 does not align at all with relevant government policies, its score could be “1” (fails to meet expectations). If project strategy option No. 2 is very well aligned with relevant government policies, its score could be “4” or “5” (meets most or all expectations).

Use small groups with a mix of perspectives and expertise and compare results from each group to help address bias.

### 3.4 Compare and rank project strategy options and decide on a preliminary project strategy

Discuss and compare the total scores in the last row from **Table 5c** for each strategy option, as well as scores on specific criteria. Remove any strategy options that score too low on certain criteria, such as donor requirements. But do not consider a numerical score blindly. The exercise aims to uncover perceptions and assumptions about the different strategies, and to facilitate objective analysis of the competing project strategy options. Consider insights and conclusions from the discussion.

**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
These steps are typically done in a workshop setting. Ensure all participants have a shared understanding of both strategy options and proposed criteria before starting the exercise.



**Use small groups with a mix of perspectives and expertise and compare results from each group to help address bias**

Focus on where there is agreement, reach consensus and decide on a project strategy option. This decision is of course preliminary, pending the review of the concept note.

### 3.5 Refine and further develop the project strategy

Refine and further develop the selected project strategy. Use **Chapter II's** checklists to refine the project strategy in light of cross-cutting considerations. For example, the project strategy must be gender responsive and conflict sensitive. You may decide that capacity strengthening will be a cross-cutting element of the project strategy. Clarify sustainability concerns about how project benefits will be maintained after the project ends. Sustainability may involve technical, organizational, funding or policy dimensions. Some donors may require an explicit exit strategy.

Think critically about the selected project strategy and targeting considerations, including intended beneficiaries, people or groups who are expected to participate as actors or change agents (e.g. health providers, teachers, agricultural extension agents, lead farmers, parents) and geographic location. Project strategy choices about crops and other livelihood activities can have important implications for gender. Choices about project location can have important implications for equity and conflict.

Be sure to write up the project strategy: What project participants are expected to do differently as a result of project activities, where, and with what results, along with any assumptions about the role of other actors and other details. Document the rationale for selecting this strategy. For now, a list of bullet points is fine.

#### Lessons learned

Some project design stakeholders have a vested interest in a particular sector or strategy option. Selecting project strategies based on evidence, using common criteria and a transparent comparison and ranking system (along with good facilitation), is key to minimizing bias.

#### Further resources, tools and links

- *A user's guide to integral human development (IHD): Practical guidance for CRS staff and partners* (Heinrich et al 2008) A comprehensive set of questions for reviewing a project strategy from an IHD perspective (Pages 14-15).



## SECTION 4: ARTICULATE AND TEST THE THEORY OF CHANGE

### When will you use this section?

- At the same time that you analyze project strategy options

### 4.1 Discuss and articulate the project's theory of change

In this step, you practice evaluative thinking and use conceptual frameworks to double-check the validity of the selected project strategy and how it will produce the desired outcomes and impact at the SO level. You will articulate a robust TOC that makes explicit why you and others believe that the selected project strategy will work in a particular project context.

First, discuss assumptions. These are factors that project implementers cannot – or decide not to – control but that could endanger project success if the assumptions are incorrect. Assumptions are expectations fundamental to the working of the results framework's objectives hierarchy. They may include:

- possible, but not probable risks and/or

**Focus on where there is agreement, reach consensus and decide on a project strategy option**



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**IN THIS STEP . . .**  
you may decide to modify or even discard a selected project strategy if it is not supported by a robust theory of change.

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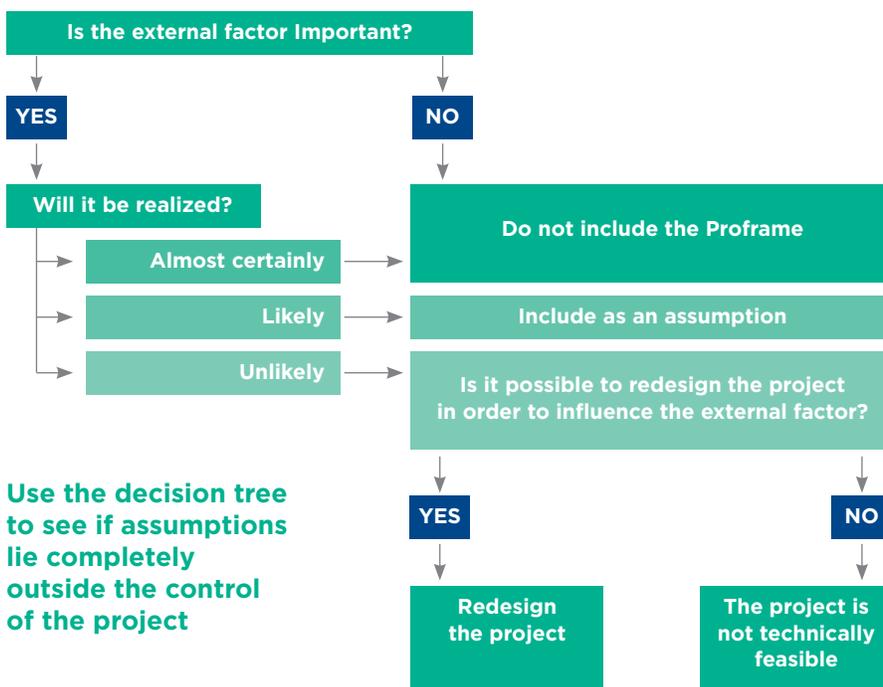
- decisions about what the project will not do that affect the project's results (for example, activities done by another actor). Use findings from the assessment, in particular gap and capacity analyses, to develop assumptions.

While assumptions are context-specific, common assumptions concern:

- Government or trade bodies' plans, policies and actions
- Plans and actions of other organizations (UN, INGOs, etc.) that operate in the project area
- Trends in national and international markets
- Community and beneficiary resources (interest, motivation, time, etc.)
- Risks of human-made or natural disasters, such as war, civil strife or floods and droughts

Use the decision tree (Figure 5.7) to see if assumptions lie completely outside the control of the project or if you need to adjust the project strategy to lessen their risk to the project.

Figure 5.7: Decision tree for critical assumptions



**CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS**  
 Factors or conditions outside of the project design team's control yet the existence of which is critical to allowing the project to achieve its next-highest-level objective.

Use the decision tree to see if assumptions lie completely outside the control of the project

**Example of how to use the decision tree**

A child health project has an SO that children under the age of 2 years in a remote northern district of Nigeria are fully immunized. Rumors and misinformation have decreased immunization coverage over the previous few years. The project strategy focuses on community mobilization and engagement of powerful religious leaders to create demand for immunization. A critical assumption to achieve the IR is that "Government health services will provide immunizations in a timely manner."

**Situation A:** Is this external factor important? Yes, because increasing demand alone cannot immunize children. Will it be realized? Likely so, because the government has provided vaccines and services fairly well in the past in this part of the country. However, stocks of vaccines occasionally run out due to imperfect supply chains. So, it is wise to consider this assumption so that the SO will be achieved.

**Situation B:** For the same reasons as Situation A, this factor is important. But it is unlikely to be realized because a recent conflict has left government health services in disarray, and supplies are lacking. Can the project strategy be revised to incorporate this external factor? Yes, in this case the project design team revises the project strategy to include a partnership with UNICEF to supply vaccines and cold chain management.

Record these assumptions and revise objectives or the project strategy as appropriate. You will revisit and refine these assumptions when constructing the Proframe in **Chapter VII**.

#### 4.2 Write a theory of change statement

Review the goal, strategic objectives and project strategy. Connect these elements by developing a clear and explicit theory of change statement using the “if and then, because” formulation. Below are short examples:

##### **TOC statement for a project that promotes employment for ex-combatant youth**

**If** employment is provided for ex-combatant youth, **then** the likelihood of inter-communal violence is reduced, **because** unemployed youth are the most likely to be recruited into fighting but employed youth disengage from command structures and are less recruitable because they have more to lose (USAID 2013d).

##### **TOC statement for a project to integrate returnees in Eastern Europe**

Past experience shows that: **If** returnee families live in adequate and appropriate housing, earn income, and use public and social services in their communities and as long as the government has a supportive legal framework, **then** returnees will be socially and economically integrated into their resident communities.<sup>2</sup> Other actors were anticipated to respond to the housing need, so CRS focused on the other project elements.

##### **TOC statement for a project to promote exclusive breastfeeding behavior**

**If** pregnant women, grandmothers and traditional birth attendants understand the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, and **if** pregnant women participate in breastfeeding support groups, **then** more women will exclusively breastfeed **because:**

- The project assessment findings and other country studies have shown the tremendous influence of older women on decisions by women of reproductive age and their husbands in collectivist societies (where the project will take place)
- Bandura’s social learning theory (Grusec 1992) and lessons learned from similar projects have shown that ongoing support from peers to overcome exclusive breastfeeding problems is highly effective in changing social norms and behaviors around exclusive breastfeeding

#### 4.3 Review the theory of change

Use the checklist in **Table 5a** (below) to review and assess the validity of both the process by which you developed the theory of change and the “if and then, because” TOC statement. Discuss any questions answered with “no” and revise the TOC as needed.

Encourage debate and challenge each other’s thinking. Consider assumptions identified earlier. Depending on the outcome of these discussions, revise the project strategy or even revisit the decision on the most appropriate project strategy.

**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
In many projects, IR-level objectives involve social and behavior change. Articulate your theory of change so that the project strategy and results framework are based on robust social and behavior change models, frameworks and theories.

**SOCIAL LEARNING**  
The idea that people’s behaviors are driven by external factors and that people learn from observing others.

**Encourage debate and challenge each other’s thinking**

2. Adapted from *Supporting sustainable reintegration of returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Proposal submitted by CRS/Bosnia and Herzegovina (CRS/BiH) to US Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrations (BPRM) in 2013

**Table 5a: Checklist to review and assess the validity of a theory of change**

Qualities of a robust theory of change	Yes/No
The intended changes from the effort are explicit	
The pathway to change is clear and understandable and reflects a relevant conceptual framework	
There are clear connections to key drivers and determinants from the assessment	
The statement demonstrates logic, common sense and/or reflects research results	
The effort will lead to the desired results without leaps or gaps	
Beliefs and assumptions about how one level of change influences another have been articulated and challenged	
The theory of change is grounded in context, and reflects the reality of change processes in that specific setting	
The theory of change is specific and can be tested for validity over time	

(Adapted from USAID 2013d)

#### 4.4 As appropriate, consider possible research questions

As you develop the TOC, possible research questions may emerge that can link your project to a larger country or agency learning agenda. Research questions may relate to improving implementation, demonstrating evidence of impact, advocacy with donors and policymakers, influencing government or other practitioners, etc.

**Research questions may emerge that can link your project to a larger country or agency learning agenda**

#### Further resources, tools and links

- *The community builder's approach to theory of change: A practical guide to theory development* (Anderson 2005)
- USAID's office of Food for Peace defines a theory of change as both a process (making explicit the way CRS thinks about a current situation or problem, its underlying causes, the long-term change sought, and what needs to happen in order for that change to come about) and a product (a set of hypotheses, outcomes, assumptions, and indicators that make up causal pathways of change needed to bring about a desired long-term goal). More information can be found at *The FANTA Project*.
- *Theories and indicators of change: Concepts and primers for Conflict Management and Mitigation* (USAID March 2013d)

## SECTION 5: DETERMINE THE IRs AND DRAFT THE RESULTS FRAMEWORK

#### When will you use this section?

- After selecting an appropriate project strategy and drafting higher-level objectives (strategic objectives and goal); done for each strategic objective

#### Steps and tools

##### 5.1 Translate the project strategy into intermediate results

Develop IR statements for the project strategy. Intermediate results state the expected change(s) in identifiable behaviors of a specific group or the expected change(s) in systems, policies or institutions required to achieve the SOs (end-of-project benefits). IR-level statements may involve changes in the rate that project participants adopt new behaviors, expansion of project reach or coverage, new ways of organizing or managing systems, or changes to policy for instance.

**INTERMEDIATE RESULTS**  
the expected change(s) in identifiable behaviors of a specific group or the expected change(s) in systems, policies or institutions required to achieve the strategic objectives.

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### Examples of intermediate results statements

For an agriculture project	For a peacebuilding project	For a newborn health project
Targeted women rice farmers are using the improved rice cultivation techniques	The two different faith groups have begun to effectively implement their agreed-upon activity of mutual interest	Pregnant women in target districts deliver their babies under the supervision of a skilled provider

Note that IRs and SOs for the same project often involve different target groups. For example, a child nutrition project’s SO target group are children under the age of 3 years while the IR target groups may be mothers, grandmothers, fathers and health service providers whose practices and behaviors directly affect the nutrition status of children under the age of 3 years.

**Note that IRs and SOs for the same project often involve different target groups**

### 5.2 Decide how many intermediate results are needed

Similar to the process for strategic objectives, follow any required donor guidance regarding intermediate results. Fewer IRs suggests a focused project with a simple theory of change. However, the complement of IRs should reflect the TOC in terms of key change agents, changed behaviors, coverage to deliver the intended outcomes, etc.

### 5.3 Plug all draft objective statements into the results framework

Review the donor template and language for the results framework and adapt it to their requirements. See the comparative glossary in **Appendix 1**. Sketch a results framework and plug in the goal, strategic objectives and intermediate results you have identified.

Figure 5.8 Project team works on results framework



While a results framework only includes IRs, SOs and the goal, project design teams often find it useful to informally “think down” to outputs and broad illustrative activities using flip charts and sticky notes. Activities and outputs will be fully fleshed out after the concept note review (see **Chapter VII**).

**OUTPUTS**  
The goods, services, knowledge, skills, attitudes and enabling environment that are delivered by the project (as a result of the activities undertaken).

### 5.4 Review the results framework

Review the draft objectives by discussing these questions:

- Do the SOs describe the central purpose of the project?
- Are the SOs specific to the project context?
- Can the SOs be realistically achieved by the end of the project?
- Do the SOs logically contribute towards achievement of the goal?
- Does the number of SOs make sense given the project timeframe and budget, and considerations of scope vs scale?
- Do the IRs reflect the project strategy and TOC?

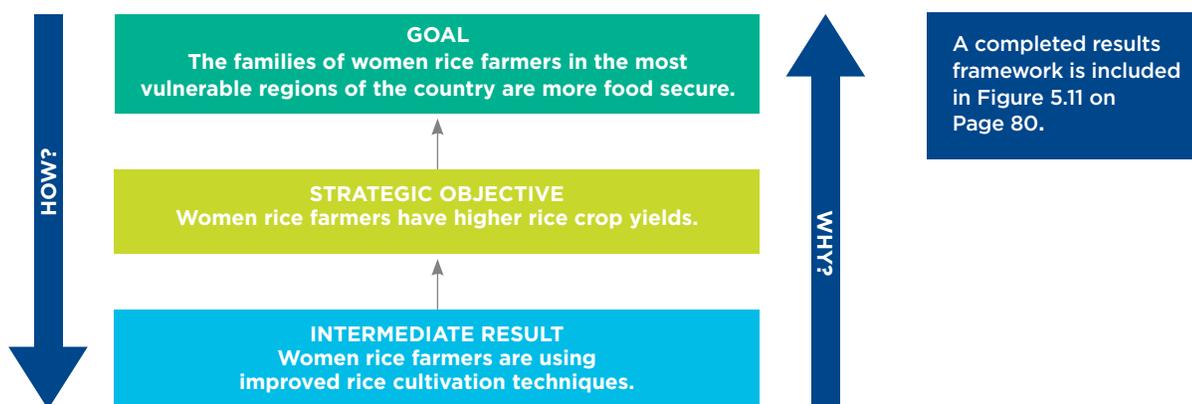
- Do the IRs reflect the right change agents and behaviors?
- Is the complement of IRs necessary and sufficient to deliver change at the SO level?

### 5.5 Review the objectives hierarchy (IRs to SOs to goal)

Going down an RF, how an objective will be achieved should be explained by the objective below it. Going up an RF, why you are trying to achieve a lower-level objective should be explained by the objective above it. This is illustrated in **Figure 5.9**. In this simple example, the project design team expects that:

- Women farmers will enjoy increased rice crop yields (SO) as a result of their using improved rice cultivation techniques (IR)
- Women farmers will use improved rice cultivation techniques (IR) in order to achieve increased rice crop yields (SO)

**Figure 5.9: Results framework's three objectives levels**



Objective statements in an RF reflect specific conditions related to the project's duration, scope and challenges related to where it will be implemented. This explains why they can look quite different from one project to the next. For example, in a remote zone, with poorly organized government agricultural services, and where farmer groups do not yet exist, the SO for a 2-year pilot agricultural project could be: *Farmer groups in one district produce improved planting materials for hardy and low-labor pulses*. In contrast, in a zone with good roads, well-functioning government agricultural services, and well-organized farmers' groups, a 5-year, well-funded project's SO could be: *Resource-poor farmers in four districts have improved sustainable production of pulses*.

**Objective statements in an RF reflect specific conditions related to the project's duration, scope and challenges related to where it will be implemented**

#### Further resources, tools and links

- *Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Guidance for developing logical and results frameworks* (Levine 2007)

## SECTION 6: LINK TO THE PROPOSAL

In essence, the results framework tells the project's story. Be sure to keep notes and documents from this step that will help explain why you chose this complement of SOs and IRs instead of other options, along with assumptions that were identified and the theory of change statement. All of this will help you write a compelling rationale and justification for the project strategy in the proposal.

Not all donors require RFs or IRs or explicit TOC statements (see comparative glossary in **Appendix 1**). However, all proposals benefit from clear articulation of the project strategy, assumptions, and how your lower-level results will deliver intended change.

Note how the project strategy contributes to the concept note/proposal's "win theme". For example, note how the project strategy aligns with the donor's strategy or why this project strategy is innovative, efficient, gender transformative, sustainable and/or ready for implementation on Day 1.

**Be sure to keep notes and documents that will help explain why you chose this complement of SOs and IRs instead of others**



## SECTION 7: HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

### Section 1: Set preliminary project goal and strategic objectives

Strategic objectives usually reflect Sphere standards for the sector. Write the SO to focus on the end result and the goal on the ultimate benefit in a way that remains valid from the initial response through the recovery period.

### Section 2 and 3: Identify and analyze strategy options and select and refine the project strategy

In an emergency context, projects are designed to address immediate needs, while thinking long-term. At the start, an emergency response typically focuses on service delivery to address these immediate needs. At the same time, the project strategy should strive to build capacities and coping mechanisms of those affected, aiming for a quick return to livelihood activities, increasing household and community resilience to shocks, and strengthening civil society from the start. Use the IHD framework to develop the RF and emergency response strategy to help think of ways to minimize household and community vulnerability to future shocks (Heinrich et al 2008).

Be sure to consult [Sphere](#) as a source of evidence-based strategy options and criteria for comparing options.

The response is likely to change over time, especially in the early stages of an emergency. This may affect the complement of SOs proposed, or the strategies to achieve these SOs, reflected in the project's IRs. For example, food distribution may become unnecessary if the government starts delivering food or making cash transfers to affected people. A WASH project may start by trucking in potable water to affected people and then shift to rehabilitating wells. Emergency responses must be flexible so that they can be adjusted over time. Donors expect emergency interventions to be responsive to changing needs and priorities, and this flexibility demonstrates that you understand the emergency context. OFDA and other donors often prefer that geographical locations are left vague, or not included at all in the wording of the SOs, to allow for an easier change in targeting as the situation changes.

When reviewing strategy options, use the Do No Harm framework (CDA 2004) to analyze and compare their possible impact on conflict.



**CONSULT SPHERE**  
Be sure to consult Sphere as a source of evidence-based strategy options and criteria for comparing options.

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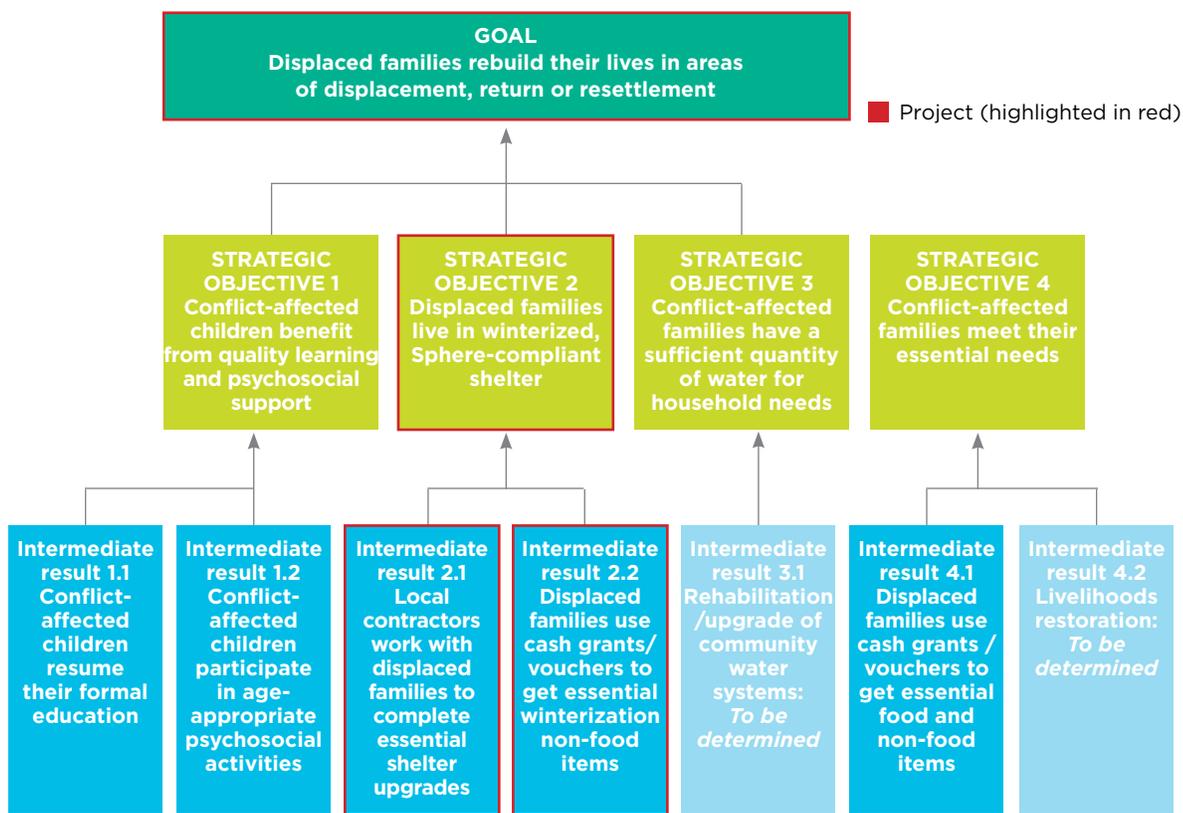
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**Section 5: Determine the intermediate results and draft the results framework**

One overall results framework is developed for the emergency response. It is then packaged in multiple proposals submitted to donors in order to secure sufficient funding to respond at scale. The RF allows donors to see how their project contributes to an organization’s overall response. Below is an example of an overall results framework for an emergency response strategy, with the elements of one specific donor submission highlighted in red and placeholder SOs and IRs included for tentative medium-term response elements.

The results framework allows donors to see how their project contributes to an organization’s overall response

Figure 5.10: How project fits into overall results framework for an ERR strategy



In emergencies, IRs generally focus on use of outputs by project beneficiaries, not necessarily changes in identifiable behaviors; as the IRs for SO4 in the above example illustrate, they are often specific to various phases of the emergency response since it evolves over time. Add IRs and SOs to the results framework as the response evolves. Remove IRs (and possibly SOs) as they are completed.

Align RF objectives with OFDA sectors (SO-level) and subsectors (IR-level) whenever possible, even if OFDA funding is not initially pursued. Because OFDA is the main source of public funding for CRS’ emergency responses, you will be more efficiently positioned to develop an OFDA proposal if funding became available.

**Tips and lessons learned**

USAID and other donors call for a strong connection between emergency response, recovery and development-focused activities, and highlight the importance of building resilience and reducing vulnerability to future disasters. Take these ideas into account when developing your response.

### Further resources, tools and links

- *The Sphere Handbook* (The Sphere Project 2011)
- *Minimum economic recovery standards* (The SEEP Network 2010) Companion standard to *The Sphere Handbook*, the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards articulate the minimum level of technical and other assistance to be provided in promoting the recovery of economies and livelihoods affected by crisis.
- *Building resilience to recurrent crisis: USAID policy and program guidance* (USAID 2012a) Information on USAID's resilience policy.
- *Emergency market mapping and analysis toolkit* (Albu 2010)
- *Integrating peacebuilding into humanitarian and development programming* (Rogers et al 2010)

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SECTION 8: TABLES AND EXAMPLES

Table 5b: Summary list of project strategy options

Project strategy option/ description (Below are examples for a WASH project)	1. Who is involved	2. Evidence of impact	3. Advantages	4. Disadvantages	5. Assumptions	6. Risks	7. Likelihood of impact in this project context
Linking the community development committee with government WASH services and private sector soap distributors							
Training community facilitators in Community-Led Total Sanitation response							
Delivering ready-made latrine slabs and handwashing stations							

**Who is involved:** Who does this project strategy work with (IR level) and who would benefit (SO level)?

**Evidence of impact:** What do technical advice, literature and standards tell you about this strategy's likelihood to bring about the desired change (SO)? What made this project strategy successful elsewhere?

**Advantages:** What are the advantages of this project strategy option (e.g. cost, feasibility, value for money, leveraging opportunities, scale versus scope, sustainability, etc.)?

**Disadvantages:** What are the disadvantages of this project strategy option (e.g. cost, feasibility, value for money, leveraging opportunities, scale versus scope, sustainability, etc.)?

**Assumptions:** What assumptions does the project strategy make about interests and influence of project participants and beneficiaries? For example, is it assumed that community members will freely volunteer? That religious leaders will fully support it? What negative responses might be anticipated, given these interests and influence? What assumptions does the project strategy make about other factors in the environment (e.g. other actors, the government, etc.)?

**Risks:** What are the risks associated with this project strategy option (e.g. power or gender considerations, CRS and partner capacity, etc.)? How can the project strategy mitigate these risks?

**Likelihood of impact in this project context:** In light of the assessment findings, how likely is it that this project strategy can address problems, leverage opportunities and bring about desired change (SO) equally well in this project's context?

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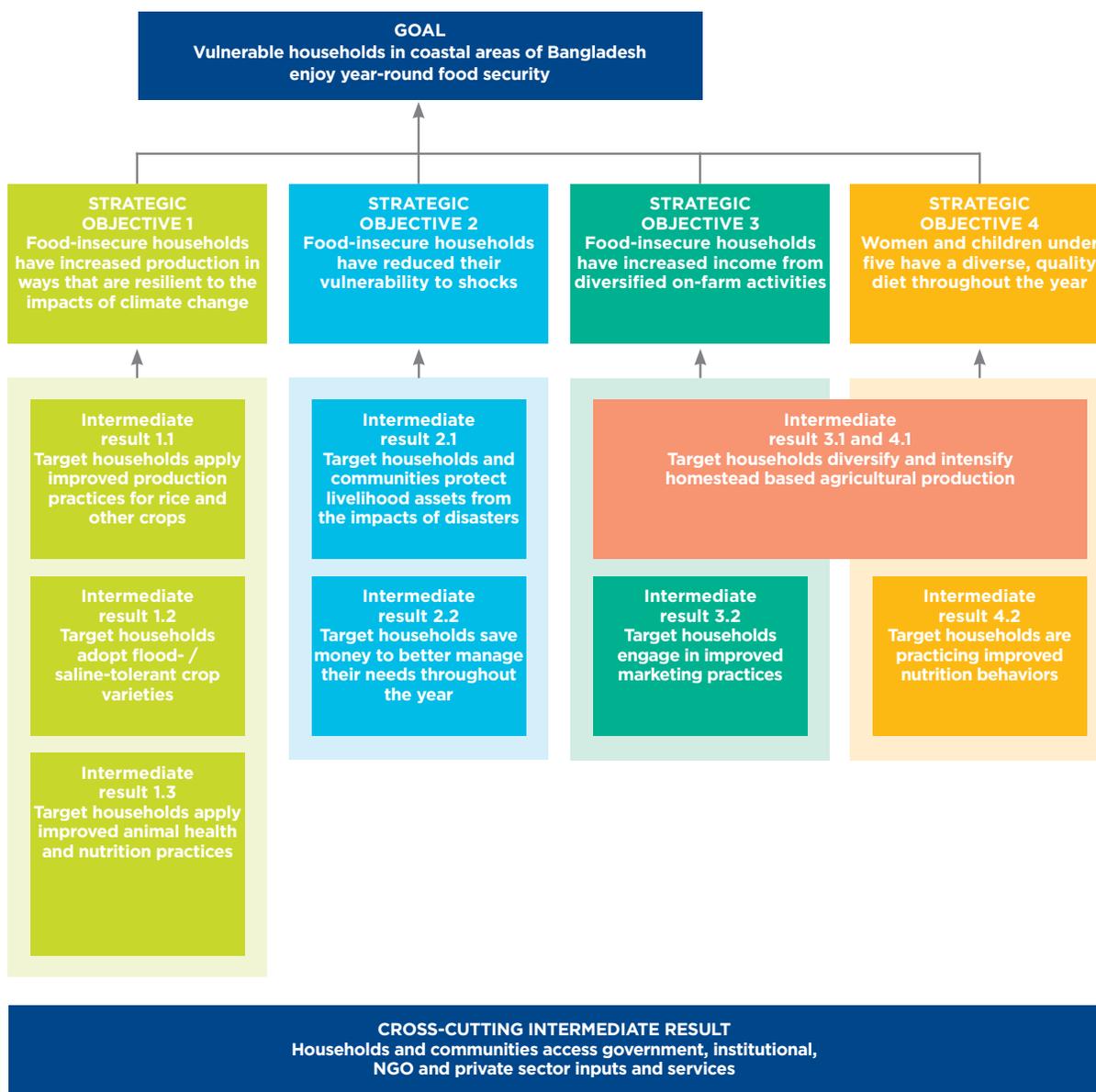
**Table 5c: Possible criteria to evaluate project strategy options**

Category	Criteria How well does the project strategy option:	Project strategy Option 1	Project strategy Option 2	Etc.
Responsiveness to assessment findings and beneficiary voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address priority community needs as evidenced in the problem analysis?</li> <li>Strengthen and maximize household and community assets and resources?</li> <li>Build on strengths and opportunities?</li> <li>Meet community or beneficiary acceptability and cultural appropriateness?</li> <li>Address key leverage points?</li> <li>Respond to expressed, felt, normative and relative (unmet) needs?</li> <li>As feasible, address root, structural causes?</li> </ul>			
Potential for impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate evidence of potential impact in the context where the project will be implemented?</li> <li>Reflect learning from similar projects?</li> </ul>			
Donor considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address donor requirements and priorities?</li> <li>Respond to the funding opportunity's selection criteria?</li> </ul>			
Government considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align with relevant government policies?</li> <li>Reflect government priorities for the sector?</li> </ul>			
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align with funding opportunity requirements, project timeframe and given budget ceiling?</li> <li>Align with or leverage CRS and its partners' capacities, resources and value-added (as per the capacity analysis)?</li> <li>Consider the market capacity to deliver goods and services?</li> <li>Demonstrate technical feasibility in the project context?</li> </ul>			
Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate cost-effectiveness, i.e. the relationship between monetary input and desired outcomes?</li> <li>Fill important gaps and avoid duplication (as per the gap analysis)?</li> <li>Work with hard-to-reach groups or fragile and conflict-affected areas where costs are high and trade-offs are needed?</li> <li>Generate multiplier effects or learning that adds to value?</li> <li>Achieve the same or better results as another project strategy that is higher cost?</li> <li>Build synergies with other actions and projects?</li> </ul>			
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to supply goods and services after the project has ended through linkages or other mechanisms?</li> <li>Stimulate social and behavior change?</li> <li>Plan for post-project coverage of recurrent costs?</li> <li>Sustain community or institutional structures once the project ends?</li> <li>Strengthen local partner organizational and human capacity?</li> </ul>			
CRS and partner capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage CRS and its partner's experience and added value?</li> <li>Consider existing and potential project implementation capacity?</li> </ul>			
Cross-cutting considerations, including gender, governance and peacebuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to the checklists in <b>Chapter II</b></li> </ul>			
<b>Total scores</b>				

Evaluation Scale/Score :1 = Fails to meet expectations. 2 = Meets a few expectations. 3 = Meets some expectations. 4 = Meets most expectations. 5 = Meets all expectations

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Figure 5.11: Results framework: Food security for all in Bangladesh (Example)



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## CHAPTER VI: CONCEPT NOTE AND REVIEW

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This chapter includes three sections:

Section 1: Write the concept note

Section 2: Review the concept note

Section 3: How is this different in an emergency response?

#### Standards of quality

- Concept notes are developed in all project design situations to ensure timely input on key project design decisions by relevant stakeholders
- The concept note clearly and concisely explains the rationale for the SOs and IRs, justifying why the selected project strategy is the best option to address the core problem and its causes
- The concept note highlights the project's win themes, i.e. CRS and its partners' added value and what distinguishes the project from others

#### Why is this step of project design so important?

A concept note is a short (usually about five-page) document that highlights and communicates key project design decisions at an early stage in the project design process. It documents key findings from the problem identification and analysis and justifies the proposed results framework, strategy, underlying theory of change, scope and scale. The concept note also briefly outlines preliminary project activities, target beneficiaries, management, budget and/or partnership decisions made thus far, to the extent that they are known.

The purpose of an internal concept note is to foster dialogue and evaluative thinking among the project design team, other project stakeholders and technical advisors before investing time and resources in the development of the full proposal. It is an interim step toward the full proposal and a valuable opportunity for relevant stakeholders to provide an early constructive review while there is still time to make significant changes to the project's proposed strategy, RF or other key elements. Concept notes are reviewed by other CRS country program staff, partner management (if not part of the project design team), the region and/or headquarters. It is essential that this review takes place early in the project design process, before the project design team has invested more resources in the subsequent steps of project design and proposal development. If a project design team invests significant time and effort developing a Proframe, a detailed budget and a full proposal narrative, only to learn that reviewers suggest major changes to the RF or that the donor has little interest, this can be demoralizing and wasteful.

Donor concept notes: Concept notes developed for submission to donors have somewhat different purposes. An unsolicited concept note typically seeks to gauge donor interest in a proposed project or to influence a donor's country strategy or an upcoming call for proposals. These CNs should be as brief as possible (one to three pages) and focus on high level justification for the project (evidence base for the need and proposed solution, TOC, win themes) and CRS and partners' unique position to achieve proposed objectives.

Concept notes developed in response to a donor call for expressions of interest or concept notes are used by the donor to shortlist applicants invited to submit a full proposal and can be highly competitive. Donor templates typically require more information than internal CNs, for example, a proposed budget and management structure, and far more attention to the style and quality of the writing. Even if the donor template only requires a summary budget, it usually requires development of a detailed budget,

**The purpose of an internal concept note is to foster dialogue and evaluative thinking among the project design team, other project stakeholders and technical advisors before investing time and resources in the development of the full proposal**

aligned to the project's preliminary activities schedule, to ensure that what you are proposing to do is feasible in the given timeframe with this budget. Developing a CN for a donor may thus require almost as much work as a full proposal.

It is good practice to submit an early draft of donor-requested concept notes for internal review by key stakeholders, before investing too much time in activity scheduling and budget development to inform the final concept note.

In all cases, use the concept note to seek technical feedback on your draft win themes. These are compelling statements that help persuade a donor of CRS and its partners' unique value and suitability to deliver, conveying what distinguishes this project from those submitted by others. Win themes should reflect innovative thinking in the sector, so ensure that your CN's draft win theme(s) are reviewed by relevant regional and headquarter technical advisors. Win themes will be more fully developed in the proposal.

**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
If you are writing a donor-requested concept note, be sure to review *ProPack I's* Chapters VII – IX.

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## SECTION 1: WRITE THE CONCEPT NOTE

### When will you use this section?

- After setting higher-level objectives, selecting an appropriate project strategy and developing a results framework
- Usually right after the project design workshop focusing on interpretation of assessment data, RF and strategy selection, with all workshop decisions documented in the concept note

### Steps and tools

#### 1.1 Review donor concerns and write a draft win theme

During project design planning, you identified those responsible for writing the concept note. From the start, everyone should be familiar with the donor's concerns such as innovation, efficiency, responsiveness, best value, scalability, sustainability, etc. Review the funding opportunity documents again, along with the relevant donor strategy (country and/or given sectors), before writing the CN.

To develop the win theme, identify the strengths and comparative advantages of CRS, partners and/or consortium members and the proposed project strategy. Answer these questions:

- What is CRS' unique added value?
- What can CRS and its partners alone offer in terms of experience, approaches and results? How is this better than those of other applicants?

Strengths and unique added value may relate to performance/track record, institutional knowledge, innovation, organizational features, risk management, capacities and human resources, on-the-ground presence, strategy alignment, etc. For example, the win theme may highlight an innovative, low-cost and low-risk project strategy. Or it may focus on CRS and its partners' proven experience and expertise. Initial project budgeting can help identify why the project strategy demonstrates value for money.

#### 1.2 Write the concept note

Use the donor's concept note template or the relevant sections of the donor proposal template. If the donor does not have a preferred format, use the suggested template in **Table 6a**. Work with all project design team members to develop the CN, including the budget lead or finance manager to develop a draft budget. If the CN is for internal use, use concise language and bullet lists rather than a lengthy narrative. Keep the CN short – usually about five pages – using the suggestions provided in **Table 6a**.

**WIN  
THEME:**  
The win theme should convey CRS and its partners' "value proposition": the benefits they are uniquely placed to deliver.

### Further resources, tools and links

- *101 Win themes for all occasions* (Dickson, no date)
- *pREPARE!* (CRS 2015f)  Section III.



## SECTION 2: REVIEW THE CONCEPT NOTE

### When will you use this section?

- After drafting the concept note, when reviewing it against quality standards

### Steps and tools

#### 2.1 Conduct an internal review of the draft concept note

Using the checklist in **Table 6b**, engage relevant stakeholders to review and discuss the concept note. Stakeholders at the country-program level include, in addition to the project design team, the head of programs, head of operations, country representative, finance manager, country program staff from other sectors or departments, as well as equivalent partner staff. Be sure to adapt the checklist to include any additional donor evaluation criteria.

Engage the project design team and relevant internal reviewers to discuss review findings. For any questions where reviewers responded “somewhat” or “no”, analyze why this is the case and take corrective action as appropriate. Not all questions need to be fully addressed at the concept note stage – especially if this risks delaying the regional or headquarters CN review – but the team should articulate their plans to do so in the project design timeline.

#### 2.2 Edit, refine and submit the concept note

Edit and refine the concept note in light of internal review comments and recommendations. Document key project design decisions that may still be pending and options being considered. Following appropriate procedures, submit the CN to the next level of technical review, typically at regional and/or HQ level.

**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
Remind reviewers to focus on ideas and logic, not on minor edits or writing style.

### Further resources, tools and links

- *pREPARE!* (CRS 2015f)  Section III.



## SECTION 3: HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

### Section 1: Writing the concept note

In the initial phases of an emergency response (1-2 weeks after the onset of a disaster), no concept note is required, as the proposal itself is generally only one to two pages long and written at the same time that initial activities (e.g. simple food or household item distribution) are implemented. Instead, discuss major decisions with the region before implementation. This verbal communication serves the same purpose as an internal concept note review.

As soon as time allows, or for more complex interventions to be submitted for external funding, follow the regular process for an internal CN and then a full proposal.

Donor templates and expectations are different from those for non-emergency situations: Less detail is expected and a degree of uncertainty is acceptable. Some donors require CNs to be one to two pages in length. For OFDA, concept

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notes are generally reviewed by in-country staff prior to submission of a full proposal to USAID/OFDA in Washington DC. This serves to provide feedback to CRS on the proposed scope and scale of the response (i.e. sectors or strategies, geographical targeting, overall budget figure) prior to full proposal development.

It may be appropriate to informally present a tentative response to local donor contacts (verbally or by email) before submitting a CN, to test their interest in funding a part of it. Do not waste time writing unsolicited CNs (or proposals) unless invited to do so.

Donors evaluate CNs on technical quality and relevance (as well as reputation, cluster meeting conversations and the quality of initial assessments and responses) and are often less concerned about writing quality or packaging. Focus on clear presentation and justification of key decisions and avoid unnecessary details.

**It may be appropriate to informally present a tentative response to local donor contacts to test their interest in funding a part of it**

### Further resources, tools and links

- *pREPARE!* (CRS 2015f)  Flow chart and concept note tips for an emergency, as well as the emergency proposal template, Section V.

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**Table 6a: Concept note template**

<b>Country program:</b>	
<b>Proposed project title:</b>	
<b>Date submitted:</b>	
<b>Project timeframe (start and end date):</b>	

**I. Problem statement and analysis (two pages)**

1. State the problem and opportunities that this project aims to address (problem statement), including who (groups, subgroups, etc.) is affected, how they are affected and where, using supporting data from the assessment.
2. Briefly discuss the key immediate and underlying causes using supporting data from the assessment and reflecting key findings identified during data analysis and interpretation. Briefly discuss key leverage points and the relative importance of various causes.
3. Briefly discuss gender considerations (roles, needs, etc.) if not done in No. 1 or No. 2 above.

*(Consult Chapter IV for more information on steps contributing to this section.)*

**II. Project objectives, results framework, project strategy, theory of change (two pages)**

1. Include the results framework, clearly stating the project goal, strategic objectives and intermediate results.
2. Explain the rationale for selecting this complement of SOs. Explain how SOs address the core problem and key determinants revealed during the assessment, and why these SOs were chosen rather than others (e.g. findings from gap and capacity/best practice analysis).
3. Document the project's targeting decisions (number and type of people or households, geographic area, etc.) if known. Give some sense of scale even if precise numbers are not yet known.
4. Describe the project strategy and include a draft theory of change statement. Explain how intermediate results lead to strategic objectives and document the project's key assumptions. State the win theme and describe the rationale and logic for the project strategy (including lessons learned, evidence-based practices, value for money, etc.).
5. As appropriate, discuss project sustainability.
6. Briefly outline broad, illustrative project activities or tentative outputs under each IR, if these have been identified.

*(Consult Chapter V for more information on steps contributing to this section.)*

**III. Project partnership, management and budget (one page)**

1. Outline and justify partner selection and proposed partnership arrangements to the extent that they have been decided. Highlight relevant CRS and partner capacity and past experience. Outline possible capacity strengthening needs for project implementation, management and MEAL.
2. Briefly describe management and budget decisions made to date, as appropriate.
  - Outline preliminary project staffing and management structure decisions, especially those with significant implications for the country program (staffing expansion, new field offices, new partners, etc.) and for the project budget.
  - Include a draft, preliminary budget outline or at least a ballpark overall budget figure.

*(Consult Chapter II, Section 1, Chapter V, and as needed Chapters VIII and IX for steps contributing to this section.)*

**Table 6b: Concept note review checklist**

Questions	Yes	Somewhat	No
<b>Problem description and analysis</b>			
Does the problem analysis section clearly state what the core problem to be addressed is and provide adequate supporting evidence from secondary data and field assessments?			
Are the core problem's immediate and underlying causes clearly analyzed and supported by evidence from the assessment along with the relevant conceptual framework?			
Does the problem analysis identify key leverage points and/or give a sense of the relative priority of the various issues or causes of the problem?			
Does the concept note include a clear gender analysis and/or does the problem analysis adequately disaggregate information by gender and discuss gender consideration?			
Does the description of the problem adequately disaggregate between relevant groups and sub-groups in the community (or types of people/ positions in the relevant entity)?			
Does the CN include an analysis of similar efforts being undertaken by other actors, including the host country government?			
<b>Results framework, project strategy and theory of change</b>			
Does the results framework include clearly written objective statements (IRs, SOs and goal) that reflect a logical means-to-end project hierarchy?			
Is the project strategy clearly described and justified in terms of why it was chosen rather than other strategy options?			
Do the results framework and project strategy clearly address the core problem, key determinants and other assessment findings?			
Is the project's TOC explicitly articulated, using "if and then, because" logical statements?			
For follow-on projects, does the project strategy reflect results and lessons learned from current / previous projects?			
Does the project strategy reflect evidence-based practices for the sector?			
Is the proposed strategy likely to result in sustainable outcomes, behaviors or services once the project is over?			
Are preliminary targeting decisions (geographic, household, individuals) described and justified?			
Are preliminary targeting decisions appropriate given key findings from the problem and gender analyses, conflict and equity considerations?			
Are the project scope and scale realistic and appropriate in light of the timeframe and expected budget?			
<b>Preliminary partnership and management decisions</b>			
Are proposed partnerships strategic and relevant given the project strategy?			
<b>Overall budget</b>			
Is the preliminary budget figure appropriate given the project's scope and scale?			
<b>Donor/Solicitation responsiveness</b>			
Does the CN adequately respond to donor priorities and/or opportunity evaluation criteria (if stated)?			
Are preliminary win themes and CRS and partners comparative advantages articulated?			

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Please comment on all "somewhat" or "no" ratings.

# CHAPTER VII: PROFRAME AND PLANNING FOR MEAL

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This chapter includes eight sections:

- Section 1: Determine activities and outputs
- Section 2: Construct the Proframe: Columns 1 and 4
- Section 3: Construct the Proframe: Columns 2 and 3
- Section 4: Plan for MEAL: Monitoring and Evaluation
- Section 5: Plan for MEAL: Accountability and Learning
- Section 6: Link to the proposal
- Section 7: How is this different in an emergency response?
- Section 8: Tables and examples

### Standards of quality

- The Proframe always includes donor-required indicators and sector standard indicators, if they exist
- The project Proframe and plans for MEAL reflect MEAL Policies and Procedures
- Project MEAL plans aim to support quality implementation, timely and evidence-based decision-making, and accountability to beneficiaries, partners and donors
- CRS staff consult MEAL specialists for project design decisions on monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning

**The Proframe always includes donor-required indicators and sector standard indicators, if they exist**

### Why is this step of project design important?

Constructing a project Proframe builds upon and fleshes out the work initiated when developing the project’s results framework and theory of change. The Proframe is a logical planning tool for generating a **Project framework** - as portrayed in **Figure 7.1**.

**Figure 7.1: The Proframe Matrix**

	Objective statements	Performance indicator statements	Measurement methods/Data sources	Critical assumptions
Evaluation and learning	Goal			
	Strategic objectives			
Monitoring and learning	Intermediate results			
	Outputs			
	Activities			

The Proframe provides information about higher-level objectives (IRs, SOs and goal) as well as output and activity-level objectives. In developing outputs and activities, the project design team is in effect planning project implementation and ensuring that activities contribute towards higher-level results.

Donors and organizations may have slightly different terms for Proframe objectives levels. See the comparative glossary in **Appendix 1** for a comparison of these terms.

Assumptions were discussed when developing the project TOC. In this step, you confirm these assumptions and list them in the Proframe’s **critical assumptions** (Column 4). In this way, you can use Proframe to test the “if and then” logic of the TOC again, from each objective level to the next, ensuring that the project has a robust objectives hierarchy and theory of change.

**In developing outputs and activities, the project design team is in effect planning project implementation and ensuring that activities contribute towards higher-level results**

The Proframe's critical assumptions column also helps demonstrate solid knowledge of the project context to a donor. These critical assumptions can be the basis for renegotiation of project objectives and indicators with donors if monitoring data shows that these assumptions are not being realized in practice.

The Proframe's five levels of objective statements link the results framework to the activities schedule and in turn the budget. By aligning these important project design elements, a solid Proframe helps ensure that all steps of project design are coherent and that all parts of the proposal (objectives, activities and budget) "tell the same story".

The Proframe also captures information about performance indicators (Column 2) and their related measurement methods and data sources (Column 3). Performance indicator statements provide the complementary SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound) elements of each objective statement that will serve to gather evidence of how much or how well objectives are being/have been achieved. Proframe's Columns 2 and 3 help ensure that performance indicators are not developed in a void, without asking how, realistically, they are to be measured. The dotted line between these two columns illustrates how they are interconnected and inseparable.

Setting quarterly or annual targets (perhaps using an indicator performance tracking table or IPTT) helps clarify the services or level of change that the project aims to deliver over time. This helps develop an accurate activities schedule and budget that align with donor timeframes and budget ceilings.

Planning for quality monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) helps promote intentional and timely data collection, analysis and use, transparent two-way communication with communities and other stakeholders, and the generation and use of learning within the project and beyond, including dissemination to the broader development community and policymakers. MEAL planning also includes optimized use of technology for M&E data collection and analysis.

The M&E plan provides more details on Proframe indicators and associated measurement methods/data sources, with additional information provided on the frequency of data collection, method and frequency of data analysis and use, and on roles and responsibilities for all steps in the process. The plan serves as a quality check, ensuring that proposed indicators and their associated objective statements in the Proframe are achievable and useful, contributing to stronger performance management and to better transparency and accountability within and outside of CRS.

Accountability is how CRS responds to and balances the needs of all stakeholders (including beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, donors, government, partners and CRS itself) in its communication and decision-making, and delivers against this commitment (ECB 2010).

Learning is a continuous process of analyzing and interpreting information and knowledge (evaluation findings, monitoring data, innovations, stories, person-to-person exchanges and new learning) that brings to light new promising practices or calls into question received wisdom. Learning leads to adaption of the project strategy and/or activities in order to sustain the most effective and efficient path to achieving project success, as well as identification of project strengths and promising practices to be replicated within the project and beyond. Projects sometimes contribute towards agency-wide or country program learning agendas. As shown in **Figure 7.2** (over the page) monitoring and evaluation, accountability and learning work together to inform and facilitate project management decision-making based on evidence.



**The Proframe's five levels of objectives link the results framework to the activities schedule and the budget**

#### INDICATORS

Quantitative or qualitative factors or variables that provide a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor (OECD 2010)

#### M&E PLAN

A table that builds on the Proframe and details key M&E requirements for each indicator and assumption, thereby enabling projects to collect comparable data over time.

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Figure 7.2: Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning

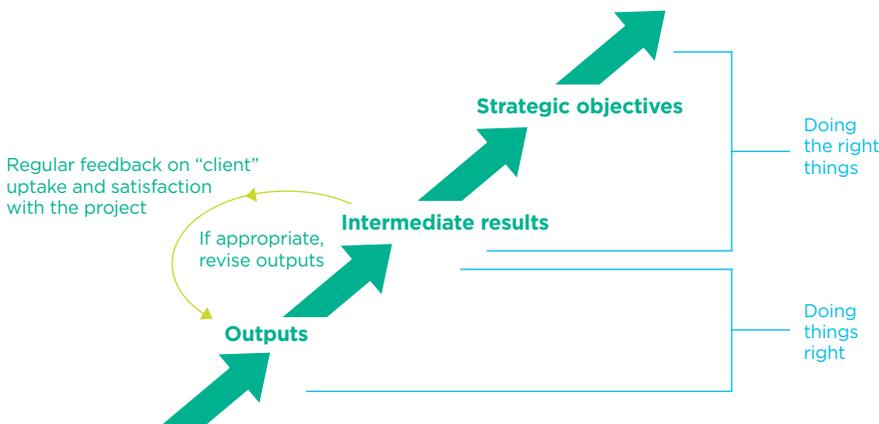


This diagram shows the key ways in which monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and accountability and learning (A&L) work together in a MEAL system.

Monitoring indicators, learning and adaptation are critical to project success

Monitoring indicators, learning and adaptation are critical to project success. As soon as implementation starts, CRS and its partners rigorously track activities and start monitoring output-level indicators to ensure quality activities are delivering target outputs. Soon afterwards, they monitor IR-level indicators to learn whether the project’s theory of change appears to be validated by evidence, suggesting that the project is on track to achieve the related SOs.

Figure 7.3: Intermediate results help managers to manage for results



The Proframe and other plans for MEAL help clarify required project MEAL capacities (to be considered as part of the project’s management and staffing plans) as well as MEAL-specific activities and budget. After a project is funded, one of the first tasks of the implementation team will be to transform all these plans into a working, operational MEAL system (see *ProPack II* and *ProPack III*).

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## HAMIDA'S STORY

Hamida manages a CRS health project in which one of the strategic objectives (SOs) is a lower incidence of acute childhood diarrhea. The project has both a Proframe and a functioning MEAL system. Hamida also recently attended CRS training in MEAL, so she now understands the steps that will help ensure a successful project. In this case, success is measured by fewer cases of child diarrhea seen at the area clinic. Hamida and her team have also chosen an intermediate result (IR) for this SO, to track changes in how parents treat their children's diarrhea.

Six months into the project, Hamida and her team reviewed IR data and saw that although training was delivered on time and correctly, trainees were not using the oral rehydration therapy (ORT) taught to them for treating children with diarrhea. After questioning project participants further, Hamida discovered that training emphasized messages on therapy, but did provide any hands-on practice for parents themselves to mix and administer the solutions for infants, using locally familiar measures and containers.

Hamida helped trainers revise the curriculum according to these findings. This was done at almost no extra cost. At the next review, IR indicators showed much higher levels of ORT use by parents. Hamida and her team are now confident that the midterm evaluation will show that the project's strategic objective of reducing acute childhood diarrhea will almost certainly be met.



## SECTION 1: DETERMINE ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

### When will you use this section?

- After developing and receiving review feedback on the concept note

### 1.1 Review the results framework and project strategy

In **Chapter V**, you developed a results framework, project strategy and theory of change. You made clear how intermediate results led to strategic objectives, which in turn contributed towards the goal. You highlighted underlying assumptions and the evidence base for the project strategy in its TOC. In developing the results framework, you likely defined broad, illustrative activities and possibly outputs, although the concept note's results framework only includes the goal, SOs and IRs.

As a result of the review process (**Chapter VI**), you will have received feedback on the concept note, including the results framework. At this time, discuss review comments and suggestions with the rest of the project design team and relevant stakeholders and adjust the results framework, the project strategy and the theory of change in light of this feedback.

This and further steps in this chapter will likely be done in a workshop setting, as described in **Appendix 2**. Review stakeholder analysis findings to identify who needs to be actively engaged in constructing the Proframe and developing MEAL plans.

### 1.2 Develop the activity-to-output logic

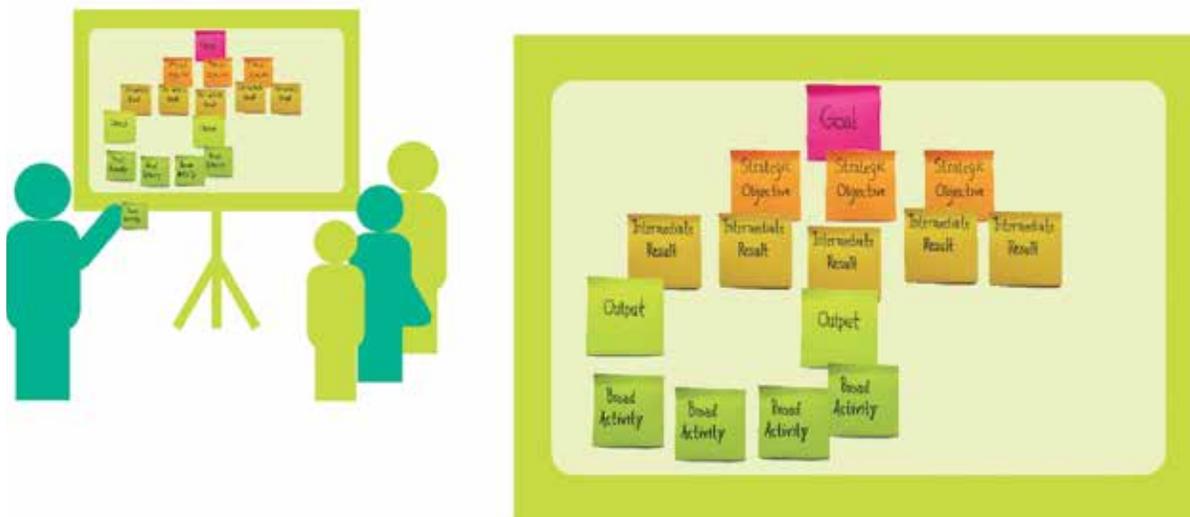
Now, revisit and refine the activities that you may have drafted earlier when working on the results framework, along with the outputs. Use the RF format for this initial exercise, posting relevant outputs and corresponding activities under each IR. The RF's "at-a-glance" format makes it easy to check the means-to-ends logic of activities to outputs to IRs, before tackling Proframe construction.

**Discuss review comments and suggestions with the rest of the project design team and relevant stakeholders and adjust the results framework, the project strategy and the theory of change in light of this feedback**

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**Figure 7.4: Revisit and refine activities**



Discuss **how activities lead to outputs** (and in turn their related IRs). Focus on major, illustrative activities or categories of activities. Do not get distracted by details: Focus on making the “how” clear. For example, a CRS-supported influence and advocacy project in Mexico seeks changes in rural development policy implementation in an underserved state. Mexican federal law mandates the creation of municipal rural development councils with citizen participation in decision-making. Public resources and planning for rural development are channeled through these municipal councils. This law, however, has not yet been implemented in five rural municipalities served by CRS and its partners. One project IR is to establish functioning municipal rural development councils with small farmer council members in these five municipalities. Two illustrative activities and outputs for this IR follow:

- Partner community mobilizers train farm leaders in participatory mechanisms at the municipal level (activity), so that they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively represent project partners in municipal rural development councils (output)
- CRS project officers organize farm leaders to advocate with municipal authorities (activity) so that these authorities in turn agree to create municipal rural development councils in the five municipalities (output)

As you discuss and refine activities and outputs – and how they lead to achievement of related IRs – think ahead and consider what is feasible given the project budget, timeline, and CRS and its partners’ capacities and human resources. Developing project activities is an iterative process. As you provide more details in the activities schedule and budget, you will have a better idea of unit costs and this will allow you to adjust project targets accordingly.

#### IF YOU INTEND TO USE ICT4D

Consider whether you will use ICT4D to lower costs and improve outcomes. Examples include the use of netbook computers for distance education to agricultural field agents, mobile phones for farmers to access weather information and market prices, Java-enabled phones for educational modules about pregnancy, postpartum and newborn danger signs, mobile money in food-for-work projects, etc. Before deciding on an ICT4D solution, you must first assess the ICT4D landscape in the project area and country, including mobile phone penetration, trends, and import restrictions. See [Getting started with ICT4D solution design](#) (CRS 2015c)  for details, and consult your MEAL and IT specialists early in the project design process.

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### 1.3 Write and refine activity and output statements

Transform the activity-to-output discussion in Step 1.2 into objective statements.

Chapter V's examples (for IR, SO and goal statements) are continued here.

**Outputs** are the goods, services, knowledge, skills, attitudes and enabling environment that are delivered by the project, as a result of the activities undertaken. Outputs are demonstrably and effectively received by intended project beneficiaries.

#### Examples of output statements

For an agriculture intervention	For a peacebuilding intervention	For a newborn health intervention
Women rice farmers have demonstrably increased their knowledge of and skills in the improved rice cultivation techniques	The two ethnic groups have formally agreed on a plan to implement a tangible activity of mutual interest	Pregnant women and their partners jointly identify a facility where the women will deliver.

**Activities** describe the functions to be undertaken and managed (what CRS and its partners do) in order to deliver the project's outputs to the targeted project beneficiaries.

#### Examples of activity-level statements

For an agriculture intervention	For a peacebuilding intervention	For a newborn health intervention
Partner agricultural extension workers organize and deliver training for women rice farmers about more productive, environmentally sound techniques of rice cultivation	CRS and partner program managers organize a workshop bringing together two conflicting faith groups to identify a tangible activity of mutual interest	Project male and female community health teams train pregnant women, their partners and other family members on the importance of delivering babies with a skilled attendant

#### Further resources, tools and links

- [Getting started with ICT4D solution design: Key questions for CRS program and IT staff](#) (CRS 2015c)  Helps staff make informed decisions about whether or not to invest in ICT4D for a given project or program. *Annexes 1 and 2* include nine key questions to guide staff through ICT4D concept development and a tool for ICT4D integration analysis.
- [Mobile technology handbook](#) (PACT 2014) Practical guidance on how to design mobile data collection solutions from the design stage and in a holistic manner.
- [Organizational guide to ICT4D: Leveraging technology for international development](#) (NetHope 2014)



## SECTION 2: CONSTRUCT THE PROFRAME: COLUMNS 1 AND 4

### When will you use this section?

- After developing draft activity- and output-level statements and thinking about the activity-to-output-to-IR logic.

### Steps and tools

#### 2.1 Prepare for Proframe construction

Review all relevant work to date, in particular the results framework, project strategy, theory of change and activity- and output-level statements done in **Section 1** above. A Proframe template can be downloaded [here](#) .

Orient the project design team and other stakeholders engaged in this step of project design to the Proframe construction roadmap for Column 1 (objective statements) and Column 4 (critical assumptions) using **Figure 7.5**. Remind them that “planning down and thinking up” will verify the project’s “if and then” logic and affirm the TOC and critical assumptions. Explain that the roadmap starts with Proframe’s Columns 1 and 4 to save time. First check that draft objectives make sense before engaging in the demanding work on their associated indicators and measurement methods/data sources. Note that the Proframe does not include indicators for activity-level objectives. These are monitored using the activities schedule (see **Chapter VIII**). The Proframe does not include critical assumptions for the goal-level statement either, since it is the highest level objective in the Proframe.

**Figure 7.5: The Proframe Roadmap: Planning down, thinking up**

	Objectives statements	Performance indicator statements	Measurement methods/Data sources	Critical assumptions
Goal	↓ 1	10	10	
Strategic objectives	↓ 2	11	11	↑ 9
Intermediate results	↓ 3	12	12	↑ 8
Outputs	↓ 4	13	13	↑ 7
Activities	↓ 5	14	14	↑ 6

## 2.2 Fill in Column 1 (objective statements)

Using the results framework, copy the goal, SO and IR statements to Proframe’s Cells 1, 2 and 3. Using your work from **Section 1** above, add the output- and activity-level objectives for each IR in Cells 4 and 5.

Remember that different objective levels do not necessarily have the same beneficiary group. For example, an education project’s activity, output and IR levels may involve teachers and parents, while the SO involves a change related to school-age children. Make sure that the relevant change agent is clearly defined at each level.

## 2.3 Refine objective statements

Review and refine all objective statements, using the checklist below.

- Include only a single purpose, aim, end product or result for each objective statement.
- Avoid compound statements (... and ...) and subordinate clauses (e.g. starting with “by”, “through” and “via”). These subordinate clauses usually relate to the next level down in the objectives hierarchy.
- Write all objective statements (except activities) in full sentences as if the objective had already been achieved. For activities, write these as action verbs in the present tense.
- Use the active voice and name the precise group or sub-groups expected to receive, implement or benefit at each level of objectives. For activities, the subject of the sentence is the CRS or partner staff member (project role or position) who will implement the activity.

**“Planning down and thinking up” will verify the project’s “if and then” logic and affirm the TOC and critical assumptions**

**Remember that different objective levels do not necessarily have the same beneficiary group**

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- Use strong, action-oriented verbs to describe observable or measurable behavior, e.g. “increase” rather than “enhance,” “produce” rather than “promote” and so on.
- Check that objective statements are clear and specific, and that they can be implemented, measured and achieved.
- Check for optimal numbers of objectives. See **Chapter V** for recommendations concerning the number of SOs and IRs. IRs should each have at least one contributing output and may often have up to three or four. Do not clog up the Proframe with too many outputs and activities. Include only major, illustrative activities or categories of activities.
- Check that the objectives hierarchy clearly demonstrates how the SO will be achieved (i.e. activities together leading to associated outputs, outputs leading to associated IRs, which in turn lead to the SOs).

### 2.4 Fill in Column 4 (critical assumptions)

Remember from **Chapter V**, critical assumptions are factors that the project design team cannot – or decides not to – control but that could endanger project success if they do not hold true. They are expectations fundamental to the working of the objectives hierarchy and may include (a) possible, but not probable risks and/or (b) decisions about what the project chooses not to do that affect the project’s results (for example, activities done by another actor).

Starting at the activity level, ask what conditions (internal or especially external) must exist to achieve the next level up in the objectives hierarchy. Do this for activities to outputs (Box 6) and outputs to IRs (Box 7). Write critical assumptions in full sentences as desirable, positive conditions that need to be met if the project is to stay on course towards achieving the next level up of objectives. For instance, the Ministry of Education allows primary school teachers in target districts to participate in project-organized trainings. Check that you are fairly confident these conditions will be realized and that they can be monitored by project managers.

You already identified assumptions for higher-level objectives when developing the RF, project strategy and TOC. Review them and write critical assumptions for IRs to SOs (Box 8) and SOs to goal (Box 9) in the Proframe.

**Figure 7.6: Applying the “If-and-then” logic to draft critical assumptions**

Objectives statements	Performance indicator statements	Measurement methods/Data sources	Critical assumptions
Goal			
Strategic objectives			SOs to goal
Intermediate results			IRs to SOs
Outputs			Outputs to IRs
Activities			Activities to outputs

### 2.5 Review critical assumptions

Check the validity of assumptions. If any involve project activities and/or use of project funds to ensure (rather than just monitor) that the assumption is met, it is not an assumption, but rather a misplaced objective statement that belongs somewhere in Column 1.

Count the number of assumptions. If large numbers of assumptions exist at some level of the Proframe matrix, this signals a potential risk that higher-level objectives may not be achieved. This may require reviewing the project strategy

**Use strong, action-oriented verbs to describe observable or measurable behavior**

**CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS**  
Factors that the project design team cannot – or decides not to – control but that could endanger project success if they do not hold true.

**If large numbers of assumptions exist at some level of the Proframe matrix, this signals a potential risk that higher-level objectives may not be achieved**

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and/or the TOC. Also check for any killer assumptions, i.e. important assumptions that are very unlikely to hold true. In such cases, the project design must be reworked to bring these assumptions under project control. Otherwise they will “kill” the project!

**AN EXAMPLE OF A KILLER ASSUMPTION**

For a project with a proposed output to establish school gardens, the team identified an assumption that “the government will provide piped water to targeted schools.” In a context where most schools lack piped water and the Ministry of Education has a very small budget, this assumption is very unlikely to be true – and it will “kill” the project, no matter how well other activities are implemented (development of a gardening curriculum, training of teachers, supplying seeds). The project may need to drop this output if it is not critical to achieving the IR, or add activities aiming to supply water for the school gardens, for instance equipping the schools with rain water collection tanks.

**2.6 Test the “if and then, because” of Columns 1 and 4**

Walk through Columns 1 and 4 of your Proframe as follows.

- **If** activities are done as planned, on time, within budget and to a high standard of quality **and** the respective critical assumptions hold, **then** the resulting outputs will be delivered.
- **If** appropriate and quality outputs are delivered on time **and** the critical assumptions hold, **then** the IRs will be attained.
- **If** IRs are attained **and** critical assumptions hold, **then** SOs will be achieved, **because** (read aloud the theory of change statement).
- **If** the SOs are attained **and** critical assumptions hold, **then** the project will contribute towards the goal.

**Figure 7.7: Sample if-and-then test for a peacebuilding project**

Objective statements	Performance indicator statements	Measurement methods/Data sources	Critical assumptions
<b>Goal (THEN)</b> Inhabitants of the region experience greater levels of personal security			
<b>SO (THEN. IF)</b> Two faith groups have reduced tensions between them in non-violent ways			<b>(AND)</b> Reduction in tension contributes to improved mobility and greater sense of personal safety
<b>IR (THEN. IF)</b> Two faith groups effectively implement their agreed-upon activity			<b>(AND)</b> The plan is more important than the influence of dividers or others seeking to foment violence
<b>Output (THEN. IF)</b> Two faith groups have a plan to implement an activity of mutual interest			<i>(no critical assumptions are included at this level since the project design team addressed all foreseen potential risks in the output-to-IR logic)</i>
<b>Activity (IF)</b> CRS and partners organize a workshop bringing together two faith groups in conflict with one another to plan a tangible activity of mutual interest			<i>(no critical assumptions included at this level since the project design team controlled for all foreseen potential risks in the activity-to-output logic)</i>

**If the SOs are attained and critical assumptions hold, then the project will contribute towards the goal**



SECTION 3: CONSTRUCT THE PROFRAME: COLUMNS 2 AND 3

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**When will you use this section?**

- After completing Proframe’s Columns 1 and 4

**Steps and tools**

**3.1 Prepare to identify indicators and measurement methods/data sources**

As per **Figure 7.5** (Page 93) identify indicators and related measurement methods/ data sources for each objective statement. Be sure to involve your MEAL manager (and partners’ M&E staff as appropriate) when filling out these columns.

Start from the top (goal and SO-level indicators and measurement methods) and work your way down to those at IR and output-levels (Boxes 10–13). In many projects, the Goal-level objective is not measured, since the project SOs only contribute to the higher-level goal; if this is the case, start the process at SO level only. Remember, the activities schedule is used to monitor activity-level statements, so you will not develop indicators at this level either.

**3.2 Identify indicators**

An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes related to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor (OECD 2010).

Always check donor requirements for indicators. If the donor does not have mandated indicators, investigate whether there are globally recognized, standard indicators (and accompanying measurement methods) that are relevant to your project. These indicators mainly pertain to goal, SO or IR levels. See *Further resources* below for links to donor required or recommended indicators, as well as links to generally accepted industry indicators for the sector.

**If the donor does not have mandated indicators, investigate whether there are globally recognized, standard indicators that are relevant to your project**

When using standard indicators, adjust them appropriately to your project situation. See **Table 7a** below for an example of an appropriate and inappropriate adjustment to a standard indicator.

**Table 7a: Appropriate and inappropriate adjustments to standard indicators**

Food for Peace standard indicator	Appropriate adjustment	Inappropriate adjustment
Number of <u>individuals</u> who have received USG-supported short-term agriculture sector productivity or food security training	Number of male and female <u>farmers and pastoralists</u> who have received USG-supported short-term agriculture sector productivity or food security training	Number of female <u>producer groups</u> that have received USG-supported short-term agriculture sector productivity or food security training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The FFP standard indicator requires measurement of individuals, so the indicator focus on producer groups is inappropriate</i></li> </ul>

When developing an indicator, make sure it is SMART: Specific, measureable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

Example of a SMART indicator for a strategic objective that states “Flood affected households live in culturally appropriate shelters that protect them from the harsh winter weather”: *By 15 December, 75 percent of flood-affected households in target villages in the Eastern District live in shelters that meet Sphere standard for privacy and thermal protection.* This indicator is specific (it describes a future condition, the target group, where

the target group is located and the condition that will be met), measurable (it is possible to observe whether households live in the shelters and to assess shelter compliance with the specific Sphere standards proposed through a survey and/or direct observation), achievable (after discussions with all concerned, it is expected that the project can achieve this result in the time set and with the requested resources), relevant (the result reflects the expressed needs of local communities for shelter and directly measures the core change that the SO aims to deliver) and time-bound (an end date is given, in this case, the start of winter).

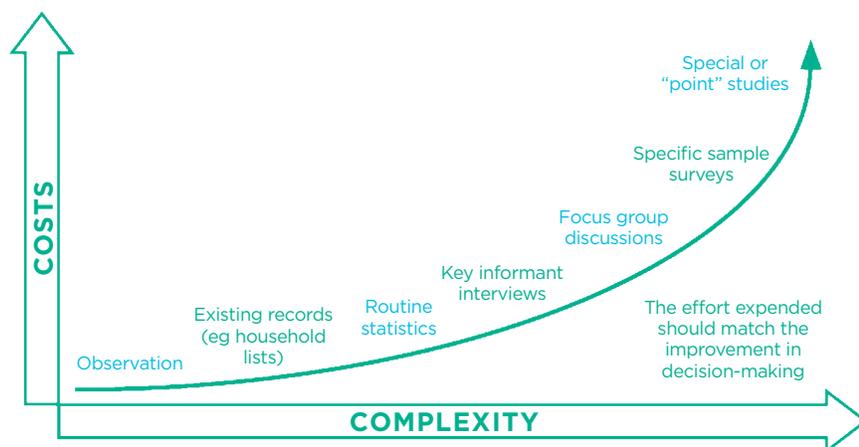
Aim for a limited set of coherent, carefully selected indicators that respond to donor requirements and that together capture the core elements of the objective statement which they aim to measure. In most cases, this is no more than two or three indicators per SO, IR or output; in many cases, there is only one. Ensure that output- and IR-level indicators are reasonably easy to measure so as to provide timely information for project management decision-making and to respond to information needs of key stakeholders (donors, CRS, partners, government, community groups, etc.)

Think carefully about whether and how the indicators will be disaggregated, and make this explicit in the Proframe. Review **Chapter II** checklists for gender integration.

### 3.3 Identify measurement methods/data sources

Proframe's Column 3 describes the measurement method the project will use to track each performance indicator in Column 2, or the precise non-project data source to be used, e.g. regular surveys by another organization. Ensure that the indicators selected are feasible and cost-effective to measure given the project situation and context. More complex data collection methods (e.g. random sample surveys) have higher costs, time and human resource requirements; make sure that these are commensurate with your project's scope and budget. Simpler methods such as use of existing records (e.g. attendance at pre-natal outreach clinics), pre- and post-training tests, direct observation or interviews with small purposefully sampled groups of project participants, should be used for output-level indicators (and when feasible at the IR or even SO level) to ensure timely data availability for project decision-making.

**Figure 7.8: Cost and complexity issues in data collection**



Measurement methods include observations, household surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, ranking, scoring or indexing techniques and pre and post-training tests. Examples of data sources include secondary data, existing government or service provider records, and census data.

**Aim for a limited set of coherent, carefully selected indicators that respond to donor requirements and that together capture the core elements of the objective statement which they aim to measure**

**ICT4D**  
Consider if data-collection systems will use technologies such as mobile data collection or cloud storage to facilitate MEAL reporting and if so, seek guidance.

Select the most appropriate and feasible measurement method(s) for the indicator, while also ensuring that the Proframe’s indicators and corresponding measurement methods together provide an appropriate balance of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data are data that can be counted, coded, or otherwise represented numerically. Qualitative data are open-ended, text-based or narrative data that provide detailed descriptions of contexts and challenges, events, types of people or households, and observed behaviors. Quantitative data document the “what” and “how much” while qualitative data often explain “why” (or “why not”) and “how”. Quantitative and qualitative data are gathered and analyzed using different methods. See **Table 7b.** for a comparison.

**A COMMON ERROR:**  
Using qualitative methods (e.g. focus group discussions) to provide quantitative data.

**Table 7b: Collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data**

Nature of data	Methods of collection	Methods of analysis
<b>Quantitative data</b>	Surveys/structured interviews, location measurements, mapping, direct observation using checklists	Comparison between baseline and actual, against target, between periods / longitudinal analysis; Comparison among disaggregation categories/comparison groups; multivariate correlation analysis; comparison between target and control group (counterfactual analysis)
<b>Qualitative data</b>	Key informant and other semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, unstructured observations, pictures or video recordings	Manual or computer-based content analysis (identify and classify emerging themes), comparison among disaggregation categories, peer/reference group analysis, quasi-statistical analytical methods, etc.

Consult **Table 7c** for tips on performance indicator statements and their associated measurement methods/data sources. The M&E Plan (see Step 3.4) provides additional guidance for drafting measurement methods for each indicator.

**Table 7c: Tips on performance indicator statements and associated measurement methods/data sources**

<b>Goal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In many cases the goal is not monitored or evaluated. For projects that evaluate the goal, performance indicator statements and associated data are drawn from appropriate existing sources such as Amnesty International, FAO, Freedom House, IFPRI, Transparency International, The World Bank, UN agencies, national government reports, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>SOs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SO indicators reflect the benefit(s) expected to occur for beneficiary subgroups by the end of the project as a result of behavioral change(s) at IR-level prompted by successful delivery and receipt of the project’s outputs.</li> <li>To measure these benefits against targets, end-of-project results are always compared with the corresponding baseline findings (whether from primary measurement methods or other data sources) at the time of final project evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>IRs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IR indicators focus on demonstrable evidence of a behavioral change (e.g. adoption or uptake), coverage or reach of services, or use of outputs</li> <li>IR indicators can usually only be collected by the project itself as they are specific to behavioral changes/or use of outputs in response to interventions by/in the specific project and its location. Secondary sources rarely exist at this level.</li> <li>Monitoring of IR indicators begins soon after outputs have begun to be delivered, when they can reasonably be expected to start taking effect, and are formally evaluated at midterm.</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Output indicators allow project management to monitor effective, timely and quality delivery of project activities. They are typically collected as part of routine project monitoring, and used in quarterly project meetings and reports to document results and adjust activities as needed to improve implementation.</li> <li>Output indicators are generally measured in terms of the immediate effects of goods and services delivered. Examples are pre-/post-training scores, practical assessments, existence of new structures, documents or systems, numbers of schools rehabilitated, etc.</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Develop an M&E plan

The M&E plan is a table that details M&E requirements for each Proframe indicator and assumption, thereby enabling projects to collect comparable data over time. The M&E plan defines indicators and summarizes information on how and when data will be collected, analyzed, reported and the respective allocation of responsibilities for each. These types of indicator worksheets are often required by donors, who may have their own specified format to be submitted with the project proposal. For instance, USAID's M&E Plan is called a Performance Management Plan (PMP) and uses a slightly different template than CRS'. See USAID's *Performance monitoring and evaluation tips: Preparing a performance management plan* (USAID 2010b) for further information.

Fill out the M&E plan template (A blank template can be downloaded [here](#)), following instructions in the M&E plan easy reference at the end of this chapter (**Table 7e**). Ensure your M&E plan reflects up-to-date CRS MEAL Policies and Procedures, e.g. quarterly meetings with partners to jointly analyze and reflect on project monitoring data, quarterly reports, etc.

### 3.5 Develop the indicator performance tracking table (IPTT)

Setting targets (using an indicator performance tracking table) helps clarify the number of services or level of change over time. Clear targets are important to develop an accurate activities schedule and related budget, especially for multi-year proposals. The IPTT is a tool used to document annual, midterm and end-of-project targets for each indicator and then to track progress over time during implementation.

Baseline and target figures are almost always estimated during project design and then revised after the baseline survey is completed during project start-up (and updated thereafter). IPTTs (or a similar format) are particularly useful for large multi-year projects and may be required by certain donors.

To develop an IPTT, consult donor guidance and use *Monitoring & Evaluation: IPTT Guidelines; Guidelines and tools for the preparation and use of indicator performance tracking tables* (McMillan et al 2008) which includes the IPTT format, sample completed IPTTs and tips.

### 3.6 Review the Proframe and correct the results framework accordingly

Review the Proframe again, using the Proframe job aid at the end of this chapter (**Table 7d**).

Ask the following questions to check the quality of the Proframe's Columns 2 and 3:

- Do indicators provide information useful for decision-making and tracking progress?
- Are the indicators adequately defined?
- Are the intensity and the frequency of monitoring activities appropriate for the scale of your project? Are seasonal issues considered?
- Is the sample methodology appropriate for your project?
- Do CRS and its partners have the skills and budget needed to collect the relevant data?
- Is there is a good balance of qualitative and quantitative indicators and measurement methods?

Work on the Proframe may have led to adjustments in the IR-, SO- and goal-level objective statements. Check that the results framework and Proframe Column 1 (Rows IR, SO and goal) match.

#### PRACTICAL TIP:

After a project has been funded, CRS staff develop an operating manual for the project MEAL system (MEAL Procedure 1.2). As appropriate, you can set up some elements of the operating manual during project design. Consult the *Guidance on monitoring and evaluation* and *ProPack III* for more information.



To develop an IPTT, consult donor guidance and use *Monitoring & Evaluation: IPTT Guidelines; Guidelines and tools for the preparation and use of Indicator Performance Tracking Tables*.

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## Lessons learned

- Remember that unexpected responses (whether positive or negative) to project interventions often occur. Ensure that plans for MEAL help to detect and document unanticipated changes in addition to progress against project indicators.
- Ensure that objective statements and indicators across all documents (RF, Proframe, M&E plan and IPTT if used) are worded in exactly the same way. If you make a change in one document, make sure that it is applied across all documents.

If you make a change in one document, make sure that it is applied across all documents



### Further resources, tools and links

Links for standard indicators by sector:

#### Agriculture and livelihoods

- [Feed the future indicator handbook](#) (Feed the Future 2014)
- Food for Peace. Check USAID Food for Peace's most up to date standard indicator list.

#### Emergency response

- [The Sphere Handbook](#) (The Sphere Project 2011) Includes standard indicators on WASH, shelter, settlement and non-food items, food security and nutrition, and health actions.
- [USAID OFDA Guidelines for proposals](#) (USAID 2012d) Page 18 and following pages include standard indicators by sector, which must be used in all OFDA submissions.

#### Health

- [Collecting PEPFAR MER Essential Survey Indicators: A supplement to the orphans and vulnerable children survey tools](#) (Measure Evaluation 2014)
- [FANTA project indicators](#) Household dietary diversity, household hunger, etc.
- [Global reference list of 100 core health indicators](#) (WHO 2015)
- [Indicators for Assessing Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices: Parts 1, 2, and 3](#) (WHO 2008/2010)
- [Monitoring and evaluation: Guideline notes and tools; Core list of indicators](#) (The Global Fund 2015)
- [Violence against women and girls: A compendium of monitoring and evaluation indicators](#) (Bloom 2008)

#### Democracy and governance and peacebuilding

- [GAIN peacebuilding indicators](#) (CRS 2010b)
- [Theories and indicators of change in Conflict Management and Mitigation](#) (USAIDd 2013)

#### Other resources and links

- [MEAL Policies and Procedures site](#) The most up-to-date agency resources on MEAL, including links to the agency MEAL policy [POL-OOD-PRG-008](#), responses to frequently asked questions (FAQ), eValue, a self-assessment tool and many other resources.
- [Guidance on monitoring and evaluation](#) (Hagens et al 2012) See in particular Creating an M&E Plan (Pages 33-38) and the M&E plan review questions in Appendix II, Step 1 (Page 120).
- [Performance monitoring and evaluation tips](#) (Second edition) No. 7. Preparing a performance management plan (USAID 2010a)
- [How-to Note: A DFID practice paper; Guidance on using the revised Logical Framework](#) (DFID 2011b)

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## SECTION 4: PLAN FOR MEAL: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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### MONITORING

The systematic collection, analysis and documentation of information about progress towards achieving project objectives and changes in operational contexts in order to inform timely decision-making and contribute to project accountability and learning.

### When will you use this section?

- When discussing the “M&E” of MEAL in order to develop MEAL-related activities and budget and to write the proposal’s MEAL narrative

### Steps and tools

#### 4.1 Develop plans for project monitoring

Monitoring is the systematic collection, analysis and documentation of information about progress towards achieving project objectives and changes in operational contexts in order to inform timely decision-making and contribute to project accountability and learning. CRS staff engage with partners to collect, analyze, reflect upon and use accurate monitoring data on a regular basis in order to be responsive to community feedback, to meet donor requirements and to maintain high program quality (CRS MEAL Policy No. 2).

Plan to monitor objectives at the activity, output and IR levels. While IR-level objectives will generally be evaluated at midterm or end of project, they should also be monitored as soon as outputs are delivered. Monitoring IRs early on will help to resolve problems or bottlenecks and ensure that the project is on track to achieve the SOs. In addition, make plans to monitor the Proframe’s critical assumptions along with unexpected changes in the context that may affect the project outcomes and positive or negative unanticipated effects of the project.

Your monitoring plans must include, at a minimum, the following CRS MEAL procedures. Plan how project staff will:

- Meet with partners on a quarterly basis to jointly analyze and reflect on project monitoring data in order to produce action items with assigned responsibilities (MEAL Procedure 2.1)
- Capture and transmit beneficiary and service delivery data annually according to agency standards, definitions and processes (MEAL Procedure 2.3)
- Conduct and document the findings of an annual data quality assessment for each project of two years or more (MEAL Procedure 2.4)

Think about the implications of planned monitoring activities for human resources, capacities and costs. All monitoring activities should be listed in the activities schedule and budgeted (see the MEAL budget template in **Chapter IX**).

#### 4.2 Develop plans for project evaluations

An evaluation is a periodic, systematic assessment of a project’s relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability on a defined population. It draws from data collected during monitoring as well as additional data collected to understand specific aspects of the project in greater depth.

CRS engages with partners to conduct utilization-focused evaluations (UFE). This approach to designing and conducting evaluations maximizes the likelihood that the learning will be applied by the intended users of the findings (Patton 2008). CRS evaluations also align with any specific donor requirements. All CRS evaluations must apply relevant ethical policies, demonstrate respect for people and promote community participation.

Detailed planning for a selected evaluation design is done during project-start up, after funding is obtained (see *ProPack II*, Chapter VII on Project Evaluation and Close-Out). At the project design stage, focus on planning key evaluation activities with budget and human resources implications. For example, CRS evaluations often engage an external third party to act as team leader, so this needs to be budgeted. If feasible, obtain draft project evaluation questions from project stakeholders during project design as this may influence the scope and costs of baseline surveys, and other MEAL activities and budget.

The Proframe's higher-level objectives (IRs, SOs and in some cases the goal) are evaluated. Depending on the project scope and timeframe, the CRS requirements for project evaluation design varies. Remember to consult the call for proposal or donor guidance, since donor requirement may be more stringent than CRS' policies.

- Projects under \$1 million in total value or one year in duration are not required to conduct an evaluation, but include plans for an after action review at project end (see section on Learning below)
- A project of \$1 million to \$5 million in total value and one year or more in duration, should include an internal final evaluation
- A project of over \$5 million in total value should commission an external final evaluation
- A project of 3 years or more is expected to include a baseline evaluation that documents values for output, IRs and SO indicators and a formative, internal midterm review (or, if required by the donor, an external midterm evaluation), in addition to the final evaluation (CRS MEAL Procedures 3.1, 3.4 and 3.6)

(Evaluation requirements for emergency responses are listed in **Section 7**)

Some donors make a distinction between performance evaluations (whereby data from indicators is compared at midterm and end of project against baseline values) and impact evaluations, typically conducted post project and which aim to measure changes in individuals, households, communities or institutions that can be attributed to a project (i.e. at goal level), often with an experimental or quasi-experimental design. Other donors refer to SO-level change as "impact". Pay strict attention to donor requirements for external or impact evaluations as these requirements may evolve. Consult your MEAL manager for advice on budget implications for your project's evaluation design.

Evaluation plans should include, at a minimum, all activities that have human resource, time and/or budget implications. In particular, plan how project staff will:

- Collect relevant baseline data and what amount of time is required to do so. Reflect on how this may affect the timing of activities start-up
- Conduct a midterm and/or final review or evaluation; consider when these should occur and what amount of time is required to conduct them
- Hold participatory events with partners to reflect on evaluation findings

#### 4.3 Write up plans and decisions for the proposal's MEAL narrative

Be sure to capture plans and key decisions for monitoring and evaluation that will be included in the proposal's MEAL narrative. See **Section 6** below for further details.

##### Further resources, tools and links

- [Guidance on monitoring and evaluation](#) (Hagens et al 2012) See the Core M&E standards, gender in M&E, project monitoring, and community participation in M&E (Pages 3-19).
- [CRS MEAL Policies and Procedures site](#) The most up-to-date agency resources on Monitoring and Evaluation.
- [ProPack II](#) (CRS 2007a) See in particular Chapter VI, Section III, on project review meetings and Chapter VII, Sections I and II, on evaluations, including utilization-focused evaluations.

#### AFTER ACTION REVIEW

A simple, quick and versatile option for facilitating the continual assessment of organizational performance, looking at successes and failures, and ensuring that learning takes place to support continuous improvement.

#### PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

An evaluation that compares data from indicators over time (typically at mid-term or end of project) against baseline values.

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## SECTION 5: PLAN FOR MEAL: ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

### When will you use this section?

- When discussing the “A&L” of MEAL in order to develop MEAL-related activities and budget and to write the proposal’s MEAL narrative

### 5.1 Develop plans for accountability

During project design, discuss beneficiary accountability plans that have human resources and budget implications. At a minimum, these include:

- Orientation of new project staff on beneficiary accountability
- Consulting with male and female beneficiaries in one or more communities to define indicators for project success
- Establishing two-way communication mechanisms that reflect local conditions and community preferences. This may include posting of project information, targeting criteria and (as applicable) hotline information
- Plans for collecting, documenting and responding to all community feedback received on a regular basis (CRS MEAL Policy No. 6 and Procedures 6.1 – 6.4)

CRS projects are also accountable to donors and other stakeholders for meeting donor requirements for MEAL and sharing successes, challenges and lessons learned through the timely delivery of reports and accompanying means of communication. At a minimum, CRS staff must:

- Ensure that project MEAL systems meet donor MEAL requirements
- Communicate evaluation findings to key stakeholders

### 5.2 Develop plans for learning

During project design, discuss plans to orient new project staff on basic principles and practices of learning. Also discuss how project-level learning will be captured and shared and how it will contribute to CRS’ or the country program’s learning agenda and/or annual learning event (CRS MEAL Policy No. 8).

Discuss how learning is expected to inform internal project decision-making, including possible adaptations to project activities or strategy, as well as possible external uses (influence or advocacy purposes). If your project includes operations research, discuss implications for project human resources and budget, including use of consultants or university researchers, and the need for terms of reference with the research partner.

Plans for project-specific learning should include all learning activities that have human resources, time and/or budget implications:

- Plans for quarterly meetings with partners to jointly analyze and reflect on project monitoring and accountability data, in order to produce action items with assigned responsibilities (CRS MEAL Procedure 2.1).
- Plans for participatory interpretation of evaluation findings with partners (and other stakeholders as appropriate) in order to adjust project activities for the remainder of the project (in the case of midterm evaluations) and/or to generate lessons for future projects.
- In cases when no final evaluation is planned, include plans for an after action review at project end (CRS MEAL Procedure 3.1).
- Plan for communication and dissemination of evaluation findings, as appropriate to project size, scope and learning agenda (CRS MEAL Procedure 7.2).

Review your stakeholder analysis to decide who should be involved in these learning activities and who should be informed of results, for instance, receiving a copy of the final evaluation.



**Discuss beneficiary accountability plans including collecting, documenting and responding to all community feedback**

**Discuss how learning is expected to inform internal project decision-making, including possible adaptations to project activities or strategy, as well as possible external uses (influence or advocacy purposes)**

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### 5.3 Write up plans and decisions for the proposal's MEAL narrative

Be sure to capture plans and decisions for accountability and learning that will be included in the proposal's MEAL narrative. See **Section 6** below.

#### Lessons learned

Constructing a Proframe and discussing plans for MEAL should always be done **before** writing the project proposal's technical narrative.

#### Further resources, tools and links

- CRS *MEAL Policies and Procedures site*  The most up-to-date agency resources on accountability and learning.
- *Communication toolbox: Practical guidance for program managers to improve communication with participants and community members* (CRS 2013c) Describes how to make a systematic communication plan and improve accountability in emergency and development contexts.
- *Impact measurement and accountability in emergencies: The good enough guide* (ECB 2007) Simple tools for teams with limited prior experience.
- *Haiti's Accountability Framework* (CRS 2012b) A strong, practical example of beneficiary accountability integration. Developed for an emergency response, the framework is equally applicable in a development context.
- *Feed the Future learning agenda* (Feed the Future 2012) A sample donor learning agenda.



## SECTION 6: LINK TO THE PROPOSAL

Include the Proframe in the project proposal (or adapt it to the donor's logical framework template and language). Always ensure that the MEAL narrative addresses donor requirements, priorities and any MEAL criteria they have provided. Some donors require submission of an M&E plan at the proposal stage.

Insert information and decisions from this chapter into the MEAL narrative:

- A description of monitoring activities (including primary methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection at output and IR levels, quarterly reflection meetings with partners, and completing annual data quality assessments)
- A description of evaluation activities (plans for baseline data collection, midterm review or evaluation, and final review or evaluation as applicable)
- A description of participatory learning events with partners, such as after action reviews, lessons learned workshops and participatory reflections on evaluation findings
- A description of accountability activities, in particular possible community-identified indicators of project success and proposed community feedback mechanisms (including how feedback will be responded to)
- A description of how project-level learning will be captured and shared and how it contributes to larger learning agenda within CRS and externally

(You may add other elements to the MEAL narrative in subsequent steps when you complete the staffing and management plans, activities schedule and budget.)

Some donors require a completed M&E plan or IPTT with the project proposal. In any case, all proposals should include a discussion of targets in the MEAL narrative. Targets must be consistent across the MEAL narrative, the Proframe and/or other MEAL tools, the activities schedule and the budget.

Consult the *CRS MEAL guidance: Top tips for writing a MEAL narrative* (CRS 2015a)  for more information.

**Always ensure that the MEAL narrative addresses donor requirements, priorities and any MEAL criteria they have provided**



**Targets must be consistent across the MEAL narrative, the Proframe and/or other MEAL tools, the activities schedule and the budget**

**SECTION 7: HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE?****Sections 2 and 3: Construct the Proframe, Columns 1 and 4, 2 and 3**

In line with developing one results framework, develop one Proframe for the overall emergency response, using it to inform all donor submissions and ensure consistency. (You may need to adjust language or add some donor-mandated indicators to meet donor requirements, but the objective statements and indicators should generally align.) Some elements of the Proframe (e.g. those related to medium-term recovery) are tentative in the early stages of a response and others may be deleted when the immediate response ends.

Critical assumptions, while important for any project, are vital in an emergency response, given the potential for rapid changes. Assumptions about how long people will be displaced and what it takes for them to return and rebuild may be impossible to make at the start. Be honest and recognize what you know and do not know. This can increase donors' trust and position you to successfully negotiate project changes.

When selecting indicators, use OFDA-mandated indicators for the sector or sub-sector. This positions you for potential OFDA funding, even if it is not available or sought at the start. Also refer to Sphere indicators for the technical area proposed, especially for SO level indicators.

To develop each indicator's measurement methods/data sources (Proframe's Column 3), apply a "good enough" approach to ensure that data collection methods will facilitate timely analysis and decision-making. See *Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning in emergencies: A resource pack for simple and strong MEAL* (Morel and Hagens 2012) and its flow chart of monitoring methods for details.

**Sections 4 and 5: Plan for MEAL: Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning**

In emergency situations, MEAL is first and foremost use-focused. Timeliness and relevance of the data is more critical than its level of accuracy or statistical significance: in a fluid environment, what is true today might not be tomorrow. Ensure that plans for data analysis and use are made from the very start, including daily team debriefs and regular (weekly then monthly) opportunities to reflect on monitoring and accountability data and act upon it in a timely manner.

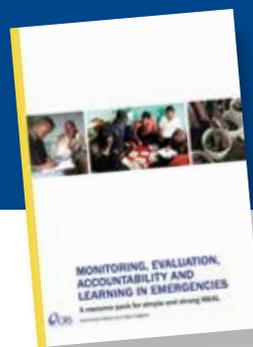
Plan to monitor the Proframe's assumptions and the changing context from the very start and to continue doing so until the emergency situation stabilizes. In some cases, you may decide to include specific trigger indicators, such as market prices or household coping measures. Trigger indicators reflect thresholds at which a project may need to suspend, start or change activities in response to changes in the environment. They are particularly relevant in dynamic and unpredictable operating environments (Mathys 2007). In other cases, informal (but intentional) monitoring of the project's context may be sufficient.

OFDA guidance indicates that baselines are required for all proposals, which can be challenging in an emergency context. Consult *Guidance: Meeting OFDA's baseline requirement* (CRS 2014a)  for information on how to meet this requirement without undue burden.

Emergency responses with an overall value of \$1 million or more and an anticipated length of one year or more should include plans for a real-time evaluation within the first 90 days of the response (CRS MEAL Procedure No. 3.5). RTEs may be repeated if there is a significant change in the environment and related response strategy.

**Critical assumptions, while important for any project, are vital in an emergency response, given the potential for rapid changes**

See *Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning in emergencies: A resource pack for simple and strong MEAL* and its flow chart of monitoring methods for details.

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### Further resources, tools and links

- *Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning in emergencies: A resource pack for simple and strong MEAL* (Morel and Hagens 2012)
- *Guidance on conducting real-time evaluations in emergencies* (Ishida and Wilson 2010)
- *The Sphere Handbook* (The Sphere Project 2011)
- *USAID/OFDA Guidelines for proposals* (USAID 2012) Sector, sub-sector and indicator table, Pages 18-25.
- *Guidance: Meeting OFDA's baseline requirement* (CRS 2014a)  Discusses options and helps staff make context-appropriate decisions on how to meet OFDA's baseline requirement.
- *Closing the loop: Effective feedback in emergency contexts; Practitioner guide* (Bonino 2014) Helps staff design and implement feedback mechanisms, especially in humanitarian programs.

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## SECTION 8: TABLES AND EXAMPLES

**Table 7d: Proframe job aid**

Objective statements	Performance indicator statements	Measurement methods/Data sources	Critical assumptions
<p><b>Goal:</b> This is the longer-term, wider change in people's lives or livelihoods to which the project will contribute. Think of the goal as a larger, longer-term hope or aspiration.</p> <p><i>How to write: Write as a full sentence, as if already achieved. Make the general communities of the intended beneficiaries the subject of the sentence.</i></p>	<p>Performance indicator statements (if used) reflect changes.</p>	<p>Associated data are drawn from appropriate, already-existing sources such as The World Bank, UN, national government reports, Transparency International, IFPRI, etc.</p>	<p>It is not necessary to complete this box.</p>
<p><b>Strategic objectives (SOs):</b> These describe the noticeable or significant benefits that are actually achieved and enjoyed by target groups by the end of the project. Each SO expresses an aim that is realistic, specific to the project and measurable.</p> <p>SOs are the central purpose of the project.</p> <p><i>How to write: Write it in a full sentence, as if already achieved. Make the targeted beneficiary group(s) the subject of the sentence</i></p>	<p>SO indicators reflect the benefit(s) expected to occur for beneficiary groups or subgroups by the end of the project as a result of behavioral change(s) achieved at IR-level prompted by successful delivery and receipt of the project's outputs.</p>	<p>SO indicators are generally evaluated via midterm and final evaluations.</p> <p>To measure these benefits against the targets set, end-of-project results are always compared with the corresponding baseline findings.</p>	<p><b>SOs-to-goal</b></p> <p>Assumptions that will affect achievement of the goal concern:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-term sustainability of the project</li> <li>Contributions of national governments or other organizations that may be critical to achievement of the goal</li> </ol>

<p><b>Intermediate results (IRs):</b> These state the expected changes in identifiable behaviors by participants in response to the successful delivery and reception of outputs. IR-level responses may show themselves by: Project beneficiaries adopting new behaviors or skills promoted by the project; expansion of project reach or coverage; new ways of organizing or managing systems; alterations to policy; or anything else that shows project outputs being used by the targeted beneficiaries.</p> <p>These are called “intermediate” because progress at this level is a necessary step towards achieving the SOs.</p> <p>There may be more than one IR for each SO</p> <p><i>How to write: Write it in a full sentence, as if already achieved. Make the specific individuals or groups whose behavior is expected to change the subject of the sentence.</i></p>	<p>IR indicators focus on demonstrable evidence of a behavioral change, such as rate of adoption or uptake, coverage or reach of outputs.</p>	<p>IR indicators are generally monitored via regular ongoing data collection, as well as more rigorously evaluated (baseline + midterm + final)</p> <p>IR indicators normally can only be collected by the project itself because they are specific to behavioral changes in response to activities in the specific project and geographic area.</p> <p>Start with “light” monitoring. Depending on findings, more targeted or in-depth monitoring or special studies may be needed.</p> <p>At midterm, IRs are formally evaluated and project implementation or project strategies adapted as needed.</p>	<p><b>IRs-to-SOs</b></p> <p>Assumptions at this level usually come from assessment findings.</p>
<p><b>Outputs:</b> These are the goods, services, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and enabling environment delivered by the project as a result of activities undertaken.</p> <p>There may be more than one output for each IR</p> <p><i>How to write: Write it in a full sentence, as if already achieved. Make the specific individuals or groups receiving the outputs the subject of the sentence.</i></p>	<p>Output indicators remind project management of what the project is contracted to deliver and when.</p> <p>Output indicators allow project management to monitor what is to be delivered, when and, most importantly, to what effect.</p> <p>Project management is directly accountable for delivering the outputs to those targeted.</p>	<p>They are generally measured in terms of immediate effects of goods and services delivered, such as pre- and post-training scores, practical assessments, creation of certain structures, documents, systems, number of schools rehabilitated, etc.</p> <p>Sources for monitoring and evaluating outputs indicators typically include program, administrative, and management record-keeping systems.</p>	<p><b>Outputs-to-IRs</b></p> <p>Assumptions at this level are those affecting uptake/ adoption of the outputs that are outside the control of project management.</p>
<p><b>Activities:</b> These describe the functions to be undertaken and managed in order to deliver the project’s outputs to the targeted beneficiaries or participants.</p> <p>There may be more than one activity for each output. To avoid clogging up the Proframe, only major categories of activities are listed.</p> <p>A complete activities schedule is done separately (see <b>Chapter IX</b>).</p> <p><i>How to write: Write using an action verb in the present tense. In all cases, the specific CRS or partner staff responsible for doing the activity should be the subject of the sentence, e.g. Partner staff do “X”;</i></p>	<p>Do not complete.</p>	<p>Do not complete. Note that activities are measured through administrative, management and financial systems, including the activities schedule, corresponding workplans, progress reports, budget expenditures, etc.</p> <p>Activities are measured with regards to their completion as planned to a degree of acceptable quality.</p>	<p><b>Activities-to-outputs</b> Assumptions at this level concern conditions outside the direct control of project management, but that must nevertheless be met for the outputs to be delivered.</p> <p>The project itself should not spend money to achieve any of these external conditions. If any project funds are allocated to address them, they should then be included as activities.</p>

**Table 7e: M&E Plan easy reference**

Objective statement: (precisely as worded in the results framework and/or Proframe). For example: SO: Women [specify location] take action to claim their political and civil rights.		Performance indicator statement: (precisely as worded in Column 2 of the Proframe). For example, 20,000 women from [target province or district] register to vote by [date].			
Indicator definition	Data collection			Data use	
	Measurement methods and data sources	Frequency of collection	Responsibility		
Detailed definition of key terms, especially ambiguous terms, and aspects to be measured including who, what and where the indicator applies; how the indicator will be calculated; and how the indicator will be disaggregated by sex (and other variables) to ensure that everyone understands it in the same way. A common mistake is not to define "quality" or "improved use".  <i>Example: Simple numeric count.</i>	Method and data source for collecting data against the indicator. From Proframe Column 3, Measurement Methods and Data Sources, with added details. Examples of measurement methods and data sources include secondary data, census, observation, field surveys, baseline or endline surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, ranking, scoring or indexing techniques, record reviews, pre- and post-training tests.  <i>Example: Voter registration rolls; partner/project facilitator records and reports; survey (self-reporting)</i>	How often the data for each indicator will be collected, e.g. monthly, quarterly, annually, baseline/endline. List any start-up and end dates for collection. Consider factors such as seasonality, school schedules, holidays, religious observances. Relate timing and frequency of data collection to project milestones related to the objective statement. Be clear on which levels are monitored and which evaluated. Don't wait until the endline to check on progress towards SOs and regularly monitor IRs.  <i>Example: Monthly, registration period for upcoming municipal elections</i>	List those who have primary responsibility for actual data collection, specifying the organization and the title of the person responsible for collecting the data, e.g. community volunteers, CRS or partner field staff, project managers, external consultants.  <i>Example: Partner M&amp;E officer, assisted by CRS project manager.</i>	How often and when the data will be analyzed, e.g. monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually, final.  <i>Example: Data will be analyzed quarterly.</i>	How the information will be used in project decision-making and communication (reports, meetings, events) and the frequency of these reports or events. Also discuss who will use the information e.g. project managers, donors, beneficiary accountability needs.  <i>Example: Discuss in quarterly project meetings to adjust activities if progress is lower than expected. Include in donor report on annual basis. Include in end-of-project learning event with external stakeholders to evaluate impact of program on women's participation in political life.</i>
	Data analysis		Data use		
	How data will be analyzed	Frequency of analysis			
	Process for compiling and analyzing data to gauge whether indicator has been met or not. Identify the most appropriate type of analysis for the indicator. a) Quantitative data: calculation of percent distribution or statistical testing to assess for differences among comparison groups using Excel, SPSS or other software packages; b) Qualitative data: identification of common themes and differences between comparison groups using matrices. If an indicator requires multiple types of data collection, include the relevant type of data analysis for each method.  <i>Example: Comparison against target, observation of trends in women's voter registration rate over time.</i>				

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## CHAPTER VIII: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the following seven sections:

Section 1: Decide on governance structures and partnership management

Section 2: Plan delivery systems: Staffing and management plans

Section 3: Plan delivery systems: Goods and services

Section 4: Plan for risk management

Section 5: Link to the proposal

Section 6: How is this different in an emergency?

Section 7: Tables and examples

#### Standards of quality

- Processes and structures for partner oversight and project governance are guided by partnership principles including subsidiarity, stewardship and transparency.
- Project strategy selection (see **Chapter V**) is informed by a cost/impact analysis of related delivery and management plan options.
- Project proposal management plans are feasible, realistic and based on rigorous analysis involving the country program's senior management team members.
- Plans for risk mitigation have been discussed when designing all projects. If required by the donor, a risk mitigation plan is written.

#### Why is this step of project design important?

Issues related to organizational capacity and management plans are considered throughout project design, especially when selecting the project strategy, planning activities and developing the budget. All too often, management and operations issues are not equally considered with programmatic ones in making project design decisions. The quality and cost-effectiveness of management structures and staffing plans are as important as the project's objectives, strategy and theory of change. Donors are quick to spot insufficient attention to management and operations in project proposals and often point out that a proposal communicates what will be achieved – but not how. When such projects are funded, they may prove to be costly and unsustainable or challenging to launch, manage, and close, creating unacceptable risks.

The *Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence (CAFE)* (CRS 2008a) stresses the importance of establishing proven governance structures during project design and proposal development. Although the details of such structures will be completed after the project is funded (during project start-up), early discussions allow for associated costs to be budgeted.

Staffing plans are critical to achieving project results in a quality and cost-effective manner. In some projects, the way in which goods and services will be delivered to beneficiaries may have significant budget implications. In these cases, you need to look at delivery systems during project design, since your decisions may have implications for the activities schedule, budget, management plan and staffing.

All projects are built on assumptions and underlying risks about the project and operating environment. These risks can significantly impact CRS' ability to successfully reach and sustain project objectives. A risk mitigation plan includes measures that help to monitor and minimize critical risks that are outside of CRS' control. In some situations, risk mitigation plans are developed during project design, for example, when projects will be remotely monitored due to access or security considerations. This chapter focuses on risk mitigation related to delivery systems, including those for partners.

**The quality and cost-effectiveness of management structures and staffing plans are as important as the project's objectives, strategy and theory of change**

#### DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Anything CRS and its partners do to deliver project activities, which in turn lead to higher-level results. Delivery systems include project inputs (staff, goods and services) and how these inputs are related in a coherent whole to deliver results.

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Carefully considering project governance, organizational capacity, delivery systems and risks during project design will increase a project's likelihood of success. It will:

- Ensure smooth project implementation, because management, staffing and procurement were carefully planned, budgeted and organized across the life of the project – including key transition periods of start-up and close-out.
- Reduce vulnerability to risks such as insecurity, a shifting regulatory environment, supply chain breaks and partner management issues. This is because during project design, these risks were identified and plans made to mitigate them.
- Increase the competitiveness of the project proposal and demonstrate excellent stewardship of resources because project responsibilities were clarified and agreed upon to leverage the respective strengths of CRS and its partners. Also, because staffing drivers were clearly analyzed, the staffing plan and budget notes are able to credibly justify the need for the project staff.



## SECTION 1: DECIDE ON GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

### When will you use this section?

- When deciding on the project strategy, staffing plans and governance, especially when designing large, complex consortia projects

### Steps and tools

#### 1.1 Determine the most appropriate processes and structures for project governance

When CRS is the lead in a consortium, determine overall project governance as appropriate for this stage of project design. Some project governance arrangements will only be finalized later, after the award is won. Project governance outlines the management framework within which project decisions are made. It clarifies who has the authority to make decisions and who is accountable for the success of the project (PM4NGOs, 2011). Project governance structures must have a demonstrated cost-effective relationship to achievement of project results. For example:

- In very large projects, there may be a **steering committee**<sup>3</sup> that provides leadership and direction to the project, ensures shared accountability for performance, and creates a forum for learning and building on the strengths of the respective members of the partnership. A steering committee should include those who will have authority to make strategic decisions about the project.
- Where consortium members share responsibility for specific technical areas, **technical working groups** provide a forum for establishing technical standards and consistent guidance on approaches and strategies for all partners. These working groups also gather and share lessons learned and best practices throughout the life of the project.
- Where several consortium members manage different aspects of the project, **project management working groups** help to ensure consistent and coordinated decisions on work plans. Depending on whether these structures have more of a coordination role or a project management role, they are also sometimes called consortium coordination units or project management units (PMU).

In most cases, the terms of reference for these kinds of governance structures are developed after the project is funded, during project start-up. However, thinking ahead about governance structures during project design is important in order to plan related project activities and budget potential costs.

3. PMD Pro (PM4NGOs, 2011) calls the steering committee a "project board."

**NOTE:** Consortium partner selection and capacity strengthening are discussed in Chapter II, Section 1, and Chapter III. Refer to those chapters for information on how to assess partner capacity and develop an appropriate project strategy to strengthen capacity.

**Some project governance arrangements will only be finalized later, when and if the award is won**

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## 1.2 Determine the most appropriate structure for partner oversight

Some international NGOs may function as a contractor or as a sub-recipient. Review the *Sub-recipient Vendor Analysis* to help make the distinction between a contractor (who is paid to deliver a project activity or service) and a sub-recipient (who has an important role in decision-making). For partners that qualify as sub-recipients, determine their level of risk, if this is not known. Note that a partner who is “new” in your context may not necessarily be a new partner for CRS as a whole, so consult CRS’ Gateway online project information management system for organization data.

- Review Uniform Guidance (UG) audits of US NGOs as a point of reference for the partner’s oversight priorities and needs. Contact the *Global Risk and Compliance Unit* for any additional information.
- Where possible and appropriate (e.g. when a relationship with a partner already exists, or where a partner is responsible for a critical project component such as procurement), get *Sub-Recipient Financial Management (SRFM) policy* data from Gateway or your head of operations.
- Collect and check past performance references provided by partners and include donor or prime contact information. Positive references can be cited in the proposal’s management plan to highlight partner strengths and justify their selection. An inability to produce references may indicate a partner weakness that needs to be anticipated.

If the benefits of working with partner organizations without strong management capacity outweigh the costs, CRS must address the need for strong program and operations oversight in the project’s staffing plan, management plan and budget. The project may need to add operations staff, such as an accountant or a grant manager for sub-award funding to these high-risk partners. In the case of contractors, CRS is only responsible for paying for what is actually delivered. However, there are additional costs of working with contractors (such as fees) that must be budgeted for.

Using the data above, develop an actual or assumed profile of the proposed sub-recipients for the project. This will allow you to estimate the partner oversight resources required, based on some assumptions about the number of staff needed per partner. For example:

Risk category	No. of partners	No. of visits per year	No. of monitors needed
Strong internal controls			
Sufficient internal controls			
Inadequate internal controls			

Although investing in oversight costs may result in changes in a partner’s capacity, the purpose of these investments is to mitigate risks to results of this particular project. If specific changes in the partner profile are expected over the life of the project because of these or other investments (e.g. the anticipated award of a capacity strengthening grant), changes should be anticipated over the project period.

**PRACTICAL TIP:** Be sure to consult your head of programs, head of operations and deputy regional directors for program and operations. They can advise and support you on this step and all others in this chapter.

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### Further resources, tools and links

- *Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence (CAFE)* (CRS 2008a) A vital resource for forming and operating a consortium. Includes clear and concise standards for nine components or aspects of a successful consortium (Page 9).
- *Sub-recipient Financial Management Policy*. CRS policy POL-FIN-SFM-023 (December 2013).  The practical tools associated with it are available at CRS' *Global Finance Policy site*.



## SECTION 2: PLAN DELIVERY SYSTEMS: STAFFING AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

### When will you use this section?

- When developing the project strategy, results framework, Proframe, activity schedule and budget and when writing the project proposal's management and staffing plans.

**Note:** Designers should use an iterative process to synchronize the management plan with the resources available for direct expenses.

### Steps and tools

#### 2.1 Determine the number and kinds of project staff

To start, calculate the project staff using the activities schedule. Think about cost drivers for needed positions. For example, the number of trainers needed for a project depends on the number of learners and the number of planned workshops. The number of finance and compliance officers needed for a project depends on the total number of working days to review and process partners' advance liquidation, the number of site visits per year and days per visit, the number of partner liquidations expense reports to be submitted per year, etc.

**REVIEW THE STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS FINDINGS (Chapter III) to plan who needs to be involved in decisions on staffing and management plans. This is especially important when working with new partners.**

The staffing level required for the project is closely related to the project strategy and delivery structure, as illustrated in the Care Group example discussed in **Chapter IX**. In a project that provides services, you would calculate how many service providers are needed per population served. This may be defined by government policy, industry standards or best practice from past experience. For example, sector standards show that one SILC field agent supervisor is needed for five to seven field agents. Standards used in prior CRS projects mandated one antiretroviral treatment counselor per 300 patients.

Then, consider whether the activities schedule describes all the activities and support needed. Talk to your head of operations about what is required in terms of support and services from human resources, finance, procurement, IT, administration and other functions. With your HoOps, think about cost drivers for needed operations staff along with relevant internal control procedures, including segregation of duties. For example, a procurement officer who orders and purchases goods cannot be the same person who receives the ordered goods. It is critical to tie all staff included in the project to cost drivers that clearly contribute to achieving project results.

**SECTION 2** helps you to take decisions on the number, roles and responsibilities, and location of staff and the optimal management plan (also called organizational structure) required to effectively and efficiently deliver expected project results.

**COST DRIVER**  
A factor that causes a change in the cost of an activity.

**SEGREGATION OF DUTIES**  
A basic internal control concept in which different people must be responsible for authorizing transactions, recording transactions, and maintaining custody of assets.

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## 2.2 Define required positions and implied skill sets and expertise

Determine (a) how many and (b) what kinds of project staff are needed. Consider whether it is more appropriate to aggregate “part-time” functions in one staff member or, for geographic or other reasons, spread the function across several part-time staff. For example, some donors prefer fewer, but very highly skilled and educated project staff.

Define the skills sets and expertise required to deliver high-quality results. Consider needed skill sets and expertise in light of the project strategy. For example, an advocacy project may require that project leadership have strong skills in facilitating and brokering relationships among civil society groups, government and other institutions.

All projects need staff with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences necessary to implement high-quality, utilization-focused MEAL systems (CRS MEAL Policy No. 5). Consult the [MEAL Policies and Procedures site's Human Resources section](#)  for specific MEAL competencies needed across the project cycle.

Depending on project size and scope, project leadership positions, roles and responsibilities may include the following:

- Project director or chief of party who is accountable to project stakeholders (including beneficiaries and donors) for project outcomes
- Technical director or deputy chief of party who is responsible for ensuring the quality of programmatic aspects of project implementation
- Operations director or deputy chief of party who is responsible for ensuring that support services are delivered with maximum cost effectiveness and for implementing risk mitigation activities
- Grants and compliance manager who reports to the operations director and is responsible for ensuring that project activities comply with donor agreements and regulatory requirements

## 2.3 Determine the availability of required staff

Identify resources and gaps concerning project staff. To do this, list where required skill sets and expertise exist (at CRS, partner and/or community levels) and will be available for project implementation. Identify gaps that require any additional, strategic partnerships and/or new staff expertise.

Consider the pros and cons of hiring new staff or using existing staff. Do not assume that existing staff have the needed skills sets or time to manage or implement a new project. At the same time, consider the implications of hiring new staff in terms of on-boarding and learning curves. Carefully analyze needs, existing resources, and donor requirements, and make informed, defensible decisions for project staffing.

With the help of your HoOps, determine the costs and availability on the local market of required staff. Investigate how you will recruit skilled staff that will contribute to staff diversity in terms of age, gender, ethnicity or other factors. In some projects, recruitment starts during project design and proposal development. In these cases, recruitment may be nearly complete (contingent on award) when the proposal is submitted, allowing for timely project start-up if the project is approved.

## 2.4 Identify staff locations and, where relevant, points of service

Determine which project staff will be affiliated with CRS and/or its partners, ensuring no duplication of effort. Staff affiliation should reflect decisions made during consortium formation or partner selection. For example, the partner responsible for MEAL will hire staff that perform MEAL functions.



**ICT4D**  
If project activities involve use of ICT4D, ensure you have the right number and kinds of MEAL and IT staff.

**NOTE:** Some donors require identification of candidates for key staff positions and submission of their CVs with the project proposal.



**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
For large, competitive proposals, consider asking a headquarters human resources member to provide feedback on job descriptions, recruitment strategies and communication to initiate job postings.

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Decide where staff should be located, considering donor priorities, quality service delivery, subsidiarity and economy of scale. Make decisions that you can clearly justify to the donor in terms of benefits and costs of staff location. Locating staff closer to the project site allows for more frequent contact, which may contribute to better implementation and oversight. Locating operations and project staff nearer to the project site or point of service may be justified in case of:

- Continuous or regular conditions of limited access to the project site or point of service due to insecurity or infrastructure issues or poor ICT infrastructure
- Distances and transport costs that clearly exceed the costs of establishing and maintaining a decentralized office

If staff is decentralized, consider how to lower costs. For example, project staff and offices may be housed at a partner's office.

In other cases, efficiency is reduced when operating multiple project service delivery sites, due to duplication of services, communication and transport costs. In some projects, centralizing some services (e.g. operations staff) and decentralizing others (e.g. program staff) provides the benefits of both options.

### 2.5 Develop the project's management plan and organizational chart

Think about how the management plan can support project objectives. For example, in an integrated project, the management plan might show that staff from different organizations all report to one project director, avoiding sector-related silos.

Reporting relationships and integration with country program structures need special attention in a project with a chief of party. Consider the pros and cons of a chief of party reporting to the head of programs or to the country representative. Technical coordination, program integration, synergies and efficiencies for program resources and learning may be enhanced if the chief of party reports to the HoP. Often, however, CoPs are very senior staff members and prefer reporting to the country representative. In addition, the donor may expect a more direct channel of communication to the CoP. In making this decision, consider how reporting relationships will be viewed by the donor along with needs for program and operations integration.

Working with operations and program leadership in your region, consult midterm and final evaluations from previous similar projects for findings on management plans and their impact on project activity implementation. Talk to relevant project managers about their organizational chart and how it worked in reality.

Develop an organizational chart with a bird's-eye view of project staff, affiliation (partners or CRS), functions, relationships and reporting, lines of communication and locations. See **Section 7** for several examples of project organizational charts. There are many online videos with step-by-step instructions on how to make organizational charts using widely-available software, for example, *How to make an organizational chart* (Thermometertemplate 2011)

Review your organizational chart to ensure coherence and quality by asking these questions:

- Are roles, responsibilities, relationships and reporting lines clear?
- Are there duplications or redundancies needing elimination?
- Are there gaps that need to be filled?

**Locating staff closer to the project site allows for more frequent contact, which may contribute to better implementation and oversight**

**Develop an organizational chart with a bird's-eye view of project staff, affiliation (partners or CRS), functions, relationships and reporting, lines of communication and locations**

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## Lessons learned

- Consult findings from the latest management review (Management Quality Assessment Tool, MQAT, or other) in your country program to better understand overall management strengths and weaknesses and their implications for the design of your project.
- Project leadership must have requisite technical and management skills. Hire a combination of senior staff with complementary skills sets that meet these requirements.

### Further resources, tools and links

- [TAG \(CRS 2007b\)](#)  Management plan and staffing plan guidance (Pages 45-49).
- Consult the Commodity and Supply Chain Unit and the Supply Chain Management [community site](#) for resources on management plans for commodity programs.



## SECTION 3: PLAN DELIVERY SYSTEMS: GOODS AND SERVICES

### When will I use this section?

- When decisions regarding goods and services have significant budget implications and/or are critical for other elements of project design, e.g. developing the project strategy or activities. Use this section if your project has an important output concerning delivery of goods or services or if the Proframe includes critical assumptions related to supplies, stock-outs and services.

### Steps and tools

#### 3.1 Specify the goods or services needed

Identify where, when, and in what general quantities goods or services need to be delivered. Consult your finance and procurement staff to obtain average lead times and cost estimates for needed goods and services, based on the country program's past experience and the current market. Country programs should be validating prices for common goods and services every six months. Note that project participants and local partners often have strong knowledge of local markets and can provide information when CRS does not have the relevant experience. When goods and services are not available in-country, regional and headquarters procurement staff can help provide needed information.

In identifying goods and services, be sure to consider allowable costs (especially in the case of new donors). Consult with operations staff that are familiar with donor regulations to gauge the implications of these policies for project design.

#### 3.2 Assess capacities for procuring goods and services

If procurement services are a critical project activity, ensure that the CRS and partner organizational assessment (see **Chapter II, Section 1**) measures capacity in this realm. Capacities include soliciting bids, evaluating bidders, awarding and overseeing contracts. If capacity does not currently exist, consult your HoOps on appropriate capacity strengthening measures or the possibility of outsourcing the procurement function.

#### 3.3 Discuss how to mitigate risks related to procuring goods and services

With the help of your HoOps and possibly DRD/MQ, assess risks related to procurement (revealed by assessment findings) and plan how to mitigate or avoid them. Risk mitigation may be addressed or included in the project strategy, the Proframe's critical assumptions, the staffing plan and/or the management plan. **Table 8a** below provides some examples.



**Country programs should be validating prices for common goods and services every six months.**

**Table 8a: Examples of procurement risks and mitigation measures**

Common procurement risks	Potential mitigation measures
Late delivery	Build buffer time into expectations of delivery pipelines (activities schedule)
Project supply competes with local vendors	Plan for local purchase or market-based delivery options where appropriate (project strategy)
Corruption	Plan for additional oversight measures (staffing plans)

### 3.4 Develop the project's procurement plan

Review the donor's procurement plan template if one is available. With your HoOp or procurement officer, develop the most logical procurement, distribution and storage process and plan based on your analyses. Focus on implications for project design decisions (e.g. the project strategy, staffing plan, activities schedule and budget) and what is required by the donor in a project proposal. For example, warehousing and delivery/distribution options will have important implications for the budget. Ensure that the procurement plan minimizes the cost of delivering project activities, services and goods. For example, in a food assistance project, consider the relative cost-effectiveness of market-based mechanisms, such as vouchers that can be redeemed for foodstuff at local vendors\*, compared to procuring, transporting and distributing the commodities yourself.

\* **MARKET-BASED APPROACHES** have the added benefits of giving greater choice and agency to the people CRS serves (beneficiary accountability) and supporting the local economy (see **Chapter V**).

#### Lessons learned

The more detailed the specifications for project goods and services, the more workable your procurement plan will be.

#### Further resources, tools and links

- *The CRS Procurement Manual* (Revision forthcoming)
- *ProPack II* (CRS 2007a) Chapter V, Section 3, Plan for Supplies and Materials, Pages 155-157.



## SECTION 4: PLAN FOR RISK MANAGEMENT

### When will you use this section?

- At all stages of project design and proposal development when organizational capacity and management plans are being developed.

### Steps and tools

#### 4.1 Review critical assumptions in the Proframe

In developing the Proframe's critical assumptions, you considered risks. Verify that common risks associated with project management were also considered. These risks may have been included in the Proframe and informed project staffing decisions or they may not. Examples of risks include: insecurity, CRS and partner staff availability and capacity, capacity of markets related to project procurement, fraud and corruption.

#### 4.2 Check if the project's systems, structures and processes mitigate potential risks

Review the activities schedule, budget and staffing structures to ensure robust internal controls and compliance oversight in order to minimize potential risks. Focus on what is relevant to project design (i.e. that has implications on project strategy, activities, human or financial resources and the ways they interact to optimize results). Do not focus on details that are more appropriately

**Common risks include insecurity, staff availability and capacity, capacity of markets related to project procurement, fraud and corruption**

addressed during project start-up, once the project has been funded. Engage a senior operations advisor, such as your DRD/MQ, to check that:

- Shared operations staff\* can ensure compliance with internal and donor policies and procedures. Depending on the country program portfolio and the size and complexity of the project, consider the need for an internal audit position in operations.
- Project staffing and management structures and processes minimize avoidable risks, including loss of assets due to controllable factors, misunderstanding of donor compliance or document requirements, improper application of per diem or travel rates, erroneous interpretation of budget line items, and/or budget overruns.
- Project operations staffing structures comply with CRS policy on internal controls, including segregation of duties and documentation. Structures should allow for regular assessment and implementation of internal controls.

\* Except for very large grants, human resource and procurement functions are performed by the country program's shared support staff.

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### 4.3 Develop a risk mitigation plan relevant to project design

Discuss how the project will mitigate risks. If required by the donor, make a risk mitigation plan. A template and example of a risk mitigation plan is included in [Section 7](#).

#### Further resources, tools and links

- CRS *Internal Control Policy* #POL-FIN-ICS-024 (CRS 2007) 



## SECTION 5: LINK TO PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

In most cases, human resources, management and partnership decisions are documented in the proposal's management and staffing plan and/or organizational capacity sections.

- **Organizational capacity** may also be called institutional capacity, corporate capacity or past performance.
- **Management plans** may be called management strategy or organizational structure.
- **Staffing plans** may be called key personnel, personnel plan or management plan.

Ensure that organizational capacity considers country program, regional and headquarters staff that will support the project. A description of these people's expertise and experience and their proposed roles in support of the project can help make a proposal more competitive.

This chapter may also provide some of the justification for the project strategy, the description of project activities, key assumptions, the activities schedule, the budget and budget notes.

Write up the procurement plan according to the donor's template.

**Ensure that organizational capacity considers country program, regional and headquarters staff that will support the project**



## SECTION 6: HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

### Section 2: Developing the staffing and management plans

An emergency response does not have the benefit of a "start-up" period. It requires many staff to be recruited or mobilized to rapidly scale up activities, often involves a high volume of procurement and large financial transactions, and operates in a high-risk environment. Designing a competent, efficient, responsive staffing and management plan is critical to delivering timely, quality

results while ensuring compliance with CRS and donor policies. When deciding on the number, location and structure of project staff required to deliver project results in an emergency context, consider these points:

- Experienced managers are essential, especially at the start of a response. Leadership is vital to making rapid implementation and operational decisions in multiple places and to orient and coach new staff and partners.
- Country program staff are often the first to be deployed during an emergency response, especially for operations. Move from temporary duty to permanent staff as soon as possible to ensure program continuity and to avoid anyone doing two jobs at once over an extended period.
- Plan and budget for adequate numbers and kinds of staff in the early stages of a response, considering that staff may rotate in and out and need rest and relaxation leave. Plan for early deployment of HRD, regional and/or headquarters staff along with temporary duty staff from other country programs.

#### Further resources, tools and links

- Human resources and procurement sections, [Emergency field operations manual \(CRS 2015b\)](#) 

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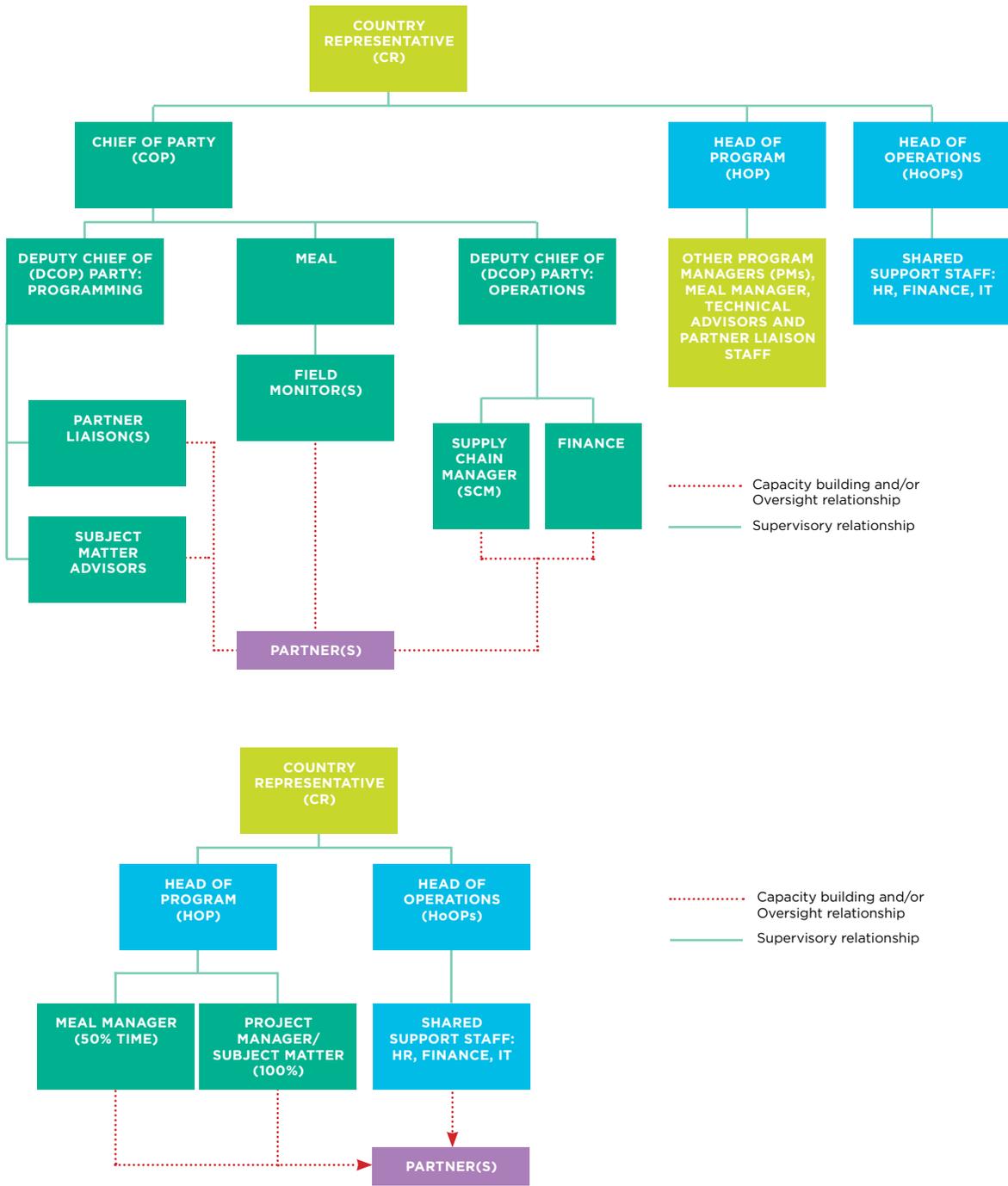
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SECTION 7: TABLES AND EXAMPLES

Figure 8.1: Examples of organizational charts



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### Guidelines and example of a risk mitigation plan template

Using the template in **Table 8b** (below), fill out Column 1 (risk categories) and Column 2 (related key risks). Then fill out the remaining columns as follows:

- **Column 3:** Rate each key risk level using red (high risk, clear concern), yellow (medium concern to be monitored) or green (within project risk tolerance).
- **Column 4:** Describe CRS and its partners' available or proposed resources and actions to mitigate each key risk.
- **Column 5:** Re-evaluate the risk rating in light of the risk mitigation measures – this should lower the risk to yellow or green.
- **Column 6:** Identify measures to be taken in Year 1 of the project to ensure that risk mitigation responses are in place and working effectively.

**Table 8b: Risk mitigation plan template**

Risk category	Key risk	Risk level	Risk mitigation responses	Remaining risk level	FY 20XX action plan
1. Corruption	1.1 Bribes will be required to get food to project sites		Activities schedule includes advocacy and negotiation with government and local officials		Plan for CRS project staff to accompany all transporters

(Adapted from PMD Pro Risk Register in *Guide to the PMD Pro: Project Management for Development Professionals* (PM4NGOs 2011))

## CHAPTER IX: ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE AND BUDGET

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes six sections:

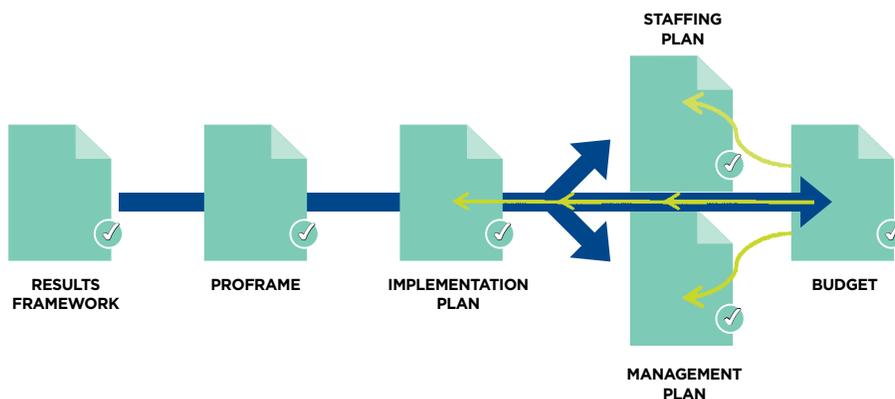
- Section 1: Involve relevant stakeholders and prepare
- Section 2: Develop the activities schedule
- Section 3: Develop the project budget
- Section 4: Link to the proposal
- Section 5: What's different in an emergency response?
- Section 6: Tables and examples

#### Standards of quality

- The project design team develops an activities schedule and budget notes for every project proposal, whether required by the donor or not
- All activities schedules demonstrate attention to project transitions: Start-up and close-out
- The budget and budget notes are congruent and “tell the same story”
- A detailed budget is developed for all MEAL activities, including ICT4D, if appropriate
- Technical and finance staff and stakeholders work in tandem on the activities schedule and budget drafts

**The budget and budget notes are congruent and “tell the same story”**

**Figure 9.1: Proposal process drafting order**



#### Why is this step of project design important?

Attention to activity scheduling is vital to avoid serious problems during project start-up and implementation. Often an activities schedule may be overambitious. A few examples follow:

- A project design team schedules community-based activities from Month 2, forgetting to build in time for sub-award signature, CRS and partner staff recruitment and orientation training.
- Time needed for procurement of goods and supplies is underestimated.
- The project design team overlooks donor requirements to approve key staff, the detailed implementation plan and plans for MEAL at project start-up and fails to build in time for this approval in the activities schedule.
- The project design team forgets to schedule time to conduct a baseline survey before activities can start.

As a result, the project overpromises and then underdelivers to both beneficiaries and donors. Experience has shown that project success is enhanced when key project transitions (including start-up and close-out) are explicitly planned and resourced.

**Attention to activity scheduling is vital to avoid serious problems during project start-up and implementation**

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The Proframe's activity-level objectives are the basis for developing an activities schedule (also called an implementation plan, workplan or timeline). To develop an activities schedule, break down Proframe's broad activity-level objectives into more specific actions. These actions are listed in the activities schedule, a bar chart that includes a timeframe and names the person or organization responsible.

In turn, the activities schedule is the basis for building an accurate project budget based on precise details. When planning project design (**Chapter III**), you made a rough estimate of the budget available for direct project costs, and estimated which was used for decisions about the project strategy and its scope and scale. Now you develop a detailed project budget by converting project activities into monetary values. This is done by identifying unit costs and cost drivers for all activities. As you will recall from **Chapter VIII**, "cost drivers" are factors that most influence changes in the costs of an activity, for example, the number of beneficiaries or groups served or the number of extension workers or clinics targeted. Determining cost drivers for each activity in the activities schedule is important for several reasons. It makes budget line items easy to adjust based on changes in the proposed project scale and targets. It also helps negotiate budgets with partners, because it gives everyone clear and transparent data for how budget resource allocations are made.

Doing a separate MEAL activities schedule (and budget), even if not required by the donor, helps you to make sensible decisions about MEAL. If the budget envelope changes during project design, it will be easier to adjust MEAL activities.

The process for developing the activities schedule and the budget are linked: They should be done at the same time, often in a workshop setting, and involve programming and operations staff, especially finance, working as a team. In doing them together, you will be able to iteratively adjust targets in the activities schedule and related budget lines and more accurately plan for project scope and scale. Decisions made when developing the activities schedule and budget are also linked with other steps of project design, in particular decisions about the staffing and management plans (discussed in **Chapter VIII**).

Once funding is secured, the activities schedule is updated and further detailed during project start-up, as part of detailed implementation planning.

The activities schedule is the basis for building an accurate project budget based on precise details

The activities schedule and budget are linked and should be done at the same time



## SECTION 1: INVOLVE RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS AND PREPARE BUDGET

### When will you use this section?

- After drafting the project's Proframe and staffing and management plans

#### 1.1 Involve relevant stakeholders in activity scheduling and budgeting

Review and update the stakeholder analysis to see who needs to be actively engaged in this step. While budget leads should have been part of the project design team from the start, this step may require involvement of additional CRS and partner staff members who may not have participated in earlier steps of project design. Program, operations, finance and HR staff should together develop both the activities schedule and the budget. Involvement of the country program's finance manager is especially important as he or she may bring knowledge of actual unit costs from similar projects. **Table 9a** below lists the kinds of staff that should be involved in developing the activities schedule and budget.

**Table 9a: Roles and responsibilities in activity scheduling and budgeting\***

Stakeholder	Role/Responsibilities
CRS budget lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepares budget, budget notes and other budget sections as applicable</li> <li>Ensures appropriate indirect cost recovery (ICR) is budgeted</li> <li>Ensures donor budget template and requirements are complied with</li> </ul>
CRS finance manager (if different from the CRS budget lead)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides initial Shared Cost (3 pool) estimates</li> <li>Runs the Shared Cost Calculator**</li> <li>Provides unit cost information when possible based on the country program's experience</li> </ul>
Partner budget lead and other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare budget and budget notes for their organizations' costs.</li> </ul>
Head of operations or operations manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help calculate project support pools (estimate office space, vehicle use, etc.)</li> <li>Ensure budget planning reflects staffing and management decisions and ensure these are adjusted to reflect changed targets as needed</li> <li>Provide market-based unit costs where no current projects are incurring similar costs</li> </ul>
Technical lead (for each sectoral objective or sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Links the Proframe and earlier project design decisions to the activities schedule and budget</li> <li>Helps determine cost drivers based on past experience</li> <li>Works with the budget leads to help translate activities from the activities schedule into budget line items</li> </ul>
Partner senior program manager or technical staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide realistic estimates on time required for each activity their organization is responsible for</li> <li>Confirm activity volume that can be delivered with proposed staffing level</li> <li>Ensure all key activities are adequately reflected in the activities schedule</li> </ul>
MEAL advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps to develop a schedule for MEAL activities</li> <li>Helps to budget for MEAL activities (see MEAL Policies and Procedures 4.1)</li> </ul>
Country representative, head of programs and/or head of operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews proposed volume of activities and related budget for realism based on past experience</li> <li>Ensures the staffing and management plan are aligned with the activities schedule and proposed budget and vice-versa</li> <li>For donors with no fixed ICR rates, discusses and negotiates indirect rates in coordination with HQ</li> <li>Ensures compliance with donor regulations and agency policy</li> </ul>

\* The stakeholders listed here are for illustrative purposes only – some functions may be filled by different positions and these specific positions may not exist in all country programs.

\*\* A standard approach for consistently distributing country-level costs to project budgets based on the benefit that each project receives from these costs.

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**1.2 Plan the activities schedule and budget workshop and prepare partners**

Prepare needed information for activity scheduling and budget planning. This includes summarizing information and previous project design decisions, for example, the number of partners, whether entities are sub-recipients or contractors, points of service, how many staff are needed, where staff will be located, etc. (see **Chapter VIII**).

Review the steps in **Sections 2 and 3** below and adapt these to the stakeholders who will be involved in the workshop. Prepare formats and templates, including those for the activities schedule and budget. Review and prepare guidelines for

budget notes for use by partners and others attending the workshop. See sample budget notes in *CAG* (CRS 2013a) , Page 40. Provide any unit cost guidance for activities that will be presented across all partner and CRS budgets (e.g. training costs will be presented as a “cost per participant per day”).

Always plan to use the donor budget template for budgeting. If it is very different from CRS’ standard budget template, consult your finance manager and donor liaison for advice to clarify cost category alignment.

Confirm whether partners understand:

- The budget’s cost categories
- The process of using the activities schedule to guide the costing of activities in the budget
- That each line item description, as well as its corresponding budget notes, should make a link between the cost and achievement of project results
- The importance of presenting all costs calculations in a transparent manner

Otherwise, plan to conduct a mini-training before or as part of the design workshop to ensure this shared understanding.

In the case of US Government funding, confirm whether partners file the A133 audit and, if they do, ask for their Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) letters.



## SECTION 2: DEVELOP THE ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

### When will you use this section?

- When preparing the stakeholder workshop or meetings for detailing activities schedule and budget

### Steps and tools

#### 2.1 Define and detail activities for each output and activity-level objective

Using flip charts, list each output-level objective from the Proframe and under each, the related activity-level objectives from the Proframe. Break each activity-level objective statement into more detailed activities or tasks, writing each on a sticky note. For example:

- A Proframe output-level objective is: *Parent-teacher associations (PTAs) produce plans to create girl-friendly school environments.*
- The Proframe activity-level objective for this output is: *Partner master trainers train all parent-teacher associations in the Kaolack region in best practices for creating girl-friendly school environments.*

More detailed activities for this activity-level objective could be:

- CRS technical staff develop a training of trainers (TOT) module.
- One CRS expert trainer conducts six 3-day TOTs for 15 partner master trainers each, for a total of 90 master trainers
- 90 partner master trainers each conduct one day-long training workshop with each of 20 PTAs in his or her area
- 90 partner master trainers each conduct two follow-up visits (at 1 and 3 months post-training) to each of the 20 PTAs in his or her area to monitor application of training and development of PTA plans to create girl-friendly schools

**KEY DECISIONS:**  
In this step, you will decide (a) if objectives and targets need adjusting and (b) partner budget allocations, based on who is responsible for which activities.

## 2.2 Time and sequence activities

Estimate the amount of time needed to implement each activity, making an informed estimate based on past experience. The amount of time required will change depending on the volume of activities and staffing decisions made in **Chapter VIII**. In the example above, using two expert trainers instead of one may cut by half the amount of time needed to deliver the six TOTs. Use your judgment to balance cost (more inputs) and timeliness of delivery. Consider typical disruptions or seasonal activities (school vacations, farm work, cultural festivities) along with critical assumptions from the Proframe to decide when activities should be scheduled and how many can be realistically delivered in a given timeframe.

Put the activities in a logical order. Think about which activities are dependent on others being done first (sequential) and which can be done at the same time (parallel). In the example above, developing the TOT module and conducting the TOT workshops are sequential. Then, identify start and end dates for each activity.

## 2.3 Define, list and sequence MEAL activities separately

List all activities related to plans for MEAL, e.g. developing a MEAL system and operations manual, orienting CRS and partner staff to MEAL requirements and tools, carrying out a baseline survey, etc. See **Chapter VII** for a detailed list of MEAL activities.

## 2.4 Pace start-up and close-out activities

Verify that you have listed and planned adequate time for project start-up activities, such as staff recruitment, on-boarding and orientation, signing sub-award agreements, holding a project launch and detailed implementation planning workshop, community selection and mobilization, etc. Carefully review the first 3 to 6 months of activities to avoid inflation of what can feasibly be done at the start of the project. Remember that new staff members may need several months on the job before reaching optimal performance.

For particularly large, multi-year projects, some donors now allow a “Year Zero” for intensive implementation planning, additional assessment studies, baseline survey, recruitment and procurement. Do not use the term “Year Zero” unless the donor does, but in all cases, pace start-up activities in line with reality, otherwise you risk overcommitting and end up with targets that the project team cannot deliver.

Check that you have listed and budgeted adequate time for project close-out activities, such as conducting the final evaluation, working with partners to close out sub-agreements, disposing of assets, transitioning staff and carrying out an audit (if required). Consider budgeting a small buffer of time to finish up activities that are behind schedule. CRS recommends that project implementation activities end 1 to 3 months before the end of the project in order to conduct the final evaluation and other close-out activities.

## 2.5 Complete the activities schedule format

Once activities are listed and sequenced, and other concerns discussed, insert this information into Column 1 of the activities schedule using **Table 9b** or the donor-required format. There is an example in **Section 4** and you can download a blank template [here](#) . Note that some donors require the listing of monthly activities for the first year only and then by quarter for the remaining project years.

Then, fill out all other columns of the activities schedule. Shade cells showing the month or quarter when the activity will be implemented within the activities schedule. When an activity involves a clear quantity of something to be delivered (e.g. how many trainings, how many kits to be procured), note that quantity in these shaded cells. You will use this information when developing

**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
In activities schedule workshops, use sticky notes to list and sequence activities. This helps engage everyone in decision-making.

**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
CRS' average recruitment time for international staff is approximately 60 days from job posting to job acceptances and additional time to arrive at post. Check country-specific pace of recruitment for national staff.

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the budget. Assign responsibilities for each activity, being as specific as possible. List the name of the organization (CRS or a collaborating partner), the name of the individual point person or position, and the number of staff required to implement this activity.

## 2.6 Review the activities schedule, Proframe and targets

Now that activities are detailed, sequenced over time and assigned, compare the activities schedule to the output-level targets (from the Proframe, M&E plan or IPTT), and the capacities of the assigned person or organization. This serves as a reality check and ensures that the activities schedule is feasible. You may need to make adjustments in one or more of these documents. For example, you may speed up activities by hiring more staff or change targets to reflect seasonal constraints. Note that these adjustments may have budget implications. Make sure that the activities schedule and project targets are aligned.

### Further resources, tools and links

- CRS Sub-agreement Process Guide (2014) checklist. Ask your colleagues in the Institutional Donor Engagement and Advancement (IDEA) team for the most up to date CRS Sub Recipient agreement checklist.
- *ProPack II* (CRS 2007a) Section 3: Activity Scheduling (Pages 74-82).
- *TAG* (CRS 2007b)  Implementation Plan (Page 42).



## SECTION 3: DEVELOP THE PROJECT BUDGET

### When will you use this section?

- Once the Proframe is developed, when developing the detailed budget in conjunction with the activities schedule, often in a workshop setting.
- Note, however, that budget considerations should guide the project design from the beginning. Good project designers will iterate between planning activities and planning spending, with a realistic view towards available resources.

### Steps and tools

#### 3.1 Determine cost drivers for activities for CRS and its partners

Keep in mind your earlier estimate of the direct programming costs (donor's budget ceiling, minus the indirect cost recovery (ICR) and approximate salaries and benefits). Refer to this information as appropriate.

Review the activities schedule and for each activity, determine cost drivers. Cost drivers are the factors or units that most greatly affect the cost of your activities, and which drive changes in cost when activity volume changes. These apply to both variable and semi-variable costs, and there can be more than one cost driver for each activity cost.

Activity cost drivers are dependent on the strategy selected for the project and related delivery modality. For instance, the cost drivers in a savings and internal lending community (SILC) project are the number of groups and the distance between these groups (which determines the number of groups one SILC trainer can oversee), not the number of individual SILC members. If you know the total budget available and have done a rapid "back of the envelope" calculation of your overhead and fixed costs, once you determine the driver of the activity cost and the unit cost for that activity, you can estimate the total number of people or groups that you can afford to target.

**FIXED COSTS** are incurred repeatedly over time but do not vary based on activity volume, e.g. office rent or senior management salaries.

**VARIABLE COSTS** are directly proportional to the volume of activities, e.g. materials or labor.

**SEMI-VARIABLE OR STEP-WISE COSTS** change in a step-wise fashion in relation to volume: they remain fixed within a certain range of volume of activity, but increase or decrease once a threshold is crossed. This is often the case for field staff or vehicles for instance.

### EXAMPLE OF A COST DRIVER FOR A HEALTH PROJECT

In the Care Group model, 10 mothers elect one of their peers to be a lead mother. Ten lead mothers (representing 100 mothers/10 groups) form a Care Group, the members of which are trained and supported by a health promoter. This promoter can train and support 10 Care Groups (representing 100 lead mothers/1000 mothers). Thus, one promoter (cost) is needed for each 1,000 mothers (cost driver) targeted by this component of the project.

When developing the project budget, discuss with technical specialists: Can one promoter support 12 (rather than 10) Care Groups, while still maintaining standards of quality? Can 12 (instead of 10) lead mothers belong to one Care Group? In this case the cost drivers (the number of mothers per group and groups per promoters) can have a major budget implication in a large-scale project.

Ensure alignment of activities schedule, staffing structure and budget: What happens if the project target is 8,600 women? Having nine promoters is inefficient. But having only eight promoters is likely to affect implementation quality. Can you adjust targets instead and reach more mothers with the same numbers of promoters?

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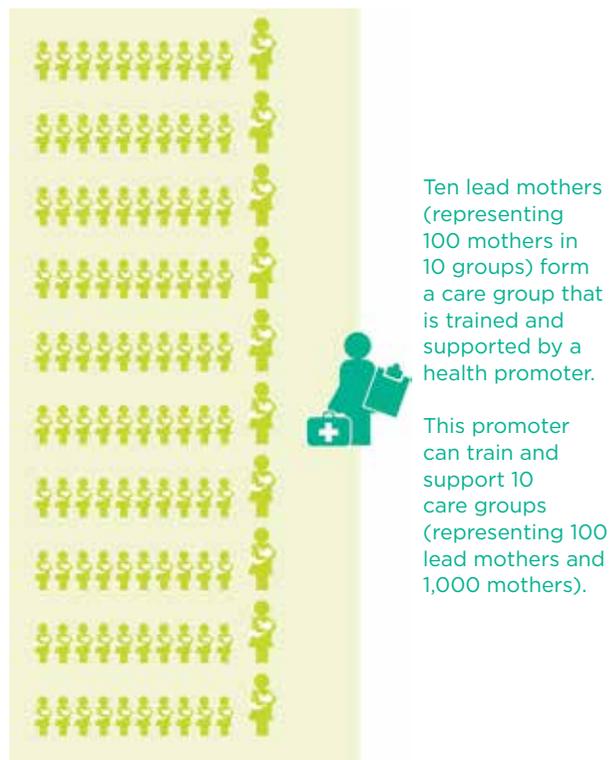
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Figure 9.2: Care group model

Ten mothers elect one of their peers to be a lead mother



Can you adjust targets instead and reach more mothers with the same numbers of promoters?

When determining cost drivers, consider past experience. Talk to other managers about the costs to deliver one unit of a project activity and how many units are needed in total. In a project that provides services, for example, you would calculate how many service providers are needed per population served. This may be defined by government policy, industry standards or best practice from past experience. Sector standards show that one SILC field agent supervisor is needed for five to seven field agents. Standards used in prior CRS projects mandated one antiretroviral treatment counselor per 300 patients.

### 3.2 Determine unit costs and calculate total costs

Identify major budget categories required by the donor, e.g. personnel, travel, supplies, equipment, etc., and where specific budget lines fit under these categories. Determine costs for each budget line using evidence-based unit costs and cost drivers.

Identify or review unit costs for all main budget lines. Relevant cost information can be obtained from your finance or procurement staff based on similar ongoing projects. Update and complement internal information: Time permitting, ask your procurement staff to confirm the price of materials to be purchased by the project; consult local stakeholders who can price services and identify efficiencies. If needed, use placeholder figures while continuing to gather more accurate cost information from the head of operations, the finance manager or other project stakeholders.

Once specific program costs are determined, the finance manager can calculate shared direct cost using CRS' shared cost calculator. Remember that shared costs will have to be recalculated if you make changes to other elements of the budget.

Determine the risks associated with the project that must be addressed or mitigated by the budget. Note that some donors' performance-based contracts are more risky than other types of cooperative agreements or grants.

- Consider explicit or implicit contingency costs if you can do so and still be cost competitive.
- In projects with large procurement components (especially in markets new to CRS) consult multiple suppliers, carefully consider seasonal impacts and any other market fluctuations.

Discuss value-for-money considerations.

- Ensure that geographic targeting, management and staffing plans allow you to deliver project objectives and targets in the most cost-effective manner. For example, you may reach the same number of households at a lower cost if you target more villages in fewer provinces, as this may reduce the number of partners and/or sub-offices needed. Project management structures are discussed in more detail in **Chapter VIII**.
- Calculate the project's cost-per-beneficiary and compare it with sector-specific guidelines when they exist. For example, in SILC projects, guidelines for economies of scale are that cost per SILC member assisted is between \$15 (large projects investing \$100,000 to \$150,000 per partner per year) and \$50 (small projects investing \$50,000 to \$100,000 per partner per year).

In determining costs, you may have to make trade-offs to have a competitive proposal. The only ways to increase value for money are to eliminate inefficient activities and/or to find ways to perform them more efficiently. These can be identified by reviewing whether some or all results can be delivered more efficiently using a different project strategy, delivery or management structure (see **Chapters V** and **VIII**). Note that this is different from reducing cost per se, which can be achieved by reducing efficient as well as inefficient activities simply to conform to resource limitations.

For detailed guidance on this step, refer to [CAG \(CRS 2013a\)](#) , Pages 36-40.

### 3.3 Determine MEAL costs

With the help of your MEAL advisor, develop costs for MEAL using the MEAL activities in the activities schedule and the MEAL budget template. Consider needed skills and human resources for MEAL, e.g. MEAL advisors from the region or HQ, consultants, survey agencies and teams, data manager, etc. Budget for ICT4D equipment and software as relevant.

**PRACTICAL TIP:** Keep good notes of decisions, assumptions and calculations made during budget development. They will inform the budget notes.

**PRACTICAL TIP:** Use CRS private funds judiciously and strategically for capacity strengthening, operations research and learning, if donors are unwilling to fund these activities within a project.

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The rule of thumb is that the MEAL budget is typically 5 to 10 percent of the total project budget. If the project involves operational research, the MEAL budget will likely take up a larger percentage. Not all MEAL costs appear separately in the project budget. In particular, personnel and vehicle costs for regular monitoring, accountability and learning activities are included under relevant budget lines. Estimate the true cost of MEAL activities so that you can highlight them in the MEAL narrative or budget notes, as appropriate.

### 3.4 Insert information into the budget template

Roll up detailed costs from Step 3.2 into summary line items for each cost category. For example, include one budget line for “training”, even if calculating this cost required you to consider the costs of the training facility, meals, transport, etc. These details can (and should) be explained in the budget notes. Rolling up the details into a summary line item (following donor requirements) will simplify the budget and ensure it better mirrors the activities schedule; this will also give you more flexibility during project implementation.

When budgeting for project staff, use the concept of full-time equivalent (FTE) for all part-time staff positions. A full-time equivalent accounts for one position fully staffed for the year. One person working full-time is one FTE. If six staff are needed to provide a service, this is expressed as six FTE. A staff person working on the project 3 months out of the year is 0.25 FTE. Two finance staff members working half-time on one grant correspond to one FTE. Using the concept of FTE helps highlight the efficiency of CRS’ shared cost approach. One FTE is seen as more efficient than four staff working on a project at 25 percent level of effort (LOE). Using LOE can make the staffing plan inadvertently look heavy and inefficient.

For multi-year projects, take into account possible cost increases or inflation. Do not forget to budget for annual merit increases for staff positions.

Review spending patterns for project start-up and close-out. Remember that a common mistake is to conflate what will actually be spent over the first few months of a new project, and this is particularly true for partners. Carefully review the budget for the first six months to ensure it realistically reflects when project staff are hired, procurement of project equipment and set-up of project infrastructure. Also carefully review the budget for close-out activities. These may include severance benefits, other incentives as per retention plans and local policy, planned spending slow-downs, etc.

### 3.5 Write up budget notes

Write up the budget notes using the calculations and information collected throughout the previous steps. Budget notes — also often called budget narrative — must describe how major line items contribute to achieving project objectives, as well as how aggregated line items were calculated. See [CAG](#) (CRS 2013a) [🔗](#) for sample budget notes.

In the budget notes, anticipate donor questions. Proactively explain and justify costs that may not be self-evident or that are outside of the norm. For example, explain the value of shared offices or why one field office is more expensive than another.

Use the budget notes to communicate budget-related “win themes” and value for money considerations. Win themes may concern existing key infrastructure (that other applicants would have to build or acquire), tried and tested cost-saving measures, use of partner facilities instead of costly hotel facilities, and cost control measures. For example, budget notes may explain that CRS will save the donor \$15,000 over the life of the project by investing in standard job tools for promoters (care group monitoring checklists and discussion reminders) which eliminate the cost of supervisory visits and refresher trainings.

**The rule of thumb is that the MEAL budget is typically 5 to 10 percent of the total project budget**

**For multi-year projects, take into account possible cost increases or inflation**

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Use the Cost Control Plan Boilerplate\* for examples of how cost control measures can be explained to donors and made explicit in the budget notes.

Lay out assumptions related to identified risks. These may include financial contributions expected from other partners or government that are outside the control of the project.

### 3.6 Review the budget and budget notes

Technical and budget leads on the project design team should review the budget and budget notes together to check that both are clear, that they are fully aligned, that all costs are included and to add further justifications for costs as needed.

Verify that the budget and budget notes clearly communicate what the project aims to accomplish and that they “tell the same story” as the proposal’s technical narrative. Ensure that the budget and activities schedule match in terms of proposed volume of activities and (for multi-year projects) their timing.

See [CAG \(CRS 2013a\)](#)  Budget review checklist (Pages 38-41).

#### Lessons learned

- Because early budget estimates influence initial project design decisions, good ongoing communication is critical to avoid last-minute surprises. Any changes made to the project strategy, the results framework, the Proframe, and/or the activities schedule must be clearly and immediately communicated to the budget design lead to ensure alignment.
- When facing tight page limits for technical narratives, use budget notes to provide additional details on proposed activities, e.g. unit costs, frequency of activities, etc.
- Make cost drivers and unit costs crystal clear. The clearer the calculations, the clearer (and more transparent) will be resource allocations for each partner.
- Adjust the level of detail to donor expectations; but keep all detailed calculations, sources of costs and assumptions for internal purposes.

#### Further resources, tools and links

- [CAG \(CRS 2013a\)](#) 
- Consult sector guidelines on budgeting. For example, *Minimum requirements for SILC project design and implementation* (Vanmeenen 2011) provides a detailed budget template example.



## SECTION 4: LINK TO THE PROPOSAL

The activities schedule, budget and budget notes are major components of the proposal. The sequence of developing these elements (linking to the Proframe’s activity-level objectives and the management structure and staffing) helps ensure that the budget is coherent with the proposal narrative; together they will “tell the same story”. For instance, you may separate a budget line for “training” into activity-specific trainings (e.g. lead mothers training, health extension worker training, SILC group trainings, etc.). However, do not split the budget line into its component costs (transport, facility, per diem, materials, etc.); keep this information for the budget notes.

Likewise, the MEAL narrative must align with the MEAL budget and staffing plans.

\*The Cost Control Plan Boilerplate can be found in the public proposal toolbox on the Business Development site.



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Use the donor’s template and budget breakdown from the start, and consult your business development advisor and public donor liaison. Different donors require different budget breakdowns and formats such as:

- Milestone-based budgeting (World Bank and US Government RFPs)
- Objective-based budgeting (FFP) or sectoral-based budgeting (OFDA)

Consult [CAG](#) (CRS 2103a)  for more information on presenting and packaging budget and budget notes, tips on multi-year funding, etc.



## SECTION 5: HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

### Section 2: Develop the activities schedule

In fluid emergency contexts, donors usually allow significant flexibility in activities and timelines in order to enable response to priority unmet needs of affected people as they change over time. Build time in the activities schedule to pilot new interventions, put systems in place, hire and train staff, and get beneficiary feedback on the response; after which activities will likely be scaled up to increase the speed of service delivery.

### Section 3: Develop the project budget

In the early stages of a response, donors may accept “broad-stroke” budgets with line-item and realignment flexibility since everyone is operating with limited knowledge. For instance, OFDA allows for 100 percent line-item flexibility. Other donors require submission of an amendment for any budget change. Consult your business development specialist or public donor liaison to understand the specifics of each donor.

Large-scale emergencies can have significant impact on certain unit costs. For example, prices of emergency supplies, staff and vehicle costs are likely to be higher than normal. Conversely, shared support costs may be low due to large purchases made in short timeframes.

Ensure that the budget covers sufficient numbers and quality of staff, costs for staff care, rest and relaxation, hardship pay where applicable, security, and sufficient logistics support.

In the budget notes, explain how the value of services or relief item packages align to what other emergency response actors have proposed or what the relevant cluster has endorsed.

**Large-scale emergencies can have significant impact on certain unit costs**



## CHAPTER X: PROPOSAL FORMAT AND REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes three sections:

Section 1: Write the project proposal

Section 2: Review the project proposal

Section 3: How is this different in an emergency response?

#### Standards of quality

- All elements of the proposal — technical narrative, RF, Proframe, activities schedule, budget and budget notes — “tell the same story” in a logical and concise manner
- Every project proposal includes a Proframe and MEAL narrative that adhere to MEAL Policies and Procedures
- All proposals are reviewed internally for quality before going on to the next level of review

#### Why is this step so important?

A project proposal is a structured document whose primary purpose is to obtain approval and funding by a donor for a proposed project. The proposal captures key project design decisions and serves to promote a common understanding of these decisions among relevant project stakeholders. A project proposal is often appended to project agreements among CRS, donors and partners.

A draft project proposal is first reviewed internally. In most cases, this internal review involves not only the project design team but also country program staff outside of the design team, for instance, from other departments or other offices, as well as senior CRS and partner staff. The process is usually led by the head of programs. A revised version of the proposal is then sent to regional and possibly headquarters levels for further review. For submissions to public donors, the business development specialist and/or public donor liaison review the proposal for donor responsiveness and compliance. As per MEAL Procedure 1.3, regional MEAL advisors must review key MEAL documentation for projects and emergency responses with an overall budget of \$1 million and above before submission to the donor.

The purpose of this chapter is to help produce a draft proposal of high technical quality. The chapter includes a concise proposal format and a review checklist for the internal review. Some proposal elements will have already been drafted in the concept note. The internal review promotes evaluative thinking by the project design team to refine the draft proposal before sending it to the next level of review.

This chapter links to other CRS resources such as [Technical Application Guidance](#) (CRS 2007b) . Consult *TAG* for detailed guidance on public donor and competitive proposals. For guidance and tips on packaging and writing proposals, consult *TAG*'s Appendix I: Packaging and Submission, and Appendix G: Writing the Right Proposal.

**PROJECT PROPOSAL**  
A structured document whose primary purpose is to obtain approval and funding by a donor for a proposed project.

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## SECTION 1: WRITE THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

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### When will you use this section?

- In conjunction with all project design steps, beginning with assessment, analysis and interpretation

### Steps and tools

#### 1.1 Review the proposal format

Always use the donor proposal template, when they have one. Carefully read and follow the directions of the call for proposal or donor guidance regarding page limits, formatting or other requirements. Throughout the proposal, mirror the donor's terms. If in doubt, consult your business development specialist.

**Always use the donor proposal template, when they have one**

When the donor does not have a required template and if you are not using the TAG proposal guidelines for public donors, use the following proposal template.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Cover page                                  | 7. MEAL narrative (including the Proframe) |
| 2. Executive summary                           | 8. Management plan                         |
| 3. Problem identification and analysis         | 9. Staffing plan                           |
| 4. Results framework                           | 10. Organizational capacity                |
| 5. Project strategy                            | 11. Budget and budget notes                |
| 6. Implementation plan and activities schedule | 12. Annexes                                |

#### 1.2 Prepare to write the proposal

At the start of project design, you will have identified a lead proposal writer who has proven, excellent writing and editing skills. Gather all project design outputs developed to date. The concept note included a first version of the problem identification and analysis as well as a draft results framework, both of which were likely revised based on concept note review comments, and you have since developed the Proframe, plans for MEAL, the activities schedule, budget and budget notes. The CN review may have included suggestions relevant to the full proposal; you may also have an assessment report, meeting notes and workshop reports, all of which may provide valuable information for the full proposal narrative.

In general, use the results framework and Proframe to structure the narrative of what the project will achieve. These frameworks provide a ready-made outline around which the proposal can be written. Use facts, drawing from the evidence base that you have gathered (assessment findings, literature review, lessons learned, etc.), to explain the rationale for project design decisions. Highlight what the project will achieve and how, not what should be done in general, to address the identified problems.

Throughout the proposal, highlight the win theme - what makes CRS and its partners different from and better than other applicants.

Focus on coherence and consistency within the proposal. Ensure that there is a logical flow from the problem analysis to the RF and project strategy, Proframe, activities schedule, budget and budget notes - that all tell the same story. Keep the narrative short and to the point.

Please refer to TAG (CRS 2007b)  for further guidance on proposal writing, as well as a suggested proposal template in case the donor does not have one.

### Further resources, tools and links

- *Designing Title II Multi-Year Assistance Programs (MYAP): A resource for CRS country programs* (CRS 2008b) This manual is intended for CRS field staff, partners and HQ staff who are involved in the design, development and implementation of Title II Multi-Year Assistance Program (MYAP) proposals, now called DFAPs. DFAPs are one of two principal types of Title II food assistance provided through USAID's Office of Food for Peace.
- RFAs and public donors: The *Technical Application Guidance* (CRS 2007b)  will help you to prepare high-quality, winning proposals for public donors. It includes detailed guidance on the RFA response process including planning, team roles and responsibilities and consortium development when CRS is the prime applicant. It also provides detailed guidance on proposal sections and annexes required in a typical RFA. The accompanying *Cost Application Guidance* (CRS 2013a)  will help you to prepare budget and budget notes that comply with the US Government's requirements and that align with (tell the same story as) the technical application.



## SECTION 2: REVIEW THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

### When will you use this section?

- When the project design team and other country-program-level stakeholders review the proposal before sending it to the next level of reviewers

### Steps and tools

#### 2.1 Use a checklist to review the proposal

The checklist (**Table 10a**) below is a useful tool for the project design team, other country program staff, and key partners to review the draft proposal before it is submitted to the next level of regional and/or HQ reviewers. It reflects the standards of quality outlined in this manual and can help identify weaknesses in the project design logic or how it is explained in the proposal. Add the donor's proposal evaluation criteria (if any) to the checklist and review your proposal against these criteria too.

Read or re-read the draft proposal and all proposed annexes and answer each question. For all questions where you have responded "no" or "somewhat", briefly explain your responses below the table.

Also reflect on relevant cross-cutting considerations using the more in-depth checklists provided in **Chapter II**.

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**Table 10a: Proposal internal review checklist**

Reflection questions	Yes/No/Somewhat
<b>Problem identification and analysis</b>	
1. Does the problem analysis section clearly state what the core problem to be addressed is and provide adequate supporting evidence from secondary data and field assessments?	
2. Are the core problem's immediate and underlying causes clearly analyzed and supported by evidence from the assessment along with the relevant conceptual framework?	
3. Does the problem analysis identify key leverage points and/or give a sense of the relative priority of the various issues or causes of the problem?	
4. Does the concept note include a clear gender analysis and/or does the problem analysis adequately disaggregate information by gender and discuss gender considerations?	
5. Does the description of the problem adequately disaggregate between relevant groups and sub-groups in the community (or types of people/positions in the relevant entity)?	
6. Does the concept note include an analysis of similar efforts being undertaken by other actors, including the host country government?	
<b>Results framework and theory of change</b>	
1. Is the results framework's hierarchy of objectives clearly described, including WHAT the project aims to achieve (goal and SO) and HOW (IR level)?	
2. Is there a clear and logical flow between the problem and gap analyses and the RF's higher-level objectives?	
3. Is the project's implicit or explicit theory of change clear and justified by relevant evidence (assessment findings, gap analysis/key assumptions, lessons learned and best practice)?	
4. Are key assumptions and risks discussed?	
<b>Project strategy</b>	
1. Is the project strategy clearly described and justified in terms of why it was chosen instead of other options?	
2. Does the proposed strategy reflect learning from past similar projects or relevant regional/global/industry best practice?	
3. Does the project strategy reflect sustainability considerations and if applicable, include an exit strategy?	
4. Is there a clear logical link between the proposed project targeting (geographic, beneficiary) and evidence from assessment, gender and other analyses?	
5. Are the project's scope and scale appropriate given the project timeframe, budget, and CRS and partner capacity?	
6. Does the project strategy clearly contribute to the win theme?	
<b>Implementation plan and activities schedule</b>	
1. Does the proposal include a succinct but specific description of proposed activities for each output?	
2. Is it clear how activities contribute to higher-level objectives (outputs and IRs)?	
3. Does the activities schedule accurately reflect pacing of project start-up and close-out?	
4. Is the activities schedule clearly aligned with the budget?	

Reflection questions	Yes/No/Somewhat
<b>Proframe, MEAL narrative and MEAL annexes</b>	
1. Does the proposal include a Proframe, donor-specific LogFrame or M&E plan? (If not a donor requirement, is an “internal Proframe” attached to the proposal for review?)	
2. Is the complement of indicators proposed appropriate for capturing both impact-level results and project progress?	
3. Are project indicators SMART? (specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic, time-bound)	
4. Do the means of verification reflect an appropriate mix of qualitative and quantitative measurement methods at various Proframe levels?	
5. Are beneficiary accountability considerations reflected in the M&E plan or narrative, e.g. are there plans for involving communities in M&E or for setting up feedback mechanisms?	
6. Does the MEAL narrative adequately reflect the key elements from the M&E plan, including monitoring methods; evaluations (e.g. baseline, midterm and/or final); and appropriate mechanisms for use of M&E and accountability information in project decision-making and learning?	
7. Does the MEAL narrative discuss how the M&E plan will be turned into a MEAL system (e.g. reference to participatory SMILER process and to use of ICT4D if applicable)?	
<b>Management, staffing plan and organizational capacity</b>	
1. Does the proposal clearly articulate the respective roles and added value of each partner, including CRS?	
2. Are office locations and points of service clearly justified in terms of cost effectiveness, program quality, etc.?	
3. Are the proposed management and staffing plans commensurate with the project scope and scale?	
4. Does organizational capacity include relevant information about regional and headquarter capacity and support of the project?	
<b>Budget and budget notes</b>	
1. Is the budget aligned and coherent with the activities schedule, targets, project strategy and objectives?	
2. Do budget notes proactively explain and justify costs to avoid donor questions?	
3. Is there a clear statement of how the budget supports the win theme (i.e. value for money, cost control measures)	
4. Has the budget been reviewed using the <a href="#">CAG</a> checklist or equivalent?	
<b>Donor responsiveness and compliance</b>	
1. Do proposal documents adequately address review comments received on the concept note or prior proposal version?	
2. Are the technical and cost applications appropriately responsive to the donor/RFA's focus and priorities?	
3. Are the technical and cost applications responsive to the RFA evaluation criteria? (List any additional donor criteria not included in the checklist)	
4. Are all proposal elements compliant with the RFA/donor templates and requirements (including font/margins, templates, page limits, required appendices, etc.)?	

## 2.2 Address identified weaknesses in the proposal

Collect and compare all reviewers' answers. Focus on checklist questions that were answered "no" or "somewhat" and analyze why this is so. Discuss and address identified issues as a team. In some cases, this may require changes to some project design decisions, in which case you will need to engage relevant project stakeholders appropriately. In other cases, this may simply require clarifications or improvements to the proposal document, e.g. improving logical flows or coherence among sections.

Following relevant procedures, submit the proposal to the next level of review.

### Further resources, tools and links

- *pREPAIR!* (CRS 2015f)  See in particular the guidance and tips for reviewers, and the table comparing the focus of internal and regional reviews at CN and full proposal stages in Section 1.
- *A user's guide to integral human development (IHD): Practical guidance for CRS staff and partners* (Heinrich et al 2008) A comprehensive set of questions to review a project strategy, as well as other proposal components (Pages 14-15).

Focus on checklist questions that were answered "no" or "somewhat" and analyze why this is so



## SECTION 3: HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

### Section 1: Write the project proposal

Given the need for quick action to reach beneficiaries with life-saving interventions, focus on documenting key project design decisions, rather than elaborate writing and packaging. Emergency response donors are interested in timely proposal submission and project start-up; they value proposals that are concise and avoid unnecessary detail. Emergency response donors place particular importance on:

- Beneficiary accountability, gender and protection considerations
- Coordination with other actors (including the UN Cluster and sectoral working groups), especially during the immediate relief phase

Initial emergency responses are generally funded by country or regional allocations or from OverOps or designated emergency funding. Use the format from Annex 14 in *pREPAIR!* (CRS 2015f) for proposals to be funded by CRS (and many Caritas Internationalis partners) in the early phases of an emergency response, unless advised otherwise by the region or headquarters. This format aligns with emergency response proposal formats used for CRS private donors such as O'Neil and OverOps reserve.

### Section 2: Review the proposal

Streamline the proposal review process; in most cases editing and review processes are lighter. Use the emergency proposal review checklist in *pREPAIR!* (CRS 2015f) Annex 15, which reflects Sphere core and technical standards.

### Further resources, tools and links

- *pREPAIR!* (CRS 2015f)  Section 5. Annex 14 – Emergency Proposal Template, Annex 15 – Emergency Proposal Review Checklist and Annex 16 – Emergency Proposal Review Template.
- *USAID/OFDA Guidelines for proposals* (USAID 2012d)

Emergency response donors value proposals that are concise and avoid unnecessary detail

## CHAPTER XI: POST-DESIGN ACTIVITIES

### INTRODUCTION

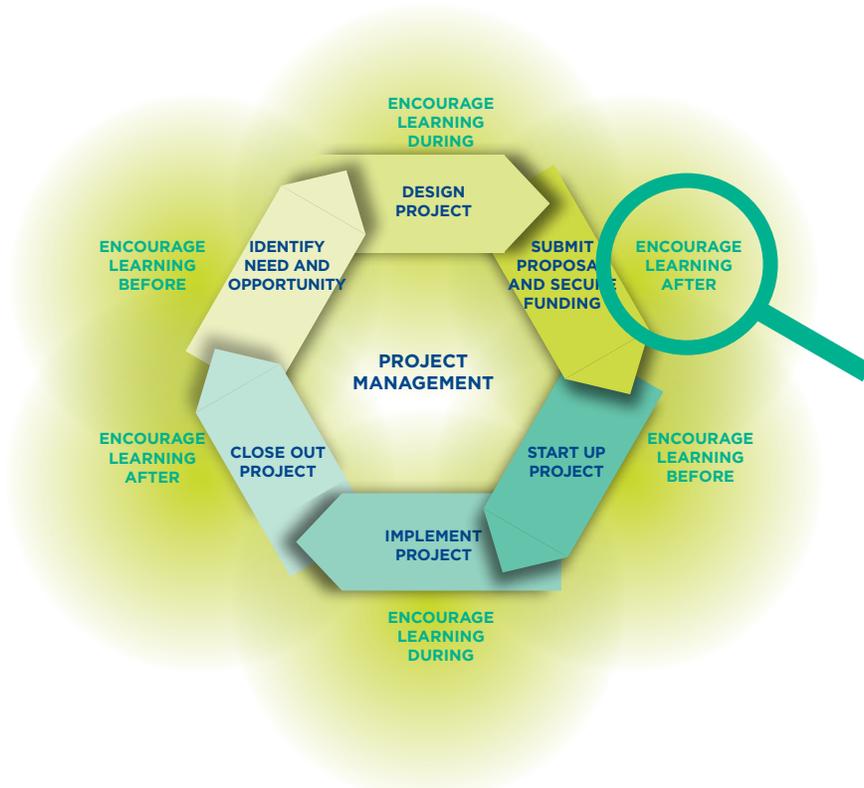
This chapter includes three sections

- Section 1: Conduct an after action review
- Section 2: Organize project design documents for the implementation team
- Section 3: How is this different in an emergency response?

#### Standards of quality

- CRS staff conduct an after action review of project design and proposal development following submission of the project proposal or concept note to the donor
- After action reviews involve key decision-makers, including the country representative, head of programs and regional staff as applicable
- CRS staff document the findings and conclusions of the review
- The detailed rationale behind all project design decisions (including the budget) is documented for handover to the project implementation team

**Figure 11.1: Project cycle showing learning**



**Learning is promoted before, during and after various stages in the CRS project cycle, including project design**

#### Why is this step of project design so important?

Learning is promoted before, during and after various stages in the CRS project cycle, including project design. An after action review is a discussion of an event against performance standards with the aim of learning. It is a simple, quick and versatile process to identify and record lessons and knowledge. Holding a review helps the project design team (and potentially CRS as a whole) to learn about what works and what doesn't. It enables project stakeholders to reflect on and analyze what happened, why it happened, how to sustain strengths and how to address weaknesses.

#### LEARNING

A continuous process of analyzing a wide variety of information sources and knowledge that bring to light new best practices or call received wisdom into question.

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After action reviews are typically done for large, competitive and/or new donor project design and proposal development efforts. The reviews complement:

- Analyses of multiple project design efforts done periodically within the country program, region and CRS as a whole to continually improve the agency's practices and performance.
- Donor debriefing meetings which are held when proposals are rejected or won to hear what the donor has to say. See [TAG \(CRS 2007b\)](#) , Section J, Post Proposal Activities.

During the period of time between project design, proposal development and project start-up, much knowledge can be lost. Very often, different people are involved in these project cycle stages. Project proposals may not capture the detailed knowledge and logic underlying project design decisions. Filing project design reports and notes in an organized manner in order to hand them over will help the project implementation team to understand the reasoning underlying project decisions.



## SECTION 1: CONDUCT AN AFTER ACTION REVIEW

### When will you use this section?

- When planning, conducting and communicating the after action review, after the proposal is submitted

### Steps and tools

#### 1.1 Plan the after action review

Decide who will participate in the after action review (AAR). Participants usually include the project design team, the proposal development team, collaborating partners/consortium members, the county representative and the deputy regional director/program quality who can circulate the review findings to other country programs and appropriate headquarters staff. It is important to involve decision-makers who are positioned to use findings and make changes.

Write a purpose statement for the review. To do so, answer this question: How do you intend to apply learning that emerges from the AAR?

Design and sequence review activities to assess (gather information and perspectives), analyze the information, and interpret (agree on findings and conclusions). Use methods and sequencing that promote frank and candid feedback, foster dialogue and overcome any power dynamics. The following review sequence has proven useful:

- An anonymous and confidential online survey where people can take time to reflect individually and openly share their opinions and perspectives
- Face-to-face meetings or teleconferences to share the survey results, gather additional comments and feedback, analyze this information, and agree on findings and conclusions

Telescope the review (e.g. 1-hour meeting, 1-day workshop, etc.) depending on the project context.

Designate a facilitator and note-taker for the face-to-face meeting or teleconference. For the facilitator, someone with an outside perspective can be helpful. The facilitator may be the head of programs, country representative, business development specialist or deputy regional director/program quality. Plan who will write the review report and how it will be communicated (see Step 1.3 below for more details). Circulate information about the review to participants, including its purpose, plans for the survey, and the meeting agenda.

**Circulate information about the review to participants, including its purpose, plans for the survey, and the meeting agenda**

## 1.2 Conduct the after action review

If using an online survey, develop that tool by adapting the questions below.

1. Please review the project design timeline: this is what CRS sets out to do.
2. In reality, what did CRS do (in terms of project design steps, sequence, timing)?
3. Please review the project design stakeholder analysis: this is who CRS planned to involve and how. Who was involved in project design and how?
4. What do you think went really well? Why was this?
5. What do you think could have gone better? Why was this?
6. What can CRS learn from its successes, failures or errors?
7. How can CRS improve the next project design and proposal development effort? Please give specific recommendations.

Summarize and analyze survey findings and develop a short report or PowerPoint presentation.

If using a face-to-face meeting or teleconference, be attuned to possible politics and dynamics. Create a safe environment by establishing ground rules and organizing discussions in pairs or small groups. Many people feel more comfortable sharing their opinions in smaller groups. Small groups can then report in plenary.

At the start of the meeting, outline the review's purpose and the meeting agenda. Explain that an AAR intends to improve, not blame.

If a survey tool was used, share the results of the survey. Discuss, validate and add to findings. Analyze findings further to identify strengths and weaknesses. These questions may help:

- For things that went well, why was this?
- For things that could have gone better, why was this?

The facilitator then helps the group to agree on key conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations. These questions may help:

- What can CRS learn from this?
- How can CRS improve next time?

If appropriate, make an action plan to improve project design for the next effort with specific recommendations and responsibilities.

## 1.3 Write the after action review report

Document the review process, key findings, lessons and recommendations in a short report. In the report:

- Briefly document the review methodology and participants, as well as the author of the review report and his/her role (if any) in the project design process.
- Briefly document key information about the project design and proposal development process.
- Capture review conclusions about what worked well and why, and what could be improved and why. Highlight any conflicting or outlier opinions.
- Summarize key lessons and concrete and actionable recommendations.

Keep the report short; strive for a three-page limit.

## 1.4 Communicate the after action review report

Share the report and its findings with those who participated in the review. The CR and DRD/PQ can circulate it to other country programs and headquarters. Otherwise, simply post the review report to the project's Gateway site.

**PRACTICAL TIP:**  
If holding a teleconference, call on each participant to respond.



**Keep the report short; strive for a three-page limit**

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## Lessons learned

Be sensitive to review timing. While it's important to do it while memories are fresh, respect the project design team's need to rest and de-stress after intensive work on project design.

### Further resources, tools and links

- *After action review guidance* (USAID 2006)
- *Knowledge sharing and learning: After action reviews and retrospects* (ODI 2009) Outline of main AAR concepts including an example from 2004 Tsunami Response.
- *TAG* (CRS 2007b)  A list of lessons learned reflection questions specific to RFAs (Page 27).



## SECTION 2: ORGANIZE PROJECT DESIGN DOCUMENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

### When will you use this section?

- After project design is completed

### Steps and tools

#### 2.1 Gather and organize project design documents

Archive and organize relevant emails. Gather and organize other documents including the project design timeline, stakeholder analysis table, assessment report, notes from workshops and meetings to develop the results framework, project strategy and TOC, the concept note and review comments, notes from workshops and meetings to develop the Proframe, M&E plan, IPTT and performance management plan (if done), management and staffing plans, the activities schedule, budget and budget notes, the project proposal, review comments and after action review report.

#### 2.2 Communicate with the project implementation team

Task the appropriate person/people with communicating information and handing over documents to the project implementation team. Plan for a transition meeting or handover event with the project implementation team. Consider naming a transition manager to be specifically responsible for these activities.

**Plan for a transition meeting or handover event with the project implementation team**



## SECTION 3: HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

### Section 1: Conduct an after action review

Due to the volume of project design work and proposal development work during an emergency response, it may not be possible to complete an AAR at the end of each proposal submission. When possible, conduct a telescoped review, for example, during a 1-hour project design team meeting.

### Section 2: Organize project documents

Documentation of project design decisions and underlying assumptions is particularly critical in emergency response programs, given high staff turnover rates and significant reliance on temporary deployments (“TDYers”), especially for project design and proposal write-up. Even if many emergency donors allow significant flexibility in activities and budget lines, documenting the rationale behind project decisions—including potential communications with donors or other stakeholders that may have informed project decisions—ensures continuity and minimizes duplication of efforts when new managers come in. In an emergency, interventions are typically initiated with CRS private resources or other sources of funding; however initial lessons from experience may have resulted in adjustment of activities, delivery modalities, or targeting decisions in the intervening period, all of which need to similarly be documented to support smooth project start-up.

## GLOSSARY

## A

**Accountability** How an organization responds to and balances the needs of all stakeholders (including beneficiaries, donors, partners, CRS itself) in its decision-making and activities and delivers against this commitment (ECB 2010).

**Activities** The functions to be undertaken and managed in order to deliver the project's outputs to the targeted project beneficiaries.

**Activities schedule** (also called an implementation plan, work plan or timeline) A schedule which breaks down the broad activity-level objectives into more specific actions, listing them in a Gantt chart (bar chart) that includes a timeframe, and names the person or organization responsible.

**After action review** A simple, quick and versatile option for facilitating the continual assessment of organizational performance, looking at successes and failures, and ensuring that learning takes place to support continuous improvement. It works by bringing together a team to discuss a recently completed task, event, activity or project in an open and honest fashion. *Adapted from Ramalingam 2006, Page 64*

**Analysis** A process of probing and investigating the constituent parts and their interrelationships of underlying causes and effects of selected issues to gain deeper insights. Analysis helps transform data and other forms of evidence into usable information that supports interpretation. Analysis has both a qualitative dimension (what something is) and a quantitative dimension (how much of that something there is). In project design, assessment data is analyzed by:

- Making comparisons
- Ranking and prioritizing issues
- Identifying similarities, differences, trends, gaps and cause-and-effect relationships

The opposite of analysis is synthesis. Both are important in a learning organization. *Adapted from Mathison 2005*

**Assessment** An exercise, often using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, to gather information on priority needs and the current context in a particular area to inform project design.

## B

**Baseline survey** The systematic collection of data required to measure project indicators in a (typically representative) sample of target respondents and locations at the time of project start-up.

**Beneficiary** An individual, group, or organization, whether targeted or not, that benefits, directly or indirectly, from a development intervention or emergency response. CRS distinguishes between direct, indirect and extended beneficiaries:

- **Direct beneficiary** A countable, identifiable individual who directly receives project services and participates in project activities.
- **Indirect beneficiary** A countable, but not identifiable individual or group of individuals who also benefit from project services but do not directly participate in project activities (e.g. household or community members).
- **Extended beneficiaries** Specific to institutional strengthening projects, these aim to measure the growth of partner institutional capacity by tracking direct beneficiaries of other (non-CRS funded) partner projects or services.

**Beneficiary accountability** Accountability to specific stakeholders (women, men, girls and boys). It is a two-way communication process, using various channels, that prioritizes the involvement of beneficiaries in project decision-making. It involves listening to beneficiaries, establishing trust, understanding their needs and reflecting those needs in the project's decision-making processes and activities (IFRC 2011).

## C

**Capacity strengthening** A deliberate and continuous process that includes:

- **Capacity building** Improving knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals or groups to function more effectively.
- **Accompaniment** Coaching and mentoring in combination with training workshops, conferences, on-the-job learning or other methods.
- **Institutional strengthening** Improving an organization's systems and structures to function effectively, work towards sustainability and achieve specific results or goals.

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**Capture planning** The process of identifying particular funding opportunities, assessing the environment, and implementing strategies for increasing the chances of winning a specific opportunity. It is worthwhile to perform capture planning for large, strategic, and highly competitive funding opportunities. To support these efforts, CRS' *Capture Toolkit* is available to you on the BD Community site, under Pre-positioning Resources.

**Causal stream** Linked factors that contribute to the problem and have high synergy with other causes (Fornoff 2014).

**Complementary funding** Funding that contributes to the project's goal and objectives and is described in the proposal narrative but is not committed in the budget as a legally binding cost share.

**Concept note** A short document outlining and justifying project design decisions at an early stage in the project design process. It is used to convey the current best thinking on the design – based on findings from the assessment and analysis – as a basis for review and dialogue between technical advisors and the design team. **Donor concept note** A concept note may also be formally required as a stage in a donor's competitive process. In this case, the concept note should reflect a full project design process (including activities scheduling, management and budget implications), even if many of the specific decisions are not shared with the donor.

**Conceptual framework** Diagrams that visualize and summarize what factors (determinants) have been shown through research to contribute to a problem. Conceptual frameworks often show cause-and-effect relationships among these factors. See **Annex 3** for illustrative examples of common conceptual frameworks.

**Conflict analysis** A structured inquiry into the causes and potential trajectory of a conflict that identifies opportunities for managing or resolving disputes. Conflict analysis is the foundation for both peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity (Levinger 2013). Some donors have preferred frameworks, such as the Conflict Assessment Framework used by USAID. There are a wide variety of conflict analysis frameworks and approaches used by NGOs and others.

**Conflict sensitivity** An approach to programming and policymaking that recognizes the potential influence between conflict-affected contexts and a policy, program or project that takes place in or affects that context. **Conflict-sensitive projects** aim to (a) minimize unintentional negative impact that may worsen or drive conflict and cause further social divisions and (b) maximize positive impact on the context to mitigate conflict and bridge social divides (Schirch 2013).

**Conflict transformation** An approach to conflict that seeks to heal relationships and increase justice while also reducing violence. These changes may be sought at personal, social, cultural, and structural levels.

**Cost driver** A factor that causes a change in the cost of an activity. Examples are the number of beneficiaries or the number of groups served. An activity can have more than one cost driver attached to it.

**Cost share** Defined by USAID as “the resources a recipient contributes to the total cost of an agreement”, i.e. the portion of project or program costs not borne by the US Federal Government. The cost share is part of the agreement and legally binding. To be allowable, cost share contributions must meet the cost principles criteria set in 22 CFR 226.23 and 2 CFR 230: they must be tracked and reported; must be necessary, reasonable, and allowable expenses for the project; and must not be used as contributions for any other federally-assisted project (USAID 2015 and CRS 2013a, Page 28).

**Critical assumptions** Factors or conditions outside of the project design team's control yet the existence of which is critical to allowing the project to achieve its next-highest-level objective.

## D

**Do No Harm** A framework that maps and analyzes the impact of aid on conflict. It involves steps to understand the context of conflict, analyze dividers, tensions, connectors and local capacities for peace, and the likely outcomes of project strategy options on these factors. Conflict analysis is implied within the framework (CDA 2004).

**Donor concept note** See Concept note

## E

**Equity** The just and fair management of social, economic and political institutions, distribution of public services and collective goods, and the formation and implementation of public policy. Equity operates horizontally (between different sociocultural identity groups) and vertically (between socioeconomic strata). Horizontal inequality is a leading cause of violent conflict.

**eValue** CRS' digital platform for collecting, managing and analyzing data on monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL). The platform uses ICT4D tools (including mobile devices, electronic data collection and integrated reporting) to achieve better MEAL.

**Evaluation** A periodic, systematic assessment of a project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability on a defined population. Evaluation draws from data collected via the monitoring system, as well as any other more detailed data (e.g., from additional surveys or studies) gathered to understand specific aspects of the project in greater depth. See *Impact evaluation and Performance evaluation*.

**Evaluative (or critical) thinking** A cognitive process important to MEAL, requiring an attitude of inquiry and a belief in the value of evidence. It involves identifying assumptions, asking thoughtful questions to elicit alternative interpretations, pursuing deeper understanding and learning through reflection and perspective-taking, and making informed decisions in preparation for adaptation and action. It is embedded in a model of change that is dynamic, reflective and responsive. (Jones 2011 and USAID 2013c)

#### **Experimental/quasi-experimental design**

Experimental design (or randomized control trial, RCT) is a type of impact evaluation method whereby two samples or groups from the same population of interest are randomly selected, and one is given the intervention while the other (the control group) is not. In **quasi-experimental design** the comparison group is identified out of convenience rather than using randomization, in particular when it is not feasible or ethical to randomly assign groups to not receive an intervention. Changes over time between the two groups are compared, with the expectation that if the intervention is effective, the desired change will be more marked among the intervention group, detectable through statistical methods.

## F

**Feedback** Information about stakeholders' reactions to the content and delivery of a project's interventions that is used as a basis for collaboration, accountability, learning and improvement.

**Focus group discussions** Data collection method that involves 6 to 12 people who are invited to discuss a specific topic in detail. Participants are invited based on a shared characteristic or situation. The discussion is planned and facilitated to ensure maximum participation and in-depth discussion.

## G

**Gateway** CRS' digital system for tracking information about donors, funding opportunities, partners and projects. Gateway uses the Salesforce platform to integrate and share this information.

**Gender** Refers to the two sexes, male and female, within the context of society. Factors such as ethnicity, class, race, age and religion can affect gender roles. Gender roles may vary widely within and between cultures, and often evolve over time. These characteristics often define identities, status, and power relations among the members of a society or culture. (Extract of address given by Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations at the 55th session of UNESCO's Commission on the Status of Women, March 18, 2011. Cited in *PBG Assessment: A basic guide for busy practitioners*, CRS 2015)

**Gender analysis** Examining the differences in women's and men's lives, including those that lead to social and economic inequality. In project design, gender analysis involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting data on women's and men's roles and responsibilities, control over resources, decision-making power, needs and interests, constraints, and opportunities. Gender analysis involves identifying gender-based differences, what explains them, and the impact that these differences have on the lives of women, men, girls and boys.

**Gender integration** Identifying and then addressing gender differences and inequalities throughout the project cycle, including project design.

**Gender-neutral programming** Programming that does not distinguish between the needs, roles and interests of men and women, girls and boys. Often called "gender-blind", it ignores gender considerations altogether and may unintentionally reinforce gender biases and inequalities.

**Gender-responsive programming** Programming that addresses roles, relations, needs and interests of women and men, boys and girls in order to guarantee right relationships. Men, women, boys and girls experience their surroundings differently as they fulfil different sets of roles and face different sets of rules, norms and practices informed by their particular culture and context. Gender-responsive programming reflects these differences.

**Gender-transformative programming** Programming that seeks to address women and men's gender roles and practical needs as well as the underlying structural and systemic issues that have created and sustained unequal power relations between women and men. This type of programming seeks to transform gender roles and promote more gender-equitable relationships between men and women.

**Go/No-go decision** Some organizations call this the “bid decision.” CRS builds in multiple points in the capture planning and proposal development processes to make (and revisit) the decision to invest time, human and financial resources in pursuing a funding opportunity (“go”) or to stop the efforts and decide not to pursue the funding opportunity (“no go”).

**Goal** The longer-term, wider development change in people’s lives or livelihoods to which the project contributes. The goal is a larger, longer-term hope or aspiration.

**Governance** Rules and processes that guide the efforts of governmental and nongovernmental organizations and institutions to manage public resources for the common good.

## I

**ICT4D** The application of information and communication technologies for international development.

**Impact evaluation** Typically conducted post project, this type of evaluation aims to measure (both intended and unintended) changes in individuals, households, communities or institutions that can be attributed to a particular project or program (usually goal level).

**Indicator performance tracking table (IPTT)** A simple, standardized way of presenting M&E project data. The IPTT is the table used to track, document, and display indicator performance data. Although individual donors may specify the format they want projects to use, most tracking tables include a list of all official project performance indicators, baseline values and benchmarks of these indicators, and targets for each indicator. Representative data are included in the IPTT during the life of the project in order to calculate achievements against initial targets (McMillan et al 2008).

**Indicators** Quantitative or qualitative factors or variables that provide a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor (OECD 2010).

**Integral human development (IHD)** The principle – on which CRS’ work is grounded – that promotes the good of the whole person and every person. IHD comes from a long tradition of Catholic social thought and reflects the aspiration of each individual to realize their full human potential in the context of just and peaceful relationships, a thriving

environment and solidarity with others. It is both a goal and a process that enables individuals and communities to protect and expand the choices they have to improve their lives, meet their basic human needs, free themselves from oppression and realize their full human potential.

**Intel/Intelligence** Information on a potential funding opportunity or initiative that could lead to programming opportunities, or information on other potential applicants who could become partners or competitors on that funding opportunity.

**Intermediate results (IRs)** The expected change(s) in identifiable behaviors of a specific group or the expected change(s) in systems, policies or institutions required to achieve the SOs (end-of-project benefits). IR-level responses may involve changes in the rate that beneficiaries adopt new behaviors or skills, expansion of project reach or coverage, new ways of organizing or managing systems, and changes to policy.

**Interpretation** Explaining findings, attaching significance to particular results, making inferences (reaching conclusions from known facts and evidence), drawing conclusions and presenting patterns within a clear and orderly framework.

**Interviews** Method to gather information from individuals usually selected based on particular characteristics, such as their particular position, experience or expertise (key informants) or as representative of a particular type of households. Interviews may be structured or semi-unstructured, following a list of open-ended questions or a checklist.

## K

**Killer assumptions** Important assumptions that are very unlikely to hold true and must be reworked to bring them under project control, otherwise they will “kill” the project.

## L

**Learning** A continuous process of analyzing a wide variety of information sources and knowledge (including evaluation findings, monitoring data, innovations, stories, person-to-person exchanges and new learning) that brings to light new best practices or calls received wisdom into question. Learning leads to iterative adaptation of project design steps, the project strategy and/or project implementation, in order to sustain the most effective and efficient path to achieving project success. See also Organizational learning

**Learning agenda** A set of questions related to an organization's development assumptions on how people, communities, organizations and society at large will respond to its interventions. Answering these questions provides evidence to the organization for programming adaptation for improved performance and impact.

## M

**M&E plan** A table that builds on the Proframe and details key M&E requirements for each indicator and assumption, thereby enabling projects to collect comparable data over time. Within the M&E plan, indicators are defined and summary information is provided for how and when data will be collected, analyzed, used and reported, and the respective allocation of responsibilities for each. The M&E plan contributes to stronger performance management and to improved transparency and accountability within and outside of CRS.

**MEAL narrative** The text in the project proposal that describes planned MEAL activities.

**Measurement methods and data sources** The measurement method that the project will use to collect data on each performance indicator or the precise non-project data source that will be used, e.g. regular surveys by other organization.

**Monitoring** The systematic collection, analysis and documentation of information about progress towards achieving project objectives and changes in operational contexts in order to inform timely decision-making and contribute to project accountability and learning.

## O

**Objectives hierarchy:** See Objective statements

**Objective statements** All five boxes under the first column of the Proframe matrix. At each level, one or more objectives must be achieved. Together, they make up the **objectives hierarchy** because of the if-and-then relationship between different levels of objectives.

**Observation** A data collection method in which the enumerator or staff person visually confirms and documents a context, characteristic, behavior, or action. Observations can be structured, using checklists, or unstructured, such as describing what has been seen. Observation is often used to triangulate data collected through other methods.

**Organizational assessment** A process to measure the capacity of an organization (e.g. structure, resources, staffing) to carry out a proposed project. CRS also

carries out assessments of an organization's strengths and areas for improvement outside of a project context when looking to engage in a process of institutional strengthening. These assessments often use CRS' Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument (HOCAI) tool (CRS 2011).

**Organizational learning** A continuous process that enhances an organization's collective ability to accept, make sense of, and respond to, internal and external change. Organizational learning is more than the sum of information held by employees. It requires systematic integration and collective interpretation of new knowledge that leads to collective action and experimentation.

**Outcome** A result or effect that is caused by or attributable to the project, program or policy. Many organizations and donors associate outcomes with immediate and intended effects, which are equivalent to intermediate results and strategic objectives in the Proframe. *Adapted from OFDA and USAID 2009, Page 8*

**Outputs** The goods, services, knowledge, skills, attitudes and enabling environment that are delivered by the project (as a result of the activities undertaken). Outputs are demonstrably and effectively received by the intended project beneficiaries.

## P

**Partner** An organization with which CRS is in a relationship based on mutual commitment and complementary purpose and values that is often supported by shared resources and which results in positive change and increased social justice.

**Partnership** For CRS, partnership is a relationship based on mutual commitment and complementary purpose and values, often supported by shared resources and which results in positive change and increased social justice. CRS partnerships may be long-term in nature and go beyond one project or they may be specific to a particular project. CRS' partnership relations can be categorized in three broad types:

**Organizational partnerships**

- Long-term, based on complementary organizational identities that transcend a specific project. May involve joint action/advocacy around shared social justice concerns.
- Both partners commit to mutual growth, learning, and capacity strengthening.
- Partnership scope and nature defined by a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or a signed/verbal agreement. If involved in project implementation, a project agreement is also signed.

**Implementing partnerships**

- Typically short- or medium-term for a specific purpose, e.g. a project or program, a learning alliance or joint action and advocacy.
- Usually, neither organization is the overall leader (although one may legally be consortium prime).
- Capacity strengthening may be a specific partnership objective.
- Collaboration scope and nature are defined by a signed project agreement or contract and a verbal and/or written partnership agreement.

**Functional partnerships**

- Typically short-term for a specific, well-defined and time-bound task or purpose.
- Relationship is often contractual for specific deliverables, skills and capacities. Contract defines scope and nature of partnership and activities implemented.
- Level of capacity strengthening depends on respective capacities and specific situation (CRS 2014d).

**Peacebuilding** A wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society to address the causes of violence before, during and after an outbreak of violence.

**Performance evaluation** An evaluation that compares data from indicators over time (typically at midterm or the end of a project) against baseline values. Performance evaluations typically focus on SO-level indicators and demonstrate whether change has occurred over the life of a project, but cannot hope to definitively establish what actually caused the observed change because of the absence of control or comparison groups. See Impact evaluation

**Performance management plan (PMP)** A tool designed to assist in the setting up and managing of the process of monitoring, analyzing, evaluating and reporting progress towards achieving a project's SOs. The PMP organizes performance management tasks and data over the life of a project. It is intended to be a living document that is developed, used and updated by project staff. It articulates plans for accountability and learning; supports institutional memory of definitions, assumptions and decisions; alerts staff to imminent tasks, such as data collection, data quality assessments, and evaluation planning; and provides documentation to help mitigate audit risks. (USAID 2010b)

**Primary data** Data collected first-hand. In an assessment, primary data is mostly collected using qualitative (e.g. semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions or observations), and sometimes quantitative, methods. Primary data fills secondary

data gaps. It typically provides data on people's felt and expressed needs, along with their strengths, resources and assets.

**Proframe** A logical planning tool for generating a **Project framework**, a 5-by-4 matrix as portrayed in **Figure 7.1** (Page 87). The Proframe combines the results framework with a logical framework or LogFrame, used by most international development organizations. While the results framework is a snapshot of the higher-level objectives (IRs, SOs and goal), the Proframe gives additional information (performance indicators, measurement methods/ data sources, and critical assumptions) for these higher-level objectives, along with outputs and activities.

**Project budget** The conversion of project activities into monetary values. For US Government grants, the **cost application** comprises the financial part (budget and budget notes or narrative) of a proposal, which aligns with and justifies the **technical application** (the main narrative section).

**Project idea note** An early opportunity for dialogue before investing time and effort in project design. A PIN serves to formally communicate a tentative "go" decision on a new project or growth opportunity with relevant staff at regional and HQ levels. It documents the team's preliminary ideas on the project focus, scope and scale and of how it fits within the country's priorities, to support discussions on initial project design considerations, technical assistance and business development support needs and proposed timeline for proposal development.

**Project strategy** (Similar terms are intervention, approach or response) A description of how the project will address identified problems and opportunities and achieve higher-level objectives, in particular the SOs. Project strategies involve decisions about who the project will work with to deliver change. Project strategies may involve social and behavior change, service delivery, institution and systems strengthening, training, capacity building, facilitation of networks or processes, infrastructure, advocacy, community empowerment, product distribution or some combination (Funnell and Rogers 2011). The project strategy may be integrated or focus on a single sector.

**Q**

**Qualitative data** Data that is open-ended, text-based or narrative and provide detailed descriptions of contexts and challenges, events, types of people or households, and observed behaviors.

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**Quantitative data** Data that can be counted, coded, or otherwise represented numerically.

**Quasi-experimental design** See Experimental design

## R

**Reflection event** The intentional use of monitoring or evaluation data to improve ongoing or future programming or to generate lessons learned. Reflection events are generally held with a variety of stakeholders and may range from short meetings to several day events.

**Results framework** An easy-to-read diagram that gives a snapshot of the top levels of a project's objectives hierarchy (means-to-end relationship). It describes the change the project wants to bring about (strategic objective), why this change is important (goal) and what needs to happen (intermediate result) for this change to occur.

## S

**Sample** A small group of people or things taken from a larger group and used to represent the larger group. (Merriam Webster Dictionary 2015)

**Secondary data** Data collected by someone other than the user. Sources of secondary data include reports, studies and evaluations. Secondary data can provide accurate information on population figures, socio-economic data, historical events and trends, coverage and access to services, etc. But secondary data may be outdated or unreliable, focus on national rather than local contexts, include mostly quantitative data, and usually lack disaggregated information on the poorest and most marginalized.

**Segregation of duties** A basic internal control concept. Different people must be responsible for authorizing transactions, recording transactions, and maintaining custody of assets. If only one person has all those responsibilities, he/she could be in a position to embezzle funds or misappropriate assets and then conceal the transgression.

**SitReps** (or Situations Reports) Short documents that aim to share information on an evolving emergency situation and CRS and partners' response to this situation to a wide diversity of stakeholders. SitReps are produced daily in the acute phase of an emergency and weekly or monthly when the situation stabilizes. Guidance and a template can be found in CRS' Emergency Field Operations Manual (CRS 2015b). 

**Social learning** Albert Bandura's social learning theory suggests that people's behaviors are driven by external factors and that people learn from observing others. Behavior change depends on self-efficacy,

reinforcement, observational learning and other factors (Grusec 1992).

**Sphere standards** One of the most widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards for the delivery of quality humanitarian response. The standards are documented in *Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in humanitarian responses*, commonly known as *The Sphere Handbook* (The Sphere Project 2011) and on the Sphere project's website, [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)

**Stakeholders** Individuals, groups and institutions important to the success of a project. Project stakeholders have an interest in or an influence over a project. Interest involves what stakeholders might gain or lose in the project, their expectations or the resources they commit. Influence refers to power that stakeholders have over a project, such as decision-making authority.

**Strategic objectives (SOs)** The noticeable or significant benefits that are achieved by the end of the project. An SO expresses an aim that is realistic, specific to the project and measurable. SOs are the central purpose of the project.

**Strategy** See Project strategy

**Subsidiarity** A Catholic social teaching principle that holds that a higher level of government or organization should not perform any function or duty that can be handled more effectively at a lower level by people who are closer to the problem and have a better understanding of the issue.

**Sustainability** A concern with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Within the project cycle, sustainability is ensuring that positive outcomes achieved over the life of the project continue once the project ends. Sustainability may be addressed through behavior change, community mobilization, demand creation, organizational capacity, linkages to networks and government, integration, systems strengthening, resource and funding diversification, advocacy and/or influence on policy and structures.

## T

**Telescoping** The idea that project design steps should be suitably adapted to specific situations, but not skipped, in the same way that a telescope's tubes are extended or shortened to meet the user's needs, without losing any of the instruments useful features in the process.

**Theory of change** A concise, explicit explanation of: “If we do X, then Y because Z”. It articulates the means-to-ends logic of the objectives hierarchy (illustrated in the results framework and Proframe), the underlying assumptions that support this logic (including actions or results that other actors are anticipated to deliver), and the evidence base for these assumptions. A robust TOC draws from research-based theories, conceptual frameworks and/or deep experience and lessons learned (Funnel and Rogers 2011; USAID 2013a).

**Title II** The US Government’s Emergency and Development Food Assistance Programs, administered by USAID’s Office of Food for Peace.

**Triangulate** Using several sources of data to reduce bias when collecting and analyzing qualitative data. Triangulation involves (1) use of multiple methods (e.g. observations, interviews and discussions) (2) by a diverse team (insiders/outside, men and women, multidisciplinary) (3) from multiple sources (men, women, individuals or groups with different socio-economic characteristics, key informants, etc.)

## V

**Value for money** The optimal use of resources to achieve intended outcomes. A value-for-money perspective in project design is the analysis of what drives costs and then making decisions and choices based on evidence in order to deliver the desired quality and impact at lower cost (DFID 2011a).

## W

**Win theme** Persuasive, compelling ideas that are likely to distinguish a proposal from others and emphasize CRS and its partners’ added value as compared to other applicants. Win themes can, for example, relate to a particularly successful, sustainable, cost-effective, or innovative project strategy, an efficient management structure, or unique organizational capacity.

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## APPENDIX 1: COMPARATIVE GLOSSARY

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**Table A.1: Comparative glossary for project design terms**

<b>ProPack / Project design terms</b>	<b>Similar terms</b>
Assessment, analysis and interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situation analysis</li> <li>• Participatory rapid appraisal</li> </ul>
Project strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervention</li> <li>• Approach</li> <li>• Project “design”</li> <li>• Response (in emergency contexts)</li> <li>• Technical application</li> </ul>
Results framework (objectives hierarchy) and theory of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development pathway</li> <li>• Development hypothesis</li> </ul>
Proframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logical Framework or LogFrame</li> </ul>
Activities schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation plan</li> <li>• Detailed implementation plan</li> <li>• Workplan</li> </ul>
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost application</li> </ul>

**Table A.2: Comparative glossary for logical planning frameworks**

Donors and organizations may have slightly different names for Logical Framework terms.

	<b>Wider or long-term effect</b>	<b>End of project effect</b>	<b>Intermediate effect</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Interventions</b>	
<b>USAID / Title II</b>	Goal	Purpose	Sub-purpose (Outcomes)	(Outputs)	Activities and resources	
<b>USAID (2012)</b>	Project goal		Outcome or project purpose	Outputs	Inputs	
<b>CRS Proframe</b>	Goal	Strategic objective	Intermediate Results	Outputs	Activities	
<b>DFID</b>	Goal	Purpose		Outputs	Activities	
<b>FAO and UNDP</b>	Development objective	Intermediate goals		Outputs	Activities	Inputs
<b>World Bank</b>	Goal	Development objective		Outputs	Component activities	Inputs
<b>Gates Foundation</b>		Impact	Outcomes	Outputs	Activities	Inputs
<b>UNHCR</b>	Goal	Project objective		Outputs	Activities	
<b>UNICEF</b>	Long-term impacts	Medium-term impacts	Outcomes	Outputs	Strategies/Activities	

Adapted from Rugh et al, undated

**Further resources, tools and links**

- *Evaluation of UNICEF's Early Childhood Development Programme with focus on Government of Netherlands funding (2008-2010): Tanzania country case study report* (UNICEF 2011) Appendix A
- *A guide to actionable measurement* (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 2010) Page 6
- *Project planning in UNHCR: A practical guide on the use of objectives, outputs, and indicators; For UNHCR staff and implementing partners* (UNHCR 2012) Page 61

## APPENDIX 2: PROJECT DESIGN WORKSHOPS

Well-organized 1- to 3-day workshops can be a valuable way to engage project stakeholders in project design work and decision-making. Workshops are also useful for sharing information (on donor priorities and requirements for example). In a workshop setting, you can schedule just-in-time training, for example, doing a quick exercise on an objectives hierarchy before tackling the RF and Proframe.

As appropriate, consider holding workshops at these junctures of project design:

### Workshop 1: Primary data collection planning for the assessment

- **When:** After secondary data has been gathered and summarized.
- **Purpose:** To review secondary data findings and plan primary data collection.

### Workshop 2: Analysis, interpretation, results framework and project strategy

- **When:** After primary data has been collected and analyzed.
- **Purpose:** (a) To interpret secondary and primary data findings from the assessment, construct the problem tree and identify key leverage points; (b) to make preliminary decisions related to the goal and objectives, possible project strategies, geographical and beneficiary targeting; (c) to construct the project's results framework and articulate the theory of change.

### Workshop 3: Proframe, activities schedule and budget

- **When:** After the concept note has been reviewed by relevant regional or HQ technical advisors and colleagues.
- **Purpose:** (a) To revise or refine the results framework and/or other project decisions based on reviewers' comments on the concept note; (b) to develop activity-to-output objectives, define performance indicators and construct the Proframe; (c) to develop the activities schedule; (d) to identify cost drivers and draft the budget for each partner's activities.

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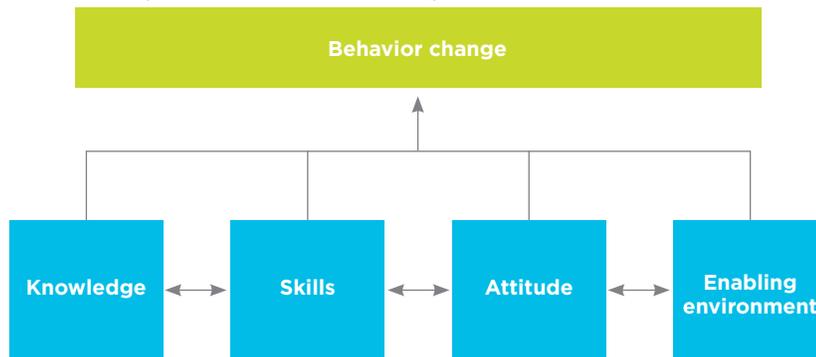
## APPENDIX 3: COMMON CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

CRS promotes use of the integral human development conceptual framework to assess and understand from a holistic perspective the complex situation of the people CRS serves. The IHD conceptual framework is presented in **Chapter 3**. Further information can be found in *A user's guide to integral human development* (Heinrich et al 2008).

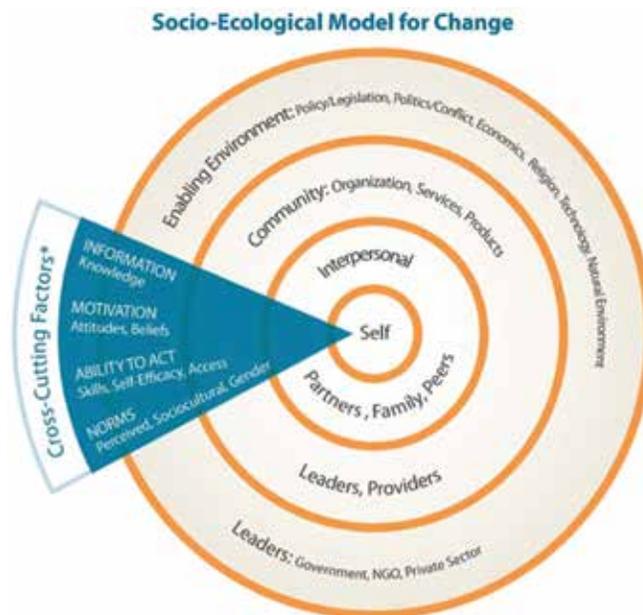
This annex presents additional, more focused conceptual frameworks that can be useful when analyzing specific problems or issues. The frameworks are listed in alphabetical order. The list is not exhaustive and is not intended to replace the literature review and expert consultations that should serve to identify the relevant conceptual framework to use in your specific situation.

### BEHAVIOR CHANGE

- At its simplest, behavior change can be analyzed in terms of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and enabling environment required for someone to adopt a new behavior



- FHI 360's Social-Ecological Model for Change portrays social and behavior change communication theories and levels of analyses needed to identify a tipping point for changes concerning individual behavior, social norms, social movements, political will and/or policy. It can be used with all sectors to understand determinants of behavior change and is particularly useful when selecting the project's intervention strategy and related activities. Source: McKee et al 2000 in *C Modules: A Learning Package for Social and Behavior Change Communication* (SBCC) (C-Change 2012), Page 16



\*These concepts apply to all levels (people, organizations, and institutions). They were originally developed for the individual level.

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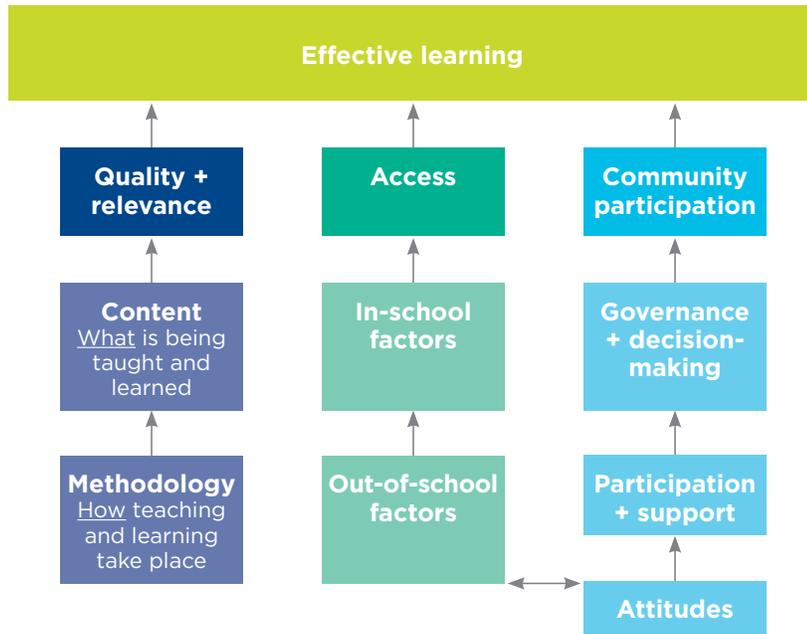
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**EDUCATION**

- CRS education practitioners use an expanded version of the effective learning framework that is informed by IHD. It builds on the key determinants of effective learning – access, quality and community support – and further probes underlying causes and their relationships. Source: Sellers and Eversmann, 2010



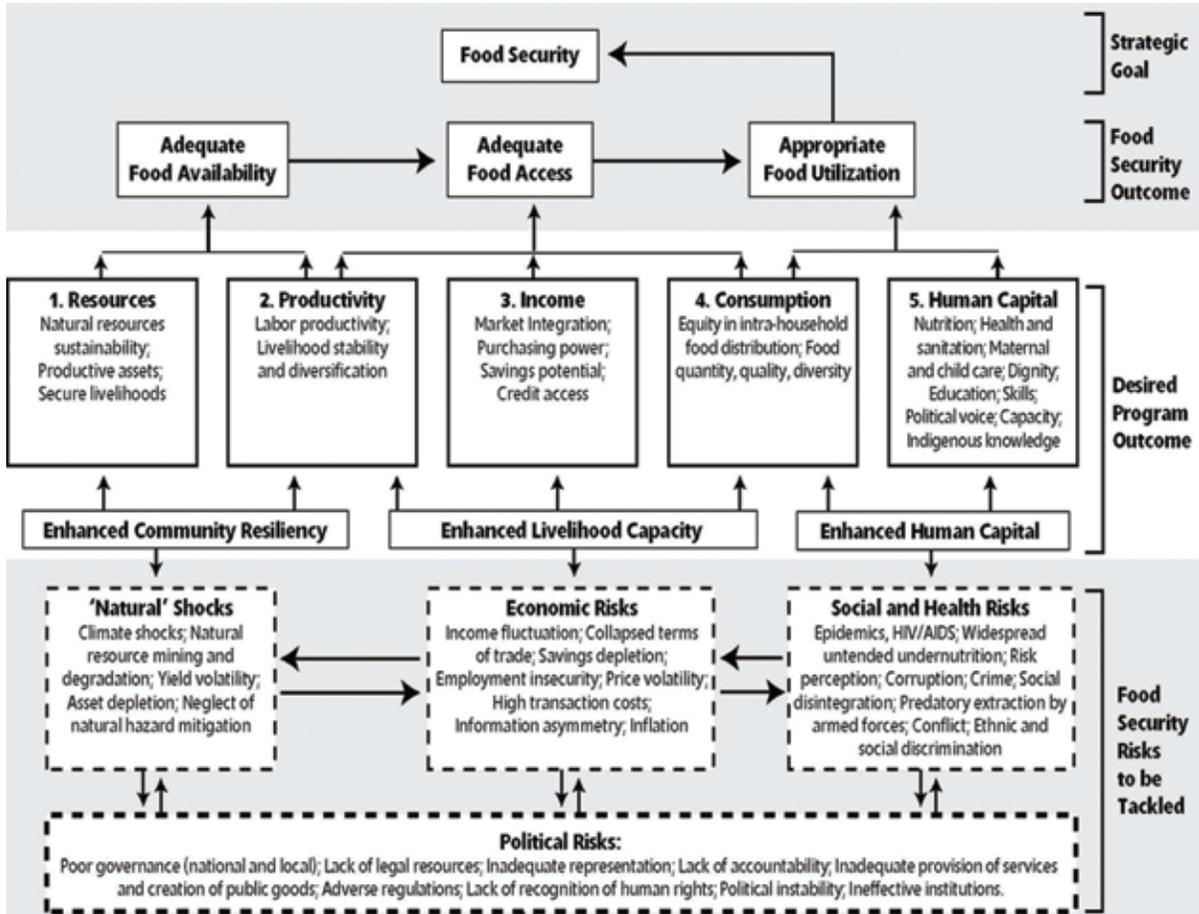
- In emergency contexts, experts use an adapted framework that emphasizes wellbeing as the third determinant of effective learning, in addition to access and quality. In this framework, community participation is an underlying factor. Source: *What works to promote children’s educational access, quality of learning, and wellbeing in crisis-affected contexts*. Literature review commissioned by the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Department for International Development (DFID), Burde et al. 2015



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## FOOD SECURITY

- At its simplest, food security can be understood in terms of **availability** of food at the community or household level, households' **access** to food, and food **utilization** (intra-household food consumption, food quality, health and nutrition issues)
- USAID/Food for Peace's Adapted Food Security Conceptual Framework probes further into underlying causes, as well as risks to food security (CRS 2008b)



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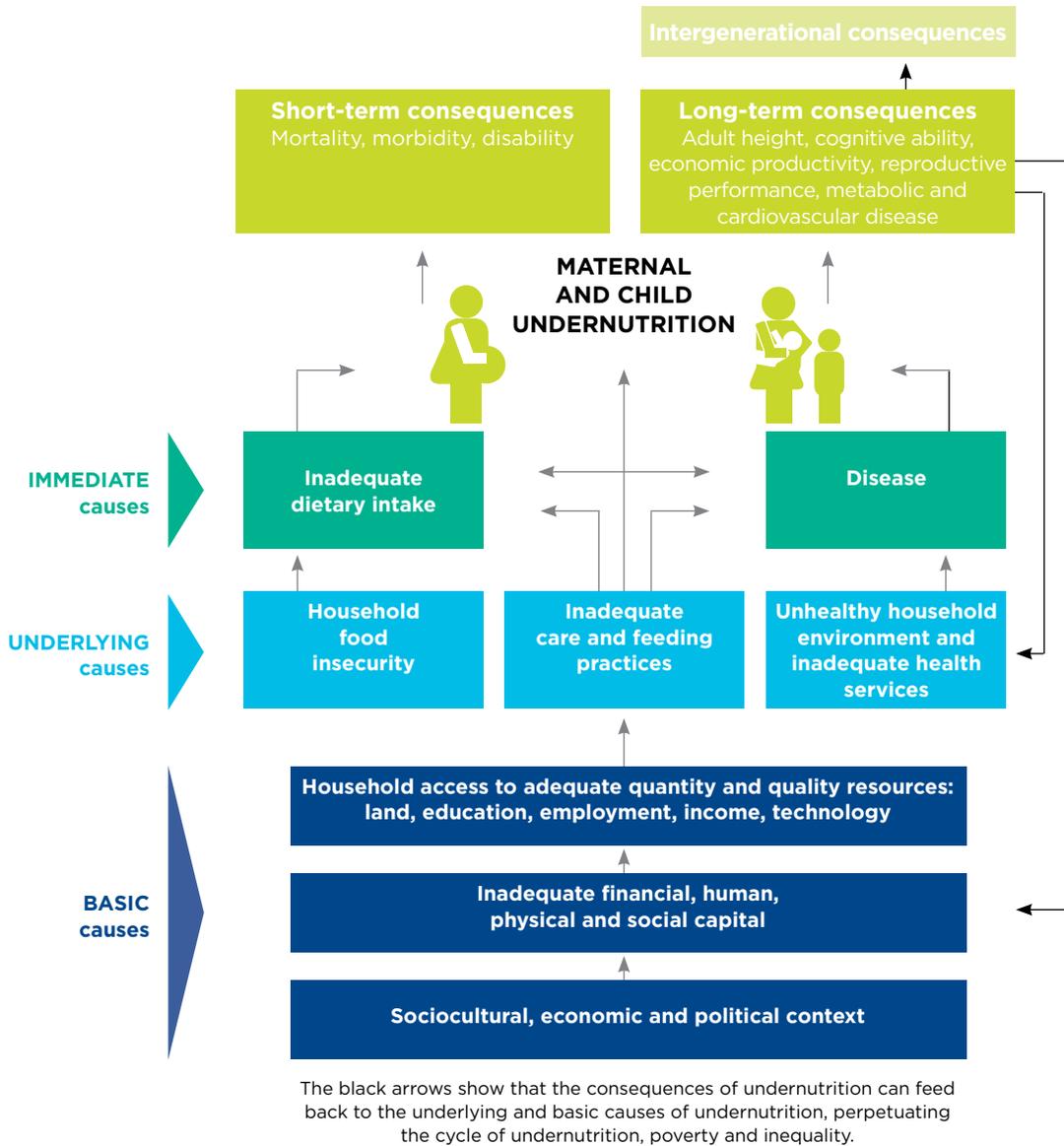
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**NUTRITION**

- The conceptual framework of the causes of undernutrition shows immediate, underlying and basic causes for undernutrition related to both dietary intake and disease, and how these causes are linked. The framework was initially developed by UNICEF.



Source: Adapted from UNICEF 1990 in *Improving Child Nutrition: The achievable imperative for global progress*, UNICEF, April 2013

- The conceptual framework of the causes of undernutrition is widely used in emergency response and a version is included in *The Sphere Handbook* (The Sphere Project 2011), Page 146

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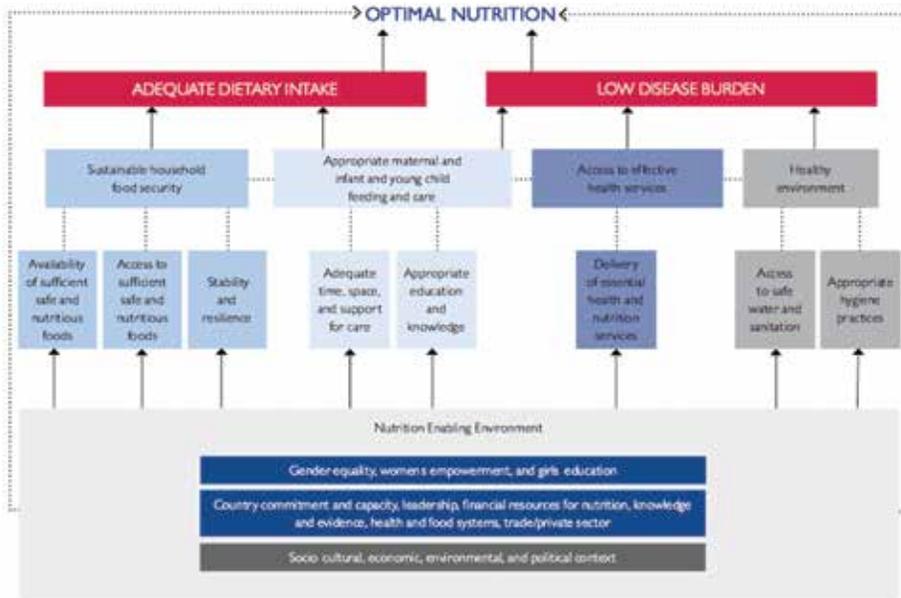
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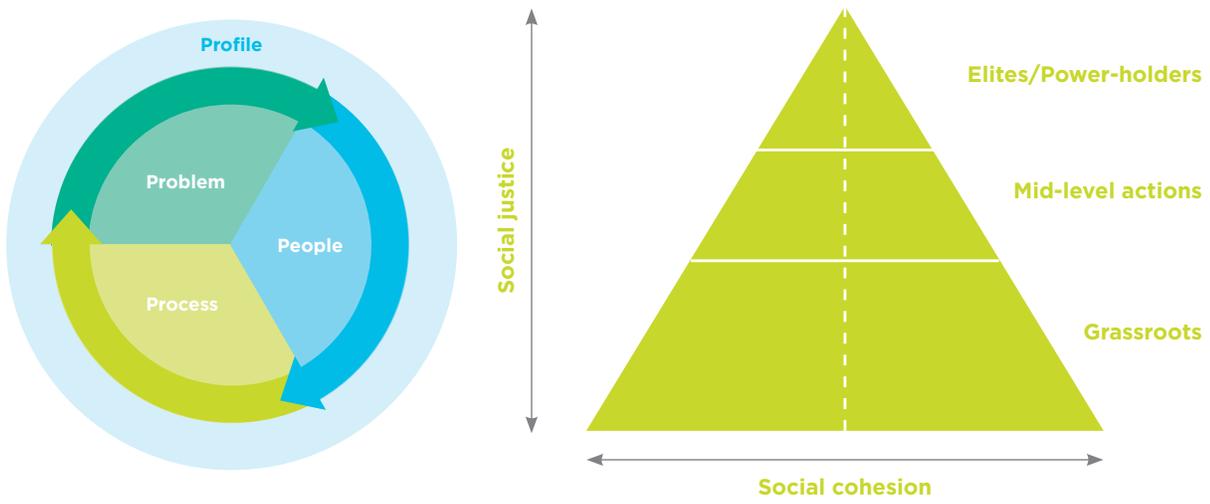
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- USAID’s multi-sectoral conceptual framework for nutrition reflects the same causal links in mirror image: it outlines immediate and underlying factors necessary for optimal nutrition. Source: USAID 2014, Page 13.



PEACEBUILDING

- CRS practitioners have been using a variation of the industry’s 3P conceptual framework (below left) used for conflict assessment and analysis (Caritas Internationalis 2002). This adapted framework encourages reflection on three interrelated elements of a conflict – the **Problem** (causes or drivers of conflict), the **People** (the actors or parties to a conflict), and the **Process** (the dynamics and trends) – within the broader contextual **Profile** of conflict.

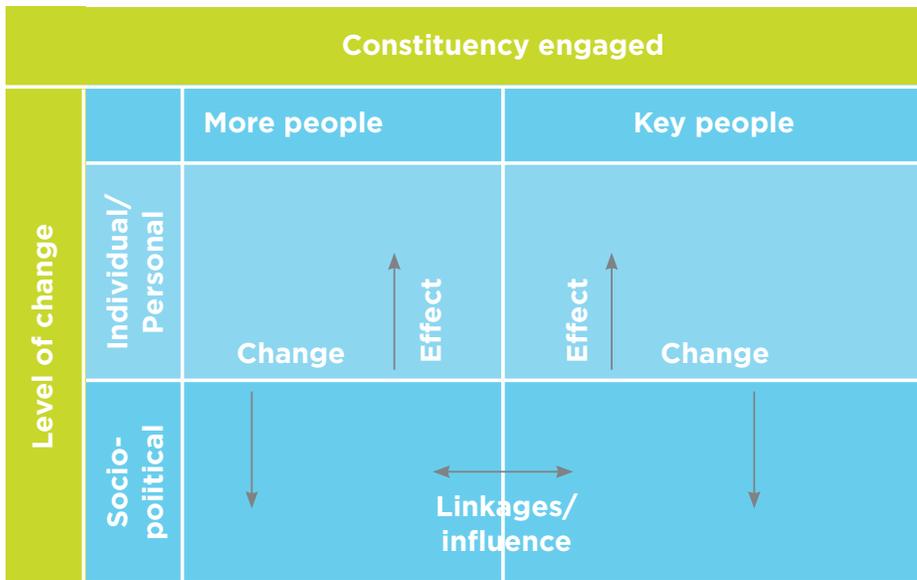


- Versions of this pyramid (often referred to as the “peacebuilding triangle”, above right) help peacebuilders think strategically about the social level(s) on which they will focus their efforts, and why. They are used to help identify avenues for vertical (across social levels) and horizontal (across identity divides) integration and impact. *Adapted from Lederach 1997*

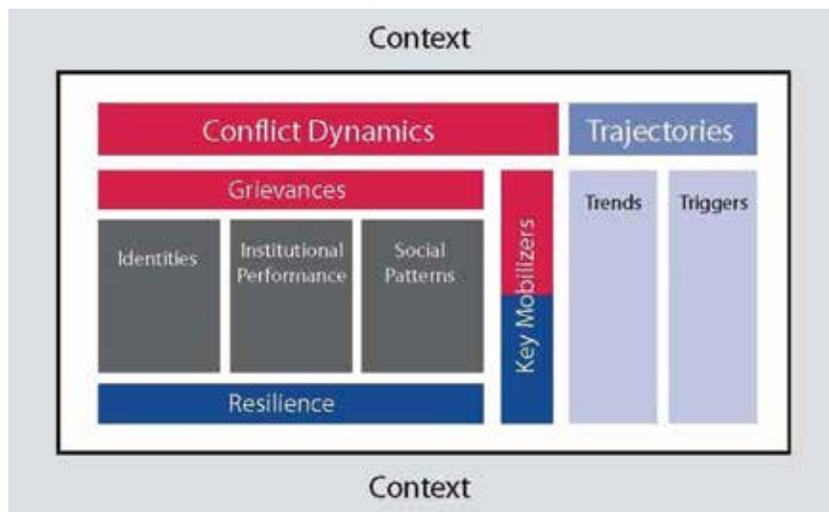
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PEACEBUILDING (CONT)

- The Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) change matrix investigates the impact of change at different levels on 'peace writ large'. It posits that to have an impact on 'peace writ large,' changes at the individual / personal level must translate into actions at the socio-political level; and that interventions focused on more people must translate into influence on key people, and vice versa. *Adapted from Anderson and Olson 2003*



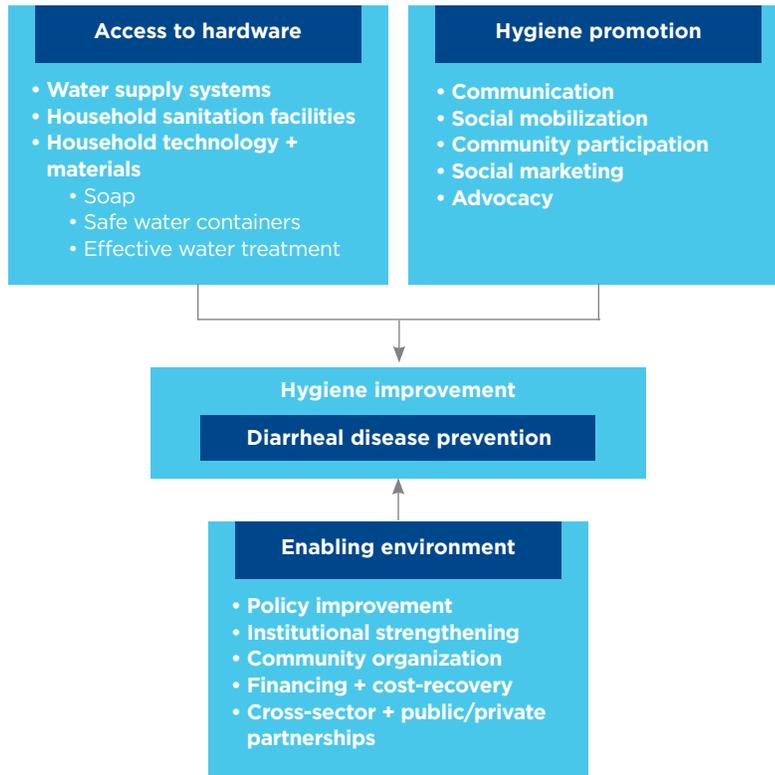
- USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation promotes use of the [Conflict Analysis Framework \(CAF\)](#) to diagnose current conflict dynamics and possible future trajectories. In this framework, key determinants of conflict include grievances, resilience and key mobilizers (USAID 2012b).



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## WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

- The WASH community uses a simple conceptual framework that highlights the three main determinants of diarrheal disease prevention: access to hardware, hygiene promotion and the enabling environment.



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