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Front End Analysis Plan

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Institutionalizing Impact Pathways and meeting performance targets

Front End Analysis (FEA) Plan: Institutionalizing Impact Pathways and meeting performance targets

Introduction

Institutionalizing the use of Impact Pathways (IP), and maintaining performance based on targets in the IP, throughout the projects carried out by the organization, (the FEA plan will basically seek to do this building upon a particular component of a project, the Kailash Sacred Landscape Initiative- KSLCDI) is required for the organization.

The organization is at the beginning phase of a new five year plan and is thus seeking to have a (new and) updated set of performance targets based on IP in place for the next phase. The beginning of the last phase (about 5 years back) is when the concepts of IP (and a whole new model of performance tracking and reporting) was first introduced into all of the programs of this non-government organization. The existing LFA (logical framework Analysis) progress tables of the project and the organization show clear discrepancies in the achievements (versus targets that were planned) at all levels.

Context

The KSLCDI initiative (program) aims to achieve long term conservation of ecosystems, habitats and biodiversity, while encouraging sustainable development, enhancing the resilience of communities in the landscape, and safeguarding cultural linkages among local populations. This program falls within the Trans-boundary Regional Program and works mainly in the border areas of Nepal, India and China.

The organization has 6 Regional Programs (RP) and 4 cross-cutting Theme areas to form an overall matrix structure. The program that the workshop aims to address is KSLCDI, which falls under the RP of transboundary landscapes and primarily under the theme ecosystem services. The program is heading into its third 5-year cycle and needs to develop the theory of change and impact pathway for the next phase.

The organization has its overall strategic objectives, and the program KSLCDI has its own specific objectives. The program objective addresses components of the objectives of the organization as a whole, working within the Regional Program objectives in the middle. Besides the programs in the organization, there is also the over arching directorate, knowledge management & communication, SPM&E (Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation) and finally the Administration and Finance Units.

The entire organization is research based, and operates as knowledge based institution. The KSLCDI programs, like all others in the organization, works on various sites on the ground with the help of local partner organizations for the implementation of its projects. The basic unit that the program follows is the set outputs that are made in coordination with all the stakeholders and the SPM&E unit at the beginning of each of the program phases. These

outputs would lead to outcomes and then the objectives of the KSLCDI program as a whole. The output, however, would need activities to be achieved within them; and further the inputs would feed into these activities.

Impact

The transboundary Kailash Sacred Landscape (KSLCDI) is established, its protection and sustainable use and development of its resources are ensured by the local communities

Outcome

Livelihoods and ecosystems management are improved in a sustainable and equitable manner in selected areas of the Kailash Sacred Landscape Region

Components

Component 1. Innovative Livelihood Options

Component 2. Ecosystem Management








Component 3. Access and Benefit Sharing Towards Development of Resilient Communities

Component 4. Long-term Conservation and Monitoring

Component 5. Regional Cooperation, Enabling Policies and Knowledge Management

For this plan, we will only focus on deliverables from **Component 3, and only on **China** (Nepal and India are also covered under the program- the transboundary intersection of the three countries)*

Table of performance of the KSLCDI- Component 3 (China):

Component 3: Access and benefit sharing	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Key Activity Planned	Deliverables	Status
3.1 Traditional Knowledge System on biodiversity resources available	3.1.1. Traditional knowledge on biodiversity documented from pilot sites;	1. Enable traditional knowledge (TK) systems at pilot sites	1. Research in pilot sites and build database on TK	
	3.1.2. Community biodiversity registers (CBR) prepared and maintained by BMC in pilots;	2. Strengthening community rights, equitable benefit sharing on environmental knowledge	2. Support Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) and prepare a booklet on local plant/animal resources; TK on community rights	
3.2 Documentation on Community Rights and Benefit Sharing from biological resources available	3.2.1. One Policy brief on context relevant and applicable ABS mechanism is prepared and shared with key stakeholders	3. ABS policy research and guidelines	3. ABS regulation complete for Pulan County (institutional linkages from local to national level)	
3.3 Institutional Capacities regarding the ABS mechanism is strengthened	3.3.1. Training cum workshops on community based ABS implementation (2 local, one national, one international)			
Key				
Deliverables achieved and well on track				
Deliverables delayed				
Deliverables not achievable				

- 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 show the output level objectives for the “access benefit sharing” component of KSLCDI in China
- Output statement 3.1 is associated with two objectively verifiable indicators, while 3.2 and 3.3 are associated with one indicator each
- Only output statement 3.2 is on target as its indicator shows the deliverables are on track
- For output statement 3.1, one of its indicators is on track, while another is delayed. Hence the output objective is not delivering according to plan as a whole.
- For output statement 3.2, the indicator shows that the deliverables have not been achieved

To sum up, for KSLCDI component 3 (China), gap exists:

The current state shows that only 1 out of 3 output objectives is on track

The desired state is that 3 out of 3 output objectives be on track

The problem

The access and benefit sharing component of the KSLCDI has only one output out of three which have met their target for China during the last 5 year phase as shown by the objectively verifiable indicator at the output level.

The Logical Framework (a component of the ToC- Theory of Change) indicates that many of the targets from the last phase were not achieved. This discrepancy passes from the output to outcome and impact levels. This is definitely a problem within the organization and its implementing agencies (as the outputs and outcomes have shown a discrepancy). This also indicates a larger problem for the transboundary cooperation in the communities where interventions have been made in China, Nepal and India (represented by the impact level results).

The discrepancies in the outcome and outputs are not that large, however, demand improvement going forward as we enter into the next phase. Output level is well within the domain of influence of the program and management (within the organization and partner agencies), and hence can be effectively altered with appropriate actions.

The means, which are represented by activities carried out, are expected to align with the overall societal impact; if not just the outcomes of components that the organization has committed to work on to fulfill its strategic objectives. The ends are the broad societal impact that will fulfil the organizations strategic objectives as well as influence local governmental policy to institutionalize the beneficial intervening activities (which are generally socio economic livelihood and ecosystem related for KSLCDI project).

The activities affect the project, the organization, the implementing field staff (both organizational and in the implementing partners) and the communities in which they work.

Importance

Donor driven projects are expected to meet performance standards anticipated by the donor agencies (which are usually set high). The research based regional non-profit organization and the project which it houses are both donor funded, and hence need to respond to the donors and to fulfil their performance expectations. In a sense, the life of the project (and its scale) is dependent upon the performance in which they deliver, particularly in the longer run. Going into the new 5-year phase, it is essential for the project and the organization to show performance targets that are realistically achievable but which also comply with donor expectations.

In relation to the gaps that were identified

- Donors have signified the importance of having documentation of community right and benefit sharing from available biological resources
- The donors also want biodiversity registers prepared and maintained

Hence it is essential to close this gap in the “Access and benefit sharing” component of KSLCDI for China. The desired level of performance would include achieving these targets.

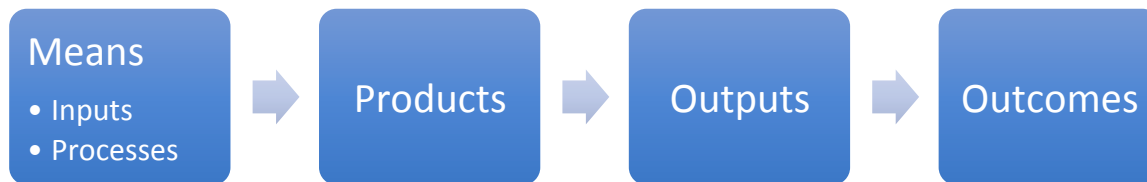
FEA Framework

The KSLCDI program works with partners for implementation on the field sites across the 3 countries in the transboundary areas where they meet. So in a sense besides the organization, the implementing local organizations are a part of the program. Within the organization the program, management, monitoring and evaluation unit, administration and finance, knowledge management and communication, and directorate are the stakeholders. Beyond this, the ministry or policy influencers could be the other major stakeholders.

Tool

Organization elements model (OEM)

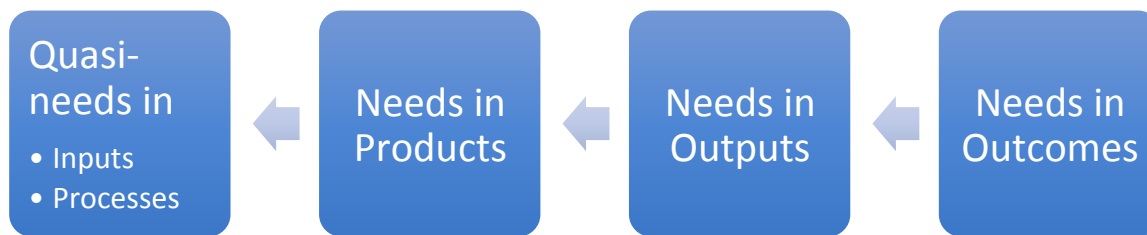
OEM provides a holistic perspective to a system that helps prevent fragmented types of interventions and accomplishments (Chyung, 2008). According to Kauffman, means are what the organizations uses and does; and ends are what organization produces.



Inputs are the “raw materials or resources” and processes are the “methods or activities”. Both of these are the means.

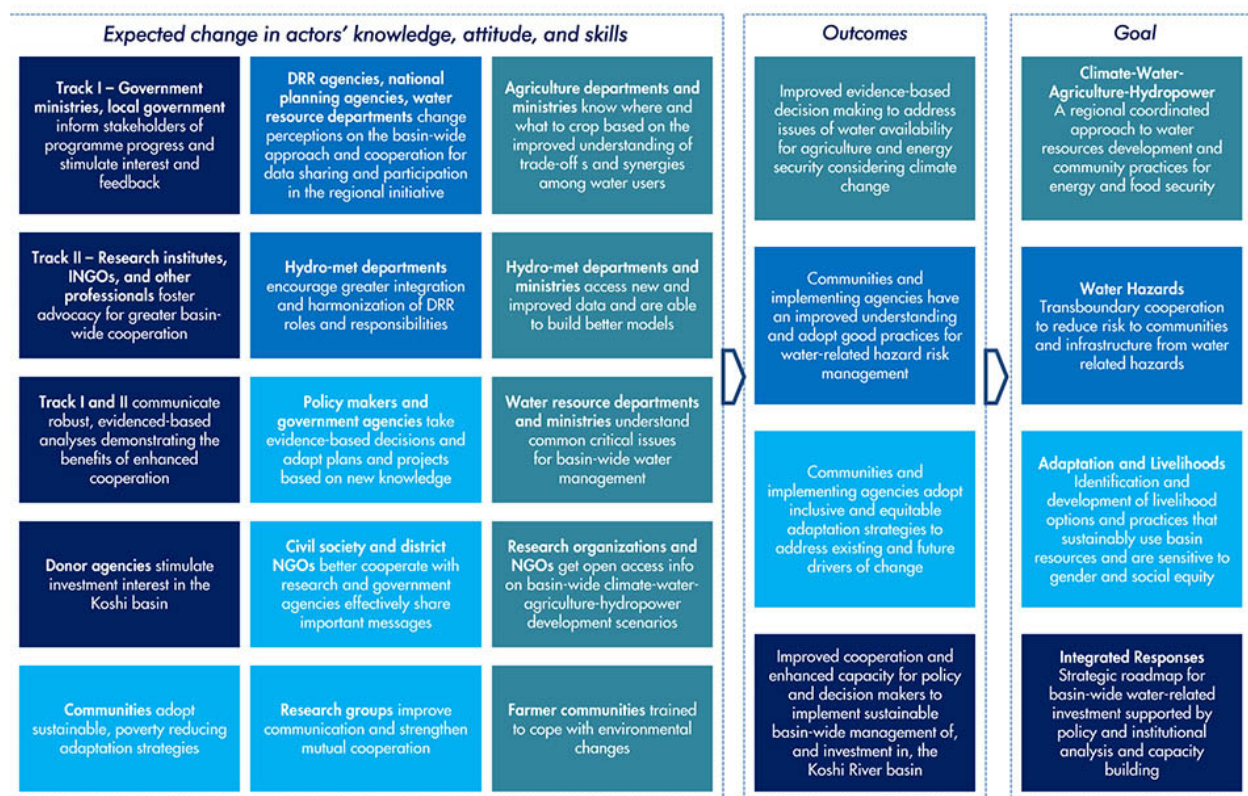
In OEM, there are two types of organizational results; products (micro- level results), that are the accomplishments that individuals or small group performance units perform; and outputs (macro level results), are the accomplishments that the organization as a whole produces. OEM further has the outcome (mega-level) result, which is the result produced beyond the organization.

Kauffman explains that the need analysis occurs at three different levels of results of a system (Kauffman, 2000). The strategic planning begins with the needs assessment at the mega level (outcome), which then leads to the needs assessment at the macro level (output), and finally to the needs assessment at the micro level (products). After his appropriate inputs and processes can be determined.



Needs are gaps between “what should be” and “what is” in end results, not in means (Watkins and Kaufman, 1996).

The OEM tool is useful in this organizations context as it helps to link the activity of this particular component of KSLCDI for China and relate it to higher-level outcome and further impact level of the initiative. Eventually, this all is related to the vision of the organization, which is for positive social and environmental impacts in the region. Impact pathway approach is very much aligned to the ideas provided by the OEM.



Representation of Impact Pathway¹ for a similar organization

¹Retrieved from <http://www.icimod.org/?q=9386>

Data collection methods

Document Analysis

A major source of the needs analysis will be based on the LFA (logical framework analysis) of the past 5 years (extant data). This will provide actual quantitative results that show performance gap.

Further, a casual timeline for significant changes achieved by the initiative component would be identified using past experiences and records. This would be backward looking to the past phase which would be used to assess whether it confirmed, contradicted or added to the initial plan created at the beginning of the last phase.

The overall list of documents to be referred are:

- Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) documentation
- Organization and partner reports
- Survey reports
- Performance indicators

Survey

At the beginning of the analysis, an online survey will be conducted within the organization and project staff regarding the discrepancies and the current reporting results. Some ideas on their perspective on potential causes and solution could be gauged through this.

The survey will also ask about their likes, dislikes, experience stories and suggestions for improving the current model of impact pathways in place in the hopes of improving upon this living model going forwards.

Interviews and Focus Group

After this, staff reflection of performance in the previous phase will take place in group and plenary discussions. Finally, Key informant conversation will be conducted with staff knowledgeable on and favorable towards changes and need to improve current levels of performance.

The group discussions would include topics concerning what the participants would like to see more of, see less of and what needed to be done differently. They would also present findings and have a plenary discussion.

Functional Job Analysis

Functional job analysis is a task analysis technique that distinguishes between what gets done on a job and what workers do to get that job done. This focuses directly on workers activities in accomplishing a job. It describes what the workers do in terms of these specific activities, not in

terms of what the overall job does. This can be useful in terms of clearly describing things to be done in activity level (below output targets). In a way, supervisors to clearly define what they expect of people working under their supervision can use this to. In addition to this, in the case of this organization that uses Human Resource tools like Management by Objectives, this analysis can give another dimension to tasks that need to be done by individuals.

Case based reasoning

This approach deals with re-using previous experiences or cases, or to adapt the experiences to new situations. Of course, the assumption here is that similar problems have similar solutions, and that problems repeat themselves. This tool is useful to use successful cases or activities that have been done in the last phase to be used going forward. This can help map clear paths to obtaining future targets.

Presentation of FEA Plan

The findings from the FEA plan would be presented to the directorate and management in the presence of the internal project staff in an internal meeting. The report from the front-end analysis would be presented to all the major stakeholders, the management, directorate, project staff (even the ones in the partner organization), monitoring and evaluation unit, administration and finance, and the knowledge management and communication unit. The management and directorate would make the final approval of the plan.

Initial Proposed Causes

- *Plans not being realistic in inception (Knowledge-skills, Environment related)*
This can be observed from the fact that out of the three outcome statements, only one is on target. This shows that the plans were not able to predict the actual situation on the ground as mentioned above with unclear role definition for the field staff and incongruency with local regulations
- *Lack of resources hindering implementation on partners end (Motivation-incentive, Environment related)*
It was observed in case of the output statement corresponding to the delayed indicator, lack of adequate resources was a reason. Since one of the two indicators for this output statement is delayed, the whole output statement is not on target.
- *Local government regulations hindering implementation on sites (Environment related)*
This is in reference to the output statement corresponding to the indicator which shows no progress that has been made. It was found out that the government regulations in place did not support the implementation of this output.
- *Roles not clearly defined by program, specifically for field staff coming from local partner organizations (Skills-knowledge related)*
This was observed in case of the output statement corresponding to the delayed indicator. When investigated, it was found that local staff coming from partner

organizations were unaware of their roles and responsibilities. They did say they knew about the pilot undertaken by the program, but were not aware of what they personally had to do towards this.

- *Communication pathways not established well through the project chain (Environment related)*

For the output objective that was not on target due to the delayed indicator, some of the fault was also realized to be in poor communication between the program and its implementing staff. There was a disconnect between managers and officers in the organization working on the project and the field staff actually working on the ground (from partner organization).

Solutions

- *Based on the past phase, we can recommend the program to make realistic targets that are likely to be achieved*

It can be seen from the indicators that output objectives have been delayed, and even not initiated in one case. Instruments like case-based reasoning can help come up with better plans for the next phase. Overall the planning for the next phase should be done in a realistic manner ensuring the supporting requirements are in place.

- *Resources made available by making clear budgeted targets that are feasible*

For the output objective that was not on target due to the delayed indicator, it was found that the local partners did not have sufficient funds to undertake the activity they were supposed to do. In consultation with donors and the finance department of the organization, optimal budget should be ensured.

- *Use high level delegation visits to push for favorable regulations for implementation*
Planned visits by high ranking officials from the Chinese Academy of Sciences which have considerable influence in China were being scheduled. These officials could initiate the process of creating favorable regulations in the areas of project implementation. The officials should be prompted on the issue when the opportunity arises.

- *Collect documentation on local regulations that apply (that may likely be in the local language)*

In the output statement corresponding to the indicator showing no progress, one reason was uncovered to be incongruency with the local regulation. This was not that the regulation turned unfavorable during the last phase, but was rather something that was completely overlooked during the planning stage of the last phase. It was further uncovered that the organization lacked the proper staff able to understand and study Chinese language regulation of that area. Hence the planning should ensure it aligns with local regulations, and an expert on the local language and cultural context would be desirable.

- *The roles of all employees and staff of the program need to be clearly defined to accomplish the required jobs. This should also take into consideration roles of employees working on the project through partner organization.*

For the output objective that was not on target due to the delayed indicator, it was found that local staff from the partner organization were not aware of their roles contributing to the project, although they had an idea of the intervention itself. The roles and responsibilities of such staff should be made clear from the planning phase itself in a systematic and pragmatic manner.

- *Clearly define the communication mechanism reaching down to dedicated field staff*
For the output objective that was not on target due to the delayed indicator, there was a realization that communication to the field staff from the partner organizations, who were the ones dedicated on implementation sites, was not going well. The communication between these staff and the project management, officers and other staff needs to be streamlined and made clear. Also a focal person for the dedicated field staff should be nominated as the go to person for all communication related issues between the program and field staff.

Results

The next review sessions of the program will take place before the final documentation, which will include the findings and recommendation. The final documentation will have all the gaps identified with causes and recommendations to rectify them. Also, the processes adding value and those that are not would be identified. Suggestions for improvement of the current framework/ impact pathways would be made.

The front-end analysis will be clearly explained to show what led to the provided conclusions. The recommendation will be in the form of actionable statements that the program can undertake.

This process will be applied to other components in China, and also in the other countries (Nepal and India). Further, similar analysis will be made to other initiatives in the program, and for other initiatives in other programs in a similar way. In the end, this process will be done for the entire organization to create an overarching impact pathway.

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