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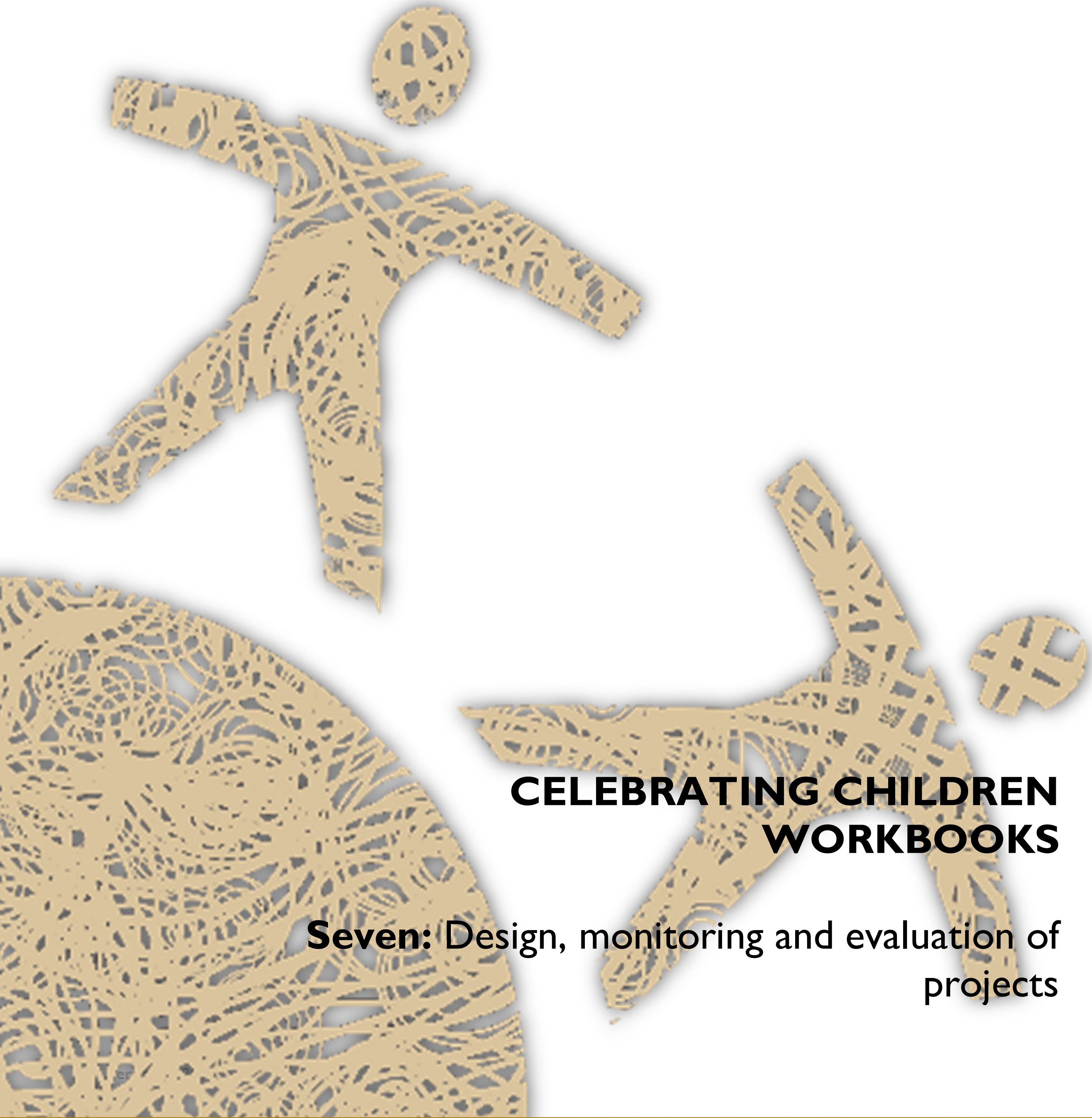

CELEBRATING CHILDREN WORKBOOKS

Seven: Design, monitoring and evaluation of projects

EQUIPONEHELPMANY

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Introduction

What makes the difference between **good** projects and **great** projects? As author, Jim Collins has coined the question, "How do we go from good to great?"[1] The keys to great child development projects rest in part on the time you dedicate to carefully identifying your project, design and planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the holistic child development context in which you are involved.

You will discover in this workbook 6 parts with a total of 15 lessons. They will equip you to understand and be able to apply some central principles and tools for ensuring that your project is really having the greatest positive impact on the lives of children.

Part 1 gives an overview of the rationale behind a great project and roots it in a biblical pattern.

Part 2 explores how to make sure that your project really meets children's needs in your local context. By researching and networking with organizations and other projects, you can learn how best to meet the needs of the children in your locale.

Part 3 addresses the basic building blocks of good project design once children's needs have been determined. Prayerful planning, goals, outputs, and activities in a solid financial climate will help ensure a great project.

Part 4 explores the methods and means of caring for and monitoring your project effectively.

Part 5 aims to provide tools that help you learn from your experiences in your local setting. This learning informs future planning and will contribute to a project that keeps evolving and improving.

Part 6 concludes the workbook by looking at the biblical basis and practical ideas for celebrating progress and achievements in your local setting.

Finally, it is our prayer that you will rejoice in knowing that your thoughtful consideration of these topics will help to provide a great project for children's holistic development. This is a holy and high calling!

[1] Collins (2001)

Part 1: Overview

In this section our aim is to lay some basic foundations that will help you to understand the different steps that are involved in designing, planning and running a successful project. For this reason we are starting by looking at the 'big picture'.

In lesson 1, we will answer some questions about what is involved in creating and sustaining an effective project, looking at what the Bible teaches us through the example of Nehemiah. We will look at this biblical pattern together with the well-accepted idea of the 'project cycle'. This model will introduce the steps involved in a project from its very beginning to its conclusion.

In lesson 2, we take the focus off the individual project that you are involved in to think about the organization as a whole. The aim is to make sure that your project fits into a broader perspective within the organization that we call a vision and mission.

Please note, this workbook generally focuses on projects. By this we mean a specific piece of work, usually with a defined start and end date and clear objectives. An organization may only have one project, or it may have a number of different projects, possibly organized into programmes. The tools and approaches that are described in the workbook are most often used for projects, but they can be applied to programmes and even to running organisations.

Lesson 1: What are some important lessons about running good projects?

Summary

- What is a biblical pattern for running good projects?
- What is the project cycle?

If we want our projects to be the best that they can be in their positive impact on the lives of children at risk, we need to ensure that all of our programmes and projects really meet the needs of those children in the most effective ways. This requires careful planning and management. This is true whether the activities are part of an organisation, a ministry or a church. It is important that we give our best for God and that includes being willing to learn and adjust our projects where they could be improved.

A biblical pattern

In the book of Nehemiah, the Bible provides us with a good model for planning, designing and implementing a project from beginning to end. We will find some key steps that we should incorporate into our own pattern of work in organisations and ministries. The book tells of how Nehemiah led the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, which had been burned down by the Babylonians. Nehemiah gives us a good illustration of what it is to be an excellent project leader overseeing a successful project with God's blessings.

We can consider the following features of Nehemiah's work[2]:

- **Calling and vision (Nehemiah 1)**

  Nehemiah's project begins with God's call. This is the basis of his vision. This means that Nehemiah's project was part of God's wider plan for his people.

- **Response to a need (Nehemiah 1)**

  By getting information about the situation and listening to God, Nehemiah identified a specific need for his project to address.

- **Planning (Nehemiah 2:1-9, Nehemiah 3)**

  We see that Nehemiah planned in detail how he would approach the king and how he would go about rebuilding the wall. This planning was steeped in prayer (look also at Proverbs 16:3 and 21:5).

- **Participation (Nehemiah 2:17, Nehemiah 3)**

  Nehemiah gathered others around him to help him fulfil the vision.

- **Learning and adapting to changing circumstances (Nehemiah 4)**

  When there was opposition to the rebuilding of the wall, he wasn't defeated but learnt from the experience and revised some of his plans.

- **Celebrating success (Nehemiah 6:15-16, Nehemiah 12)**

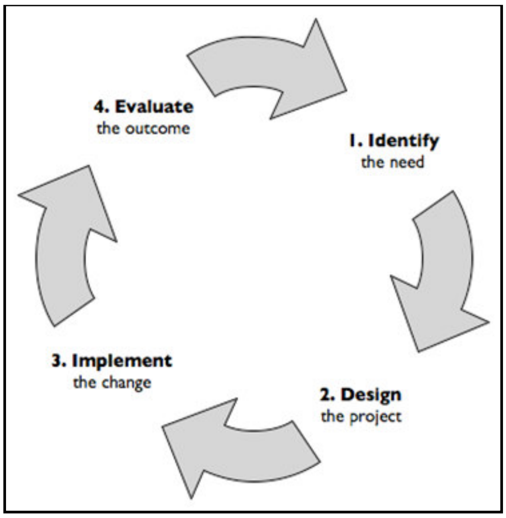
  Finally when the wall was completed, Nehemiah ensured that he celebrated the achievement with all of his fellow workers, giving all the glory to God.

[2] This framework is based on Blackman (2003)

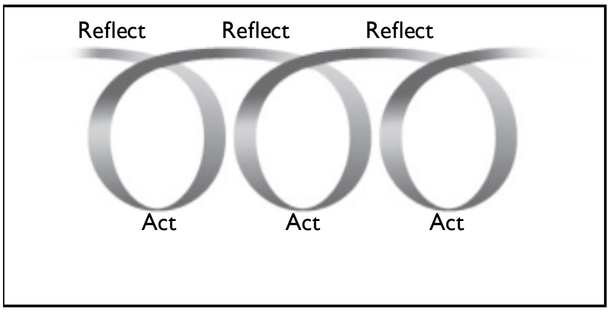
The project cycle

Based on this biblical pattern, we can use some use some helpful tools and methods to maximize the chance that our projects are successful and sustainable. This approach is often called project cycle management.[3] As we saw in Workbook 2, it is really important to give careful thought to how to include children as active participants at every stage of the project cycle.

The process of planning and managing projects can be drawn as a cycle, known as the project cycle. There are four main phases. Each phase of the cycle leads to the next.



- **1 Identify the need:** To identify what a project will focus on, we need to find out who should benefit and what their needs are.
- **2 Design the project:** Once it is decided to go ahead with the project, we can start to think about the detail. This involves carrying out further research into the people affected by a problem, how they are affected by it and how they can be involved in solving the problem. We also need to consider how we will measure the difference the project is making. We need to plan carefully.
- **3 Implement the change:** During the implementation of the project it is important to monitor and review the progress of the project and any outside changes that affect it. The project plans should be adjusted where necessary.
- **4 Evaluate the outcome:** Evaluation should be carried out after project completion. Evaluation could be carried out a few months or years after the project has finished in order to assess its long-term impact and sustainability. We need to plan for evaluation at design stage to make sure there is time and money available to do it properly.



Lesson learning: Throughout the project cycle it is also important to take time to stand back, think, rethink, learn from others and from God.

While the project cycle is a useful way of outlining the stages of a project, it has one drawback: it makes it look as though one tool follows another. In fact, many of the planning tools can be used at any stage of the project. They should be repeated throughout the project's life to ensure that any changes that might affect project success are accounted for. Findings should also be used for organisational learning and to improve other projects.

The remainder of this workbook will introduce you to some basic tools and approaches for the project cycle to get you started. As you learn it will be good to try these and to find opportunities for deeper learning.

[3] See Blackman (2003), p. 10

Case study

Read the following examples of projects that failed. What could have been done differently?

Jimmy has come off the street into a drop in centre. The centre gives Street Kids a place to take a shower, to have a rest and be safe. The structure of the day is loose so that children can adjust. However, Jimmy needs structure and something to do as he is a child who likes to think deeply, to be challenged and to solve problems. He is bored at the centre and can no longer decide what the structure of his day looks like. He therefore decides to leave the centre again.

A lady observes that there are a lot of street children hanging around the shops at night. She talks about it to her friends from church. Together they convince the Pastor that they need to do something about it and with the backing of the Pastor, they start an outreach to the children by providing them soup. The women begin to provide soup on a Thursday night for the children, which is a night that both the women can make. The soup kitchen is run in a well-lit area away from the local shops and near the security of a police station, so that the women feel protected. However once the soup kitchen has been set up, no children turn up. They then discover that another organisation is working with the same group of children on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

A former street child in a short-term shelter has expressed a wish that he could be reunited with his extended family. The staff meet with the family in order to see if the family is willing to have him. Once they said yes, the boy is reunited. Within a few days the boy is back on the street as the actual situation in the family has not changed. Despite the willingness, the relationship and ways of relating to each other haven't changed.

There are children in the community working in households (child domestic workers). A church member notices that they don't get much time off. The church decides to arrange an afternoon Sunday school class for them in addition to the morning Sunday school class they already run. Only one or two children turn up every Sunday and in the end they stop coming too. The lady who runs the afternoon Sunday class carefully prepared each of the sessions and is disappointed that it seems her work isn't valued. The church outreach to child domestic workers stops after 2 months of running.

A funder decides that they have funded the church outreach to the community for the past three years and therefore the funding would stop. The church stops the outreach as there is no money anymore.

Exercises:

Fill in the blanks in the summary of the lesson:

Careful ________ and ___________ is essential for organisations, ministries and projects to be the best they can be in the _________ _______ they have on children's lives. The book of ________ provides a good model for planning, designing and implementing a project from beginning to end. The ________ ______ is a useful tool for managing projects. It consists of ____ phases: identify the ____, _______ the project, __________ the change and evaluate the ________. Throughout the project cycle it is essential to take time to _____ _____, think and _____ from others and from God.

Discussion questions

1. What connections can you see between Nehemiah's approach to the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and the 'project cycle'?

2. Which parts of Nehemiah's pattern and of the project cycle are already part of your project? Give some examples.

3. What barriers are there to planning in your context? What advantages and disadvantages or challenges can you think of?

4. Who was involved in the different stages of Nehemiah's project and what was their role? What about in your project? Who is responsible for these different stages? Who else could have a useful role to play?

5. Can you think of a time when reflecting on your experience led to improving the way you work? What barriers are there to taking time to reflect and learn? How could you overcome these barriers?

Lesson 2: What is our organization here for?

Summary

- What are vision and mission?
- What is a core purpose?
- What is a strategy?

We saw in the last lesson that every individual project and programme that an organisation or ministry undertakes should fit into an overall plan to achieve its mission and meet children's needs in the best ways. Some organisations do not have a clear idea of what their special contribution is. They will try to organize activities to meet every need they see, whether or not it fits with the kind of organization they are.

What are you here for?

Before we look in more detail at how to design, plan and implement good projects, we need to look at the big picture of what your organisation does. It is very helpful for organisations and ministries, however small, to understand what their core purpose is. This is linked to their vision and mission.

Vision means our ultimate aim, our guiding star, the dream you have for children. The vision answers the question "What is the change you want to see?" A good definition of a vision is "a clear, inspiring and challenging picture of the future."

For example: The vision of Ithemba Kids is
"Children without parents in Cape Town are cared for in loving homes".

Some visions are quite inspirational and long term, others more medium term and measurable. The important thing is that the vision describes briefly why the organisation exists. For a Christian organisation, the vision will usually be linked to a calling from God that started the organisation (look at Proverbs 29:18).

Where a vision is for big changes in society and children's lives, it will take more that one organization to bring these changes about. This is why it is good to have a mission: a smaller goal or purpose that is part of the bigger picture that one organisation can focus on.

Mission means our specific contribution, what we do to make the vision into reality. It answers the question "**What** do we do for **whom** through **what means**?" Once you have read a good mission statement, it should be very clear what sort of work the organisation does. Where vision inspires, mission informs – it tells the public who you are, what services you offer and the end result you are looking for.

For example: "Ithemba Kids exists to identify, equip and support foster families in Cape Town, working in partnership with the local church".

Understanding clearly what your vision and mission are as an organisation or ministry is very important because it helps you to be clear about what is the change you want to see and what you will do to bring it about.

It is good to have your organization's vision and mission written down and publically available so that everyone knows who you are and what you do. This is called a vision and mission statement.

Core purpose

A typical challenge for an organisation is to find a central area of work rather than trying to do a wide range of different things. This is called the 'core purpose' of the organisation. Understanding and clarifying this involves thinking strategically.

To do this, organisations need to answer three main questions:

- Who we are (our identity and values)?
- What do we have (our capacity – resources and capabilities)?
- What is needed?

When you have answered the first three questions, your organisation needs to ask itself a fourth important question:

- Therefore, because of who we are and our current capacity, how can we best make an impact on the problem or respond to real demand?

Some more questions for organisations to consider:

Are we trying to do more than we realistically can with our current capacity? Is this because we can't let go of some of the work? If so, why is this?

Are we intending to do some work that is not really our business (that doesn't fit with who we are and why we exist)? Are we being unnecessarily competitive or fearful to let go of something that does not relate to our core purpose?

Are we being pushed by some stakeholders (donors, other organisations, our beneficiaries) to do work that could be done better by others? How do we deal with this?

Are we taking on work or projects for which we don't really have the expertise and so setting ourselves up for failure or to disappoint our beneficiaries?

Strategy

This will help a great deal to make your organisation or ministry more effective in making the changes you want to see. It will allow you to form a strategy to translate your vision and mission into practical actions. This will allow you to set specific goals and objectives (see lesson 7). Developing strategy is about making a choice: selecting the best way for your organisation from a range of possible ways to put your purpose into action.

Case study

Kone Kmeng began as a bridge between charitable financial donors and those churches in Cambodia that desperately need assistance in their desire to work with children at risk. Over our 4 years of existence, we have been able to focus and develop this idea into an organisation that empowers local churches to meet the needs in their communities, especially those of children. Kone Kmeng's efforts have grown from several small, temporary outreaches such as moto repair training, Jesus Club for children, nutrition for babies in poor health into projects that are building the local churches through programs such non-formal education, family development, community education and relief and development assistance.

Our impact in transforming the lives of vulnerable children is built, primarily on vision from God and the quality of cooperation between Kone Kmeng and the churches, Kone Kmeng and our donors, and the churches with their communities and local authorities.

Vision Statement

"Equipping churches throughout Cambodia responding to children at risk in their communities"

Our Mission

Empowering churches to respond to children at risk in their communities.

Our Values

We believe God places a high value on children and families.

We believe the church is the most important agency in transforming communities, including the lives of children at risk.

We believe that supporting the children's families is essential in order to ensure their long-term well-being.

Kone Kmeng Objectives

Churches have resources to start the specific project and respond to immediate needs.

Churches are effective at implementing activities related to children at risk.

Churches care for children spiritually, socially, physically and culturally.

Kone Kmeng Strategy

Promote a greater understanding of God's true heart for children and improve their value within Cambodian culture.

Identify specific needs within their community.

Develop a specific project to effectively address the needs of the children.

Equip the church with resources to launch new projects and the support and training to ensure effectiveness.

Network with churches that are responding to the issues of children at risk

Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Organizations and ministries should be clear about their ______, ________ and _____ ________. The vision is the _________ ____ or ______ you have for children. It should briefly describe why the organization exists. A ________ is a smaller goal or purpose that describes the specific _____________ of an organization or what you do to make the vision _ ________. The core purpose is the ________ _____ of work of your organization. A _________ is about how you will translate your vision and mission into practical actions by selecting the _____ ____ for your organization from a range of possible ways.

Discussion questions

1. What was Nehemiah's vision? How did this vision affect his life?

2. What is your personal vision for the children you work with? Is this something that one organisation can achieve on its own?

3. What is the difference between a vision and a mission? Why might it be useful for a project or an organisation to have a vision and mission statement?

4. What is the vision of your organisation or project? Where did the vision come from?

5. What do you understand by the core purpose of an organisation? Can you explain the core purpose of your organisation? How does this help the organisation to decide what sort of activities to do?

6. How does your project or your work contribute to fulfilling the mission of the organisation?

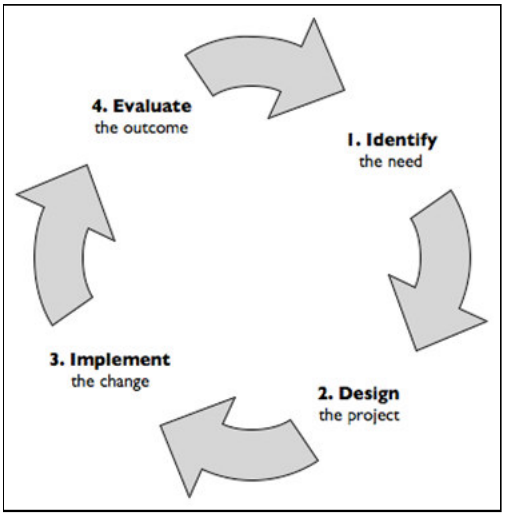
Activity

Think about the story of your organisation and your personal journey within it. Try to imagine your journey like a river or a mountain path that passes through different terrains, obstacles, etc.

Either in words or pictures, try to tell that story from your personal perspective – identify highlights, difficult times, landmarks, decisive events and changes.

- *What has happened to the organisation's original vision through this journey?*
- *What has happened to your own personal vision for your work through this journey?*
- *What is your response?*

Part 2: Identifying projects



As we saw in lesson 1, the first stage of the project cycle is to identify the need(s) that your project will address. This means to decide what your project is going to do and why. Many projects fail or are less effective than they might be because they do not know what needs they are addressing, or because the needs they are addressing are not the ones that matter most to the people they want to help.

This section will look at some key questions that need to be answered at this stage are:

Who are the children at risk in this area and **what** are the issues facing them? (Lesson 3)

Who is already responding to those children, **what** is their response, **where** and **how** is the response delivered? (Lesson 4)

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing response and **what**, if any, are the gaps in the response to the needs of the children? (Lesson 5)

What, if any, are the potential areas for collaboration? (Lesson 6)

Lesson 3: How can we find out about children's needs?

Summary

- The importance of designing projects to meet needs
- How to identify needs and problems
- How to analyse needs and problems
- Identify community assets and resources

A good project will always be designed to respond to specific, identified needs of a particular target group of people. It is a mistake to decide what sort of project you will start without having properly understood the context children live in and what makes them vulnerable to risk. In particular it is very important to involve the people you want to serve in the process of working out what sort of project is most needed.

You might already have a good idea of local needs. They might be quite obvious, or you might have become aware of them during a past project. On the other hand, you might have no idea what a community's needs are. It is important to carry out a needs assessment before planning your project, whether you think you know what the needs are or not. The time spent carrying out aneeds assessment will vary according to the contact you have had with a community in the past.

Why should we do needs assessment?

- The project should come out of what people say they want and not from assumptions that we make.
- Sometimes the needs are not immediately clear or cannot be easily understood.
- By talking to different people, we will be able to understand how problems affect people differently.
- Circumstances change:
  - There may be new people in the community.
  - There may be new needs.
  - Old needs might have been addressed.
  - Problems might be affecting people differently.
- Needs assessment gives people an opportunity to prioritise their own needs, which leads to a more sustainable project.

How do we identify needs and problems?

Once you know the location for your proposed project, begin by identifying the needs and problems of the children in the community. You should also try to work out which groups of children are most vulnerable and marginalized.

A good place to start is by looking at information and data that has already been collected by the government, official agencies, other NGOs, etc. Potential sources include UNICEF, local/national government, and published studies and surveys. This will give you some background information on the context of children's lives and may highlight some important needs.

Working in collaboration with the local community, you then need to build up a more accurate picture of the community and the needs that people there feel are important to them.

There are lots of methods you can use: **surveys** with community members and **semi-structured interviews** with different kinds of people (e.g. community leaders, women, children, school teachers). **Focus groups** bring together a group of 6-12 people who have a special interest in the topic for a discussion. You could organize focus groups with parents, with children, with church leaders, for example. Make sure that you **visit** the area and keep your eyes open to see what children are doing and what problems they are facing. Even better, get members of the community – including children – to take you on a **community tour** explain it to you, showing you what the problem areas are. Get groups of people to draw a **map** of their community that highlights the worst problem areas and the best things in the community. You could convene a **community meeting** to discuss problems in the community. Whatever methods you choose, aim to get information and ideas from as many different kinds of people as possible, especially from children and their carers.

You may be able to think of other ways of learning about the community and the needs of the children in it. Make sure that you do not make assumptions about children's needs, but be ready to learn from the community. Previously it was felt that it was important to ask the village leaders only but they only understood things from the position of the leader. Then it was felt that it was important to meet with the men in the village but they couldn't see things that women could see. Good development projects now realize that it is important to also listen to children. They often have perspectives which not only take into consideration the needs of children but also the needs of the whole community. In particular make sure that you are listening to what children are telling you. Remember, they have a unique and valid perspective on what problems they are facing.[4] At the same time, you must make sure that children are properly protected from risk of harm while you are consulting with them.

Analyse needs and problems

When you have gathered plenty of information about the situation, you need to spend time analysing the needs and problems, looking for their underlying causes. You might have seen that children are hungry and decide to provide a nutritious breakfast for some of the children. If you do not take time to find out *why* children are hungry, the long term problem will not go away, even if those children are better fed in the short term. They might be hungry because their parents do not know how to prepare nutritious food – in which case a better project would be education about food and nutrition. Or they might be hungry because of failed harvests – in which case feeding the children and helping their families grow different crops might be a better idea. The better an idea you have of the causes of the needs, the easier it will be to see effective solutions.[5]

Wherever possible, involve the local community and the children in analyzing the problems that they face and in suggesting good solutions. Give them a chance to tell you which problems are the most important ones (priorities) to them.

Identify assets and resources

As you get to know the community where your project will be based, do not spend all your time looking at the problems. Communities are very resourceful, even when they are very poor and in very difficult circumstances. Identify the assets within the community that could be used to help meet their needs. This is important information for your project design, because a good project will seek to involve and empower the community where it works to solve their own problems.

All this information will help the process of deciding what sort of project to start and which needs to meet.

[4] Look at WB2 for more information on how to include and listen to children more effectively.

[5] See also Blackman (2003), p.13-17 and the '*But why?*' tool from Workbook 3, lesson 1

Case study

1. After a landslide in Southern Leyte, Philippines, children were mobilized to help in assessing the needs of the families affected by the disaster. Children in Southern Leyte, Albay and other areas participated in hazard mapping, hazard watching and risk identification in their communities and have contributed to disaster risk reduction plans at the school and community level. Collecting the children's views was part of a participatory process involving on-the-spot collection, interpretation and analysis of information about hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities from various sources, including children. The intention was for children to be protected from possible harm of another landslide. Since the children have often felt the dangers of having their school located in a high risk location, it was a good move to listen to children's suggestions on the relocation of the school.[6]

2. After the 2004 tsunami hit Sri Lanka, children were consulted on models for houses. Although the government had already provided designs, modifications were made. This process revealed the different perceptions and concerns of children to those of their parents. Adults wanted all the characteristics of the house to be bigger; children were more concerned about the layout, the environment and privacy.[7]

3. The Chisomo Children's Club was set up in 1998 with and for the street children of Malawi and now has centres in Blantyre, Limbe and Lilongwe. The children themselves describe Chisomo as 'a children's organization that helps children to have a better future, to know their own future and provide for their own needs.' In each geographical location, the children have participated in identifying and prioritizing their needs through Participatory Learning and Action activities such as social mapping, daily time analysis, preference ranking (using beans), income generation trees and Venn diagrams. As a result there are some programme variations between the locations as they respond to the children's identified needs. For example, in Blantyre, Chisomo has established a night shelter to give short term protection to the children at night as that was their overwhelming priority, while none has been set up in the other centres.[8]

[6] Plan Philippines (2008)

[7] Chen and Thompstone (2005)

[8] World Vision Africa (2008)

Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

A good project will always be designed to respond to ________, ___________ _____ of a particular ______ _____ of people. A _____ ___________ allows you to find out about local needs. Needs assessment is important for many reasons: because the project should come out of what people ___ they want, not our ___________; sometimes needs are not immediately clear; by talking to __________ ______ we will understand how problems affect them differently; ______________ change; and needs assessment also allows people to ___________ their own needs. Methods include _____________ and ___________. You should especially listen to what _________ tell you. You also need to analyse the ____ ______ of problems and identify ______ and __________ in the community.

Discussion questions

1. Why is it important to carry out a needs assessment before planning a project in detail?

2. What does it mean to analyse the needs and problems? What should you aim to find out?

3. What specific needs is your project addressing? How did the project decide which needs to address? What is the project doing to address root causes of the problems?

4. How could you find out more about the specific needs of the children in your area?

5. What needs do the children in your project think are the highest priority for them and the community? What methods could you use to find out? How would this affect your project?

6. What assets and resources in the local community does your project build on? What about the children in your project? How could you do more to help them address their own needs?

Lesson 4: How can we discover what other people are doing to meet children's needs?

Summary

- Who is doing what where?
- Sources of information
- Types of information
- How to collect information

Once you have identified the needs of the children in your area, there are still other important steps to take before you start to design your own project and activities. In this lesson, we will think about how to find out what is already being done to meet children's needs so that you don't end up duplicating work that is already being done by others and so you can identify others who could support your project.

Who, what, where?

You need to discover who is already working with children, what they are doing and where they are operating by doing some more research. Again, there are two main types of research activity you will need to do: desk-based research and field research.

Start with **desk research**. The aim is to get a broad understanding of the local players (Christian, secular and from other faiths) who are responding to children in the area where you are planning to start your project. Potential sources include UNICEF, local/national government, published studies and surveys, and local knowledge. You should also review any available directories that list agencies and organisations involved in the issues you have identified. It is sensible to build a good general picture, not just focus on the Christian response. Desk research provides a good deal of useful data, but it is important that you check that this data is up to date.

The next step is to do **field research** in order to collect detailed and up-to-date information in the area. Consider doing things like area visits, street interviews and following up contacts identified during the desk research. This is quite literally a process of exploring your community, neighbourhoods and streets. Use potential contacts from desk research as the basis for structuring your early field research (it gives you something to get started on). Always make sure that researchers finish the data collection interview with the question, 'Is there anybody else you know of that we could talk to?' as this provides potential new contacts to follow up. Carry out street-by-street reconnoitres to look for responses that you don't know anything about yet.

Sources of information

There are four main sources of information you could consider for your situational mapping:

- **People:** The individuals you meet hold much of the information that you are looking for. How you deal with these people is very important.

  As well as meeting with individuals, think about bringing people together in a group to share. This is called participatory research. It enables stakeholders to share questions, information and ideas together, as well as helping them to build relationships with each other.

- **Children:** Often children are the best source of information. They are more aware than anybody of the issues facing them, and have inside information on the organisations trying to help them. Never rush in to interview children – there are lots of factors to consider, such as the safety of the child, the emotional development of the child, among many others. Some of the stakeholders or NGOs may already have spoken to the children and documented it, which you can use. If you are going to attempt to do this kind of research yourself, then try and do it in collaboration with the stakeholders already caring for the children, and do look at some of the many resources available concerning interviewing children.[9]

- **Public Records:** You will be able to gather some information about stakeholders and the context they are working in through public records. Your local governmental offices will likely hold statistical information about your local area, including information about children at risk. You may also be able to search the archives of various local newspapers and magazines for more information.
- **Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs):** Inter-Governmental Organisations within your country and internationally will have information on the local area you are working in. Think about visiting local offices of some of the UN agencies, such as UNICEF, UNESCO and UNAIDS. Think also about other NGOs in your local area dealing with social issues. A lot of the information you are looking for may have been collected by these people before. NGO networks are also usually quite helpful. Viva has lots of links and knowledge for making useful contacts.[10]

How much research do we need to do?

The ideal scenario might be to investigate every street and every response to marginalised children. The reality may well be that insufficient resources will be available to carry out such a detailed research programme. So you need to design a programme that will give you as much quality information as possible, while working within your financial limitations and timetable. Therefore, you need to work out how to get data from a sample that is representative of the general situation so that this data can be used to draw valid conclusions that about the whole.

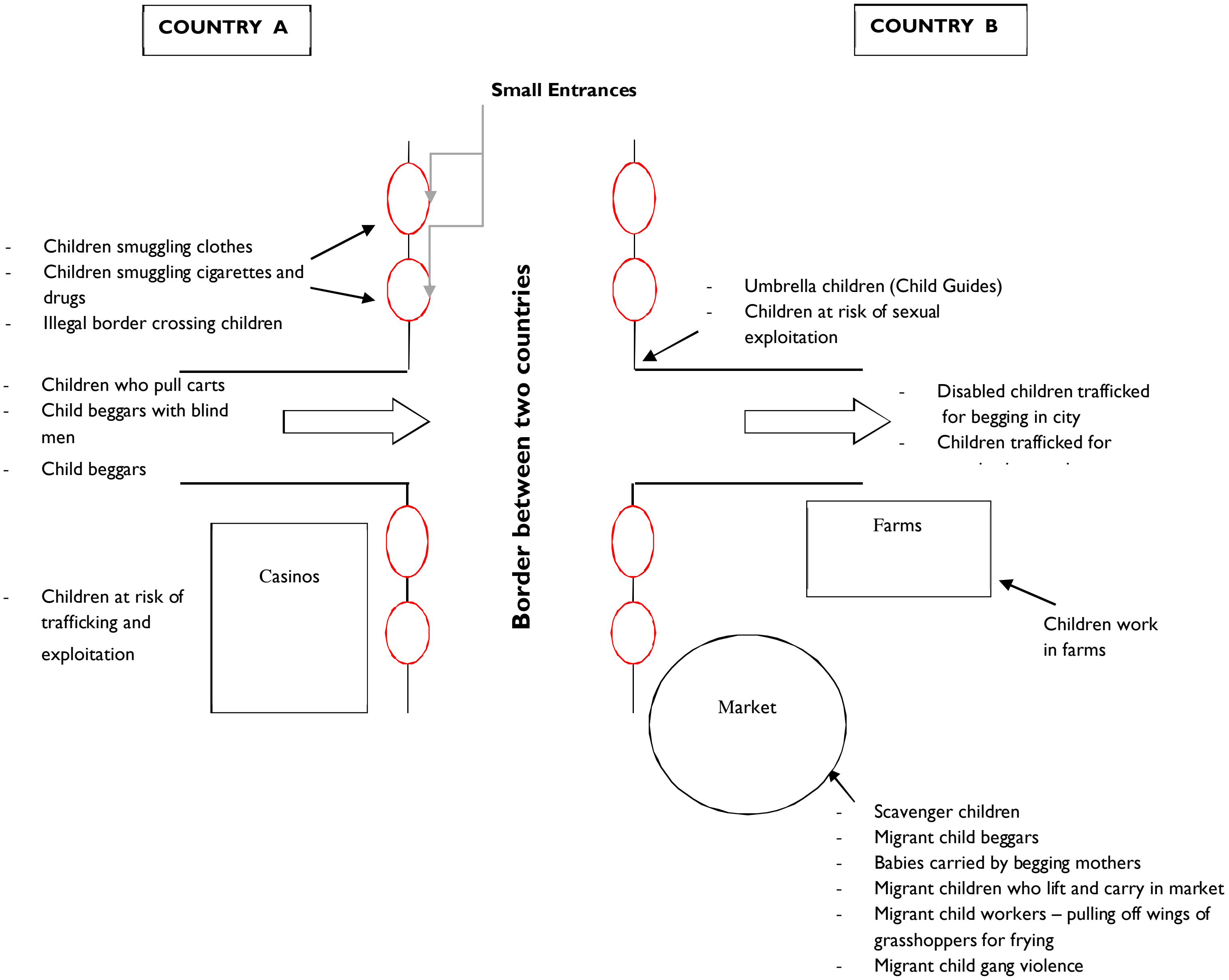
*In **La Paz, Bolivia** they used transects to define their sample area for mapping. They drew 2 lines North – South and East – West on a huge map of the city. Then they got down on their knees and physically identified addresses and locations of the projects and resources that were listed in the government directory that were close to the transect lines. In the mapping, they tried not to stray too far from the transect lines, while also trying to contact as many organisations as possible.*

[9] See the Further Resources section for relevant resources.

[10] www.viva.org

Case study

A network of NGOs working in a border area between 2 towns in 2 countries in Southeast Asia met to explore who were the children most at risk in the towns. They decided to do a map to see how children were at risk in their area.



Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

It is important to find out what is _______ _____ ____ to meet children's needs so that you do not _________ work that is already being done and so that you can identify others to _______ your project. Two main kinds of research are __________ research and _____ research. Potential sources for desk research include _______ and _________. Field research involves collecting up-to-date information in the area through _________ the community. Main sources of information are ______, public records, Inter-governmental and Non-governmental organisations, and ________. You need to work out how to get data from a ______ that is representative of the _______ _________ so that this data can be used to draw valid conclusions that about the whole.

Discussion questions

1. What are the advantages of finding out what other organisations and projects are doing to meet the needs of children before planning a new project? What are the barriers?
2. Do you know what other people are doing to respond to children in your area? How many projects can you list and what is their main focus?
3. What are good sources of information about what people are doing to help children in your area?
4. Imagine you were going to start a new project. What steps would you take to find out about needs and the response to those needs?

Lesson 5: How should we decide which needs to meet with our activities?

Summary

- Identifying gaps in provision
- Assessing your organisation's capacity
- Useful tools to help you (SWOT/BEEM and PEST analysis)

By this stage you will have a good idea of what the needs of children are and what others are doing to meet them. The next step is designed to help you work out exactly which needs to focus your attention on.

What are the main gaps in provision?

Your research into the situation and the needs of children and into what is being done to meet those needs should help you answer two questions:

- **What** are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing response?
- **What**, if any, are the gaps in the response to the needs of the children?

Before you begin to design a new project or to plan activities, make sure that you have as complete a picture of the existing work as you can. This should include work being done by Christian and non-Christian organisations, the government and independent organisations. Your aim is not to criticize other people's work, but to see what opportunities there are for your project to make a greater difference to children as you bring about the kingdom of God.

Generally, both **quantitative** and **qualitative** data will be required to get a full enough picture. Quantitative data is numerical data (e.g. how many, how much, how often). Qualitative data is descriptive (e.g. how serious, how important, how well). Qualitative information helps you to put quantitative data into perspective.

For example,
Quantitative *information may show us that 20 organisation run feeding programmes and feed 20,000 children out of a needy population of 25,000*
Qualitative *data could highlight that they only offer each child 1 meal per week and that the meal does not meet the dietary intake requirements of children*
This shows that the root causes of the problem are not being addressed.

As you build up a proper picture of the current provision for children, you will be able to identify the gaps where there are no adequate responses to important needs that you have identified. This will help you to make sure that your project has real impact rather than duplicating work that is already being done.

What is my organisation's capacity for meeting the needs?

When you have identified the gaps in provision for children's needs, you will then need to have a good look at your own organization or ministry and make a realistic assessment of your own strengths and weaknesses and of your capacity so that you can identify the best ways for you to respond to the needs and gaps you have identified. Remember, one ministry cannot try to meet all the potential needs and gaps you have identified. You need to make an informed and wise choice of what to focus on.[11]

[11] For a good organisational assessment tool see, http://tilz.tearfund.org/Publications/ROOTS/Capacity+self-assessment.htm

Here are some key questions to consider:

Does meeting the need fit in with our mission?
Does meeting the need fit into our strategy?
Will meeting the need be too risky?
Do we have enough experience?
Do we have enough resources?

What tools can we use?

One helpful tool to use is called a SWOT/BEEM analysis. SWOT stands for the **S**trengths and **W**eaknesses within your organisation; plus factors outside your organisation that offer **O**pportunities or pose **T**hreats.[12] Here are some basic SWOT questions to start with:

INTERNAL FACTORS	**STRENGTHS** What do we do well? What are we capable of doing? What resources, experience and skills do we have?	**WEAKNESSES** What are our weaknesses and limitations? What could we do better? What do we find difficult?
EXTERNAL FACTORS	**OPPORTUNITIES** What are the factors outside our ministry that could help us do our work? Where are opportunities that would help us achieve our goals better? What makes our ministry different from others? What door of opportunity has God opened for us?	**THREATS** What are the factors outside our ministry that might be unhelpful to us? What are possible obstacles to be overcome? What sources of opposition could there be?

You can then think of strategies to **B**uild on strengths, **E**liminate weaknesses, **E**xploit opportunities and **M**inimise threats. This tool helps you to focus on the strengths and limitations of your organization so that you can identify the needs you are best placed to meet and the most appropriate strategies for meeting them. As you identify opportunities outside the organization and possible threats, it will increase the likelihood of your proposed project being sustainable.

Another useful tool is called a PEST analysis. This gets you to think about and identify all the Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors in your context which could help or hinder you in meeting your objectives. Some examples might include: **P**olitical—are there wars and conflicts that will affect our project goals? **E**conomic—are there monetary issues, such as exchange rates, and a home economy that is not strong? **S**ocial—are there ethical and moral issues which affect your project design's success? **T**echnological—are there opportunities for internet access or other telecommunications to support your project design?

All of this work will help to clarify the kind of project that is most appropriate for your organisation to run at this time.

[12] The SWOT tool can be used for many purposes, e.g. organisational capacity, analysing the existing response, etc.

Case study

A Christian network in Costa Rica wanted to start a new project aimed at tackling child abuse, which they had identified as a significant problem in the country. Before they started to plan what sort of project to propose, they decided to do some research to find out what was already being done in the area of child protection, especially child abuse.

Among the organisations working in the area of prevention of abuse, they discovered that almost half of them (46%) claimed to be responding to the issue of protecting children from abuse. Did this mean that there was no real need for new projects in this area?

On closer analysis, however, the network found out that the existing response consisted of seminars or talks in the majority of cases, with few structured programmes that actually tackle abuse directly. As they did more research, they also learned that less than half of those organisations currently offered any kind of support for the process of reporting abuse cases either because they were not aware of the proper procedures or felt that it falls outside the remit of their work.

This information was very useful. It helped the network to decide what sort of project would make most difference to children because it highlighted important gaps in provision that they would be able to fill.

Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

In order to decide which ______ to focus your attention on, you need to understand the __________ and ___________ of the existing response and in particular, to identify any _____ in the response. Research should include work being done by __________ and non-Christian organisations, the ___________ and independent organisations. You will need _____________ and ____________ data. You will also need to assess the _________ of your organization to respond to the needs and gaps you have identified. The _____ tool will help you think about your strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities and threats ________ the organization. The PEST tool concentrates on __________, _________, _______ and _______________ factors that could influence your ability to respond to the needs you have identified.

Discussion questions

1. Once you know about the needs and underlying causes or children's problems and what other people are doing to help them, what other factors should you consider before deciding what sort of project to run? What are the advantages? What are the disadvantages and how does that influence how you plan?
2. Explain the difference between quantitative and qualitative information. Can you give an example of each from your own project?
3. What are the risks of not thinking about the capacity of your organization before deciding on a new project? Can you think of any situations where this has happened in your experience? What practical steps could be taken to overcome these difficulties?
4. How could the SWOT/BEEM tool be useful for your project? Are there any questions that you would like to add? Who would need to be involved?
5. Think through the factors in the PEST tool. Which are most beneficial for your project at the moment? Which pose the biggest threats? Are there any changes that your project could make to benefit more or protect itself more? If so, who needs to be involved?

Lesson 6: What are the advantages of networking?

Summary

- What is networking?
- How networking enables the holistic needs of the child to be met more effectively
- Getting started

Once you have identified a genuine need, gap in provision and an appropriate response to that need that your organisation is equipped to deliver, you are ready to begin to plan your activities. Before you do, it is worthwhile taking time to think about how you could also work together with others to make your response more effective at meeting the holistic needs of the children in your area.

What is networking?

Networking is about joining together with others who share your vision in order to exchange information and possibly to undertake joint activities. It means building on each other's strengths. The purpose of networking is to have a bigger impact on children's lives than any one project or organization can have on its own.

Here are a few examples of what motivates Christians around the world to work together with others to meet the needs of the children in their context:

- The huge scale of the situation facing children
- The inability of any single group to do enough to help children on their own
- The notable gap in coordination within the Christian community - the reality of a fragmented church - resulting in an insignificant impact despite the quantity of Christian work with children
- Working together is God's model for Christians

These points demonstrate how essential it is that Christians work together in order to fulfil our collective identity as the body of Christ as well as enhancing our individual work and callings. God wants Christians to be different from the rest of the world. Working together with others is a way of bearing witness to his way of doing things by being one when reaching out to children at risk.

What are the benefits of networking?

First steps in networking are about developing relationships so that together you can consider better ways to serve. You may be able to identify new ways of improving the quality of the care you are offering to children by purposeful collaboration with those around us. This could include other Christian projects in your neighbourhood or city; it could include non-Christian projects and government agencies. For some of the bigger issues, it may be appropriate to work with organisations and agencies in other parts of your country or region. The true aim of all these connections is to make significant changes in the situations that put children at risk in your community, your city or even your region.

In your day-to-day work, your main focus tends to be on what God has called you to do in our organisation or project – whether you are a school, a Bible class or a feeding project, for example. You will therefore tend to specialise in responding to the needs you have identified as your target. You will know from our experience that however good your project is at what it does, you cannot meet all the holistic needs of the children you are in contact with. For example, a school is not usually able to help with residential care for street children; a Sunday School class probably won't have the skills to help with medical needs, etc. However, it is possible even for a small organisation or project with a narrow focus still to be aware of where they can refer children at risk in their community.

It doesn't take very much thought to realise that as a result, there are children whose needs are not being met and when you reflect on the bigger picture, you might see problems or situations that put children at risk that are not being addressed by anyone's specific project or organisation. The research you have done may well have highlighted some of these areas.

Therefore it is good to get into the habit of thinking outside of your own organisational setting regularly so that you do not miss opportunities to meet the needs of children around you. The challenge is to 'think big': not just about focusing on the needs that are most relevant to your project, but to look at the bigger picture of the risks that face children, the factors that contribute to those risks and how an alliance of multiple players can transform that situation.

One place to start is to consider how organisations that focus on *rescuing* children who are in a difficult or dangerous situation and those that focus on *prevention* can make their work more effective by sharing information, expertise and co-ordinating some of their activities. In this way they can have a bigger impact on the wellbeing of children.

There was once a lifesaver (person who saves people from drowning) who sat at the bottom of a large waterfall and tried to save the lives of children who fell down and drowned in the strong currents. He saved many children's lives.

One day his friend came and saw what he was doing and suggested that if one of them went to the top they could warn the children and keep them from falling. So the friend went to the top. The lifesaver was pleased to see that far fewer children fell over the waterfall once the friend began to warn and prevent them at the top.

Together they decided to put up notices and rails to warn of the danger of swimming at the top of the waterfall. They enlisted the help of the local community including the leaders and school children. Everybody became aware of the importance of preventing children from swimming in this very dangerous place. The lifesaver was amazed at how few people fell over the waterfall once the prevention program had been set up.

How to start networking

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- There may already be a network of local projects and organisations in your area. If there is, try to find out what opportunities there are to join in with activities, training and so on that they organize.
- If there is no network, begin by making contact with other organizations that you identified in your research into who is already working with children. Arrange to meet and find out more about the work each of you is doing and how you could help to make each other's work more effective by sharing ideas, information, expertise and resources, for example.
- When you have formed a committed group, you could begin to plan some joint activities, such as training for workers, a special event for children, or a campaign to get more churches involved with caring for children. If you are planning to start something up, you could contact Viva for general guidance on how to go about helping people to agree on working on a specific issue together.

Case study[13]

In the Philippines, child trafficking is a complex problem related to many other social problems, particularly that of poverty. Care for victims is another area of need. Current government shelter programs for children, which cater mostly for child sexual abuse cases, are ill equipped and undermanned. They also struggle to accept the influx of victims of trafficking.

A national Christian network, PCMN, believes that the church, both as individual NGOs and as the universal body of believers, has a role to perform in the fight against child trafficking. Given the opportunities and the capacity to speak up for children, care for the victims and cooperate with each other, the church is a force in the battle. This collaboration will also magnify the church's role of sharing God's love through care of trafficked children and in advocating for the rights of the victims.

PCMN arranged consultation meetings with the leaders of churches, pastors, church workers and those faith-based organizations in Samar; and trained community educators and facilitators (church workers and leaders) to conduct community education sessions against trafficking with the families in the church and communities.

The churches were supported in formulating their own local campaign against trafficking by imparting to them facilitation skills through the facilitators training. The churches and faith-based organizations conducted their campaign reaching out to the families most at-risk of sending their children to urban areas to work. The campaign used two popular education tools. Puppet shows mostly targeted children, but adults were also reached. In addition flip charts, aimed at an adult audience, were used in church and community assemblies.

In addition, this prevention work was linked to a program with International Justice Mission, which conducts rescues and recovery of victims. Children repatriated to Samar were placed under the care of Christians as foster families and/or followed-up in the communities with various services. Children unable to be transferred immediately to their families are placed in alternative care of foster families from churches who are trained and licensed.

Results

- Churches are now engaged with the issues. They have a new awareness and relevant skills and contacts and are making their communities safer for children through awareness raising and making contacts: to relevant people and units including school teachers and schools, police, etc.
- The grass roots in the provinces (including some of the root causes) are linked to the issue of trafficking at different levels within the country as a whole, taking into account the wider picture (e.g. engaging the church to raise awareness, giving tools on how to respond and linking to relevant people).
- More children, families and churches are aware of the trafficking issues and know where to go for help. As a result fewer children are vulnerable to being trafficked.

[13] 'Philippines holistic multi-sectoral response to child trafficking' (Adapted from *Impact Assessment Report,* 2008)

Exercises

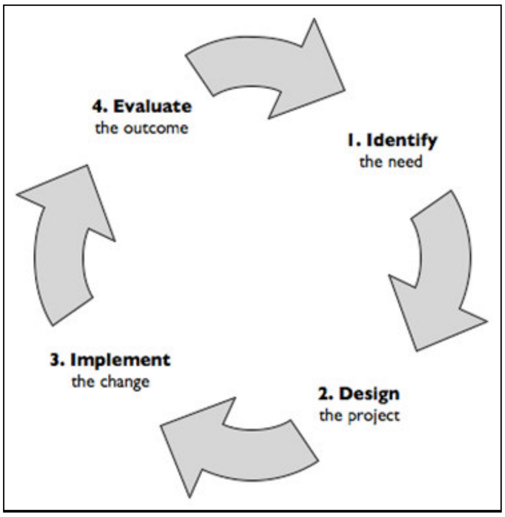
Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Networking is about joining together with others who share your ______ in order to exchange ____________ and possibly to undertake _____ ___________. The purpose of networking is to have a _______ _______ on children's lives than any one project or organization can have on its own. Organisations that focus on rescuing children can make their work more effective by collaborating with organisations that focus on ___________. Christians working together is a way of ________ ________ to God's way of doing things. Networking could involve working with other Christian or ______________ projects in your neighbourhood, ___________ agencies, and organizations in other parts of the _______ or region.

Discussion questions

1. Is there a culture of working together with other projects and organisations in your local area? Why or why not?
2. Can you think of at least 3 advantages of networking? Can you think of disadvantages and barriers to networking? How could networking benefit your work?
3. Read the lifesaver story. How does it apply to working with children at risk? What sorts of projects could increase the impact on children's lives by working together in your context?
4. What biblical principles could you apply to the idea of networking (e.g. Amos 3:3, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, 1 Cor.12 – 26)?

Part 3: Good principles for project design



We are now in the second stage of the project cycle: project design. This is where you make concrete and detailed plans about how you will address the needs that you have identified. It is essential that your planning goes hand in hand with prayer.

Key questions that lesson 7 will help you to answer are:

- What do we want to see happen?
- How will we get there?
- Who will do what and when?

Lesson 8 will then introduce another very important question:

- How much money do we need and how much do we have?

Lesson 7: How can we design and plan projects that meet the needs we have identified?

Summary

- The importance of prayerful planning
- Where you are going? (Setting goals and objectives)
- How will you get there? (Deciding on outputs and activities)
- Activity planning
- Base-line survey

At this stage, it is time to decide exactly how you are going to meet the specific needs that you have identified for your project to address. We call this project design. This is all about planning in detail how you will get from the current situation (where you are now) to a new, desired situation where the needs you have identified and decided to meet are being addressed. This plan will be the blueprint for your project – a bit like the map for a long journey.

We need to plan AND pray

Diligent planning does not mean that we are not trusting God. In Nehemiah 2:1-9 and 3, we see that Nehemiah planned prayerfully how he would approach the king. The book of Proverbs also advises how important it is to plan (e.g. Proverbs 16:3, 21:5). On the other hand, we must make sure that our plans are prepared with lots of prayer, so that we are listening to what God wants us to be doing. Good projects are built on the foundation of careful planning that makes sure that every activity that is being done is really contributing to meeting the needs that have been prioritized.

Where are you going?

Every project needs a clear **goal** or goals. To define your goal, answer the question: What do we want to see happen (e.g. in the lives of the children, in the community, etc)? A goal is a description of a destination you want to have reached by a certain date (maybe in 2, 3 or 5 years' time). Your project goal should be a long-range destination, but one that is possible for you to achieve given your capacities and resources. Example: *we want to see local churches in rural areas transforming their communities through holistic child development programmes*

Because your goal is a long way off from where you are now, it is important to have smaller goals along the way, like stages along the way of your journey or milestones. We often call these smaller goals the **purpose** or **objective** of the project. You should set dates for meeting these milestones to keep you making progress.
Example: Churches in the rural areas are implementing a holistic child development program

Good goals and objectives are SMART
S*pecific—What precisely do you want to achieve in your design plan?*
M*easurable—How will you quantify your objectives? (Example of a measurable objective: The project will increase capacity to serve 1 meal/day for 5% more children between the ages of 3-5 by the end of December, 2012.)*
A*chievable—Are you attempting to accomplish too much?*
R*ealistic—Do you have the resources (capacity and assets) to make the objective happen? (Examples: people, money, facilities, time, etc.)*
T*imed—State when you will achieve the objective. (Examples: in a month, a year, in 5 years, etc.)*

How would you make the example goal and objective on this page SMART?

How will you get there?

As with any journey, it isn't enough to know where you want to be and when. You need to work out exactly how you are going to get there. The same is true of project design.

The next step is to work out what **activities** your project will organize in order to reach your purpose and your final goal. To do this, break your purpose down into even smaller steps. For each step ask, what **outputs** would we need to see to meet this purpose? Then decide, what are the best activities to produce the outputs we need?

Example:

Pastors and church leaders have the knowledge, skills and confidence to run child development workshops in their communities by the end of 2011 (result)

We will organise regular community development workshops in the rural areas during 2011 (activity)

As you think about your own project, make sure that your activities, outputs, purpose and goal all fit together so that you can build logical sentences based on the this pattern:

Activities *– The tasks we will carry out*
…SO THAT…
Outputs *– The things we want to see as a result of our activities, in order to fulfil the purpose*
…SO THAT…
Purpose *– The specific change that we want the project to produce*
…SO THAT…
Goal *– The over-all problem we are trying to address.*

Activity plan

The task of planning still isn't done yet! Don't forget to think about the time you need to allocate, who will be responsible, how much will it cost, what you will need and so on. It is good practice to write an activity plan.[14] In your activity plan you should write down **who** will do what, **when** this will happen and **what** types of input, besides people, will be needed.

A separate sheet should be used for each output. The activities related to the output are set out, together with the resources needed, the total cost of these and the name of the person or people who will be responsible for that activity.[15]

Base-line assessment

Before you begin to implement your project, it is essential to do some work to get an accurate picture of the situation so that you will be able to measure the changes that happen as a result of your project. A survey or other method designed to focus on specific areas that the project will influence is called a base-line assessment. It is very important because this will be the basis for your monitoring and evaluation.

[14] See Blackman (2003), p.51 for an example
[15] We will look at how to calculate the cost of your activities in lesson 8

Case study

In Cambodia the EFC Children's Commission wanted to organize a training for pastors in child development so they used the

Activities *– The tasks we will carry out*
– A series of five seminars for pastors of churches in a rural area about God's heart for children
…SO THAT…
Outputs *– The things we want to see as a result of our activities, in order to fulfil the purpose –*
We want to see pastors with knowledge about what the Bible says about children and ideas about what they can do in their community
…SO THAT…
Purpose *– The specific change that we want the project to produce -*
We want pastors to develop ways in which the church can reach out to 'orphans' and vulnerable children
…SO THAT…
Goal *– The over-all problem we are trying to address.*
A reduction in the vulnerability of Children at risk in this particular rural area

Activity Plan:

Who? The EFC Children's Commission will send trainers to the designated rural areas

When? It will happen over 3 Saturdays with time in between to put ideas into practice at a time to be decided at the preparation meeting

What? The EFC CC will use a curriculum already developed and adapted.

SMART goals and objectives:

SMART goals and objectives
S*pecific—What precisely do you want to achieve in your design plan?*
We want to train twenty pastors of churches in understanding God's heart and effective ministry to children at risk
M*easurable—How will you quantify your objectives?*
The project will increase capacity of five pastors to develop new programs working with orphans/vulnerable children by the end of December, 2012.
A*chievable—Are you attempting to accomplish too much?*
At first we wanted all 20 pastors to have started projects but we realised that not all would catch the vision and we felt we could support and encourage the 5 who showed the most interest.
R*ealistic—Do you have the resources (capacity and assets) to make the objective happen? (Examples: people, money, facilities, time, etc.)*
We realised that it would need at least 3 and preferably 5 visits to the rural area. We looked at staff time available, contacted our donor and checked we could use the biggest church for a venue for no cost.
T*imed—State when you will achieve the objective. (Examples: in a month, a year, in 5 years, etc.)*
We felt that we would have achieved the objective when there was evidence that 5 churches were doing projects to benefit children in their communities.

Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Project _______ is when you decide exactly how you will meet the identified needs. Good projects are built on the foundation of careful _________ that makes sure that every activity that is being done is really contributing to meeting the needs that have been prioritized. This does not mean that we are not _________ ____. You need to decide on the project's _____, ________, ________ and ___________. The goal is the ___________ destination you want to reach. An __________ is a smaller goal or milestone along the way. Goals and objectives should be ______. This stands for _________, measurable, ___________, realistic and ______. An activity plan shows ___ will do what, _____ this will happen and _____ ______ of input are needed. You also need to do a _________ ___________ so that you can measure changes that happen as a result of the project.

Discussion questions

1. What is the attitude to planning in your culture? What about in your organization and project? What are the effects?
2. From the lesson, explain the difference between the goal and the purpose of a project. What is your project's goal? And its purpose?
3. Why is the SMART method helpful for setting goals? Have a go at making your own goal and purpose SMART
4. What are outputs of a project? How are they related to the activities of a project? How do they relate to the purpose?
5. When you plan what to do in your project, so you usually start with the activities or with the goal? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?
6. Do you have an activity plan for your project? If you do, how often is it used? If not, how could it help you be more effective?
7. What is the benefit of a baseline assessment? How could you use one to help you keep track of the progress of your project?

Lesson 8: Why do we need to prepare a budget and keep financial records?

Summary

- What is a budget and why is it important?
- How can I write a budget?
- Financial accountability

At the same time as you prepare your activity plan, you need to consider how much money the project will need and where the money will come from. Your plans need to be realistic if they are going to be successful![16]

What is a budget?

Every organisation and every project needs to have a budget, no matter how small. A budget describes the money that you plan to raise and spend for a set purpose over a fixed period of time. Luke 14:28 and 31 talk about the wisdom of planning to ensure you have enough financial and human resources to complete your plans. We are to count the cost before we begin. This is the main purpose of writing your budget. A budget is also important because it is necessary for transparent financial management; any donor needs to see the budget before approving the funds; the board needs to see the budget before releasing the funds for the project. Our finances tell a story about us. It is vital that the story we tell in our finances is a good one.

A detailed budget is useful for:

- Good financial management and accountability. It shows that we are not spending money unnecessarily.
- Monitoring our activities. It helps to assess progress. We will also know when we have completed each activity if the money has been spent. It allows us to make adjustments to our plans if we need to.
- Learning – By keeping a record of our budget (and later, what we actually spend), we will know what is realistic for future projects.

How to write a budget

Writing a budget involves answering a number of questions. These are best answered by programme staff and finance staff working together. A budget starts with your plans and goals, not numbers:
What objectives are we trying to achieve?
What activities will be involved in achieving these objectives?
What resources will we need to carry out these activities?
What will these resources cost?
Where will the funds come from? What will the source be?
Is the result realistic?

Working from your activity plan, you should complete a separate budget template for each output. This will help you make sure that you don't forget anything. There is an example on the next page.

[16] www.mango.org.uk has some very useful resources for learning more about budgets and financial management that can be downloaded free of charge

Example

Outputs	Activities	Unit cost	No of units	Total
50 children trained and acting as Child Ambassadors	**Hold one day training to train the child: 50 Ambassadors and 10 adult helpers. How to engage other children in Prayer and Praise**			
	Hire venue	100,000	1	100,000
	Food (60 people)	5,000	60	300,000
	Stationary Resources for Child Ambassadors	1,000	50	50,000
	5 Training Facilitators	10,000	5	50,000
	Transport for 20 children to venue (2 buses)	20,000	2	40,000
				540,000

Your project budget needs to include all the money you will need. Here are some of the most often overlooked costs:

- Staff related costs (e.g. recruitment costs, training, benefits and statutory payments)
- Start-up costs (e.g. publicity)
- Overhead or core costs (e.g. rent, insurance, utilities)
- Transport costs (e.g. moving goods around the country) and vehicle running costs
- Equipment maintenance (e.g. for photocopiers and computers)
- Governance costs (e.g. board meetings, AGM)
- Audit fees

If you don't include them in the budget, then you may not have enough funds to pay for them!
You also need to have a plan of what money will come into your project (**income**) and from what sources. This may involve some fundraising.[17] You should also have a **cash flow forecast**. This predicts when money will arrive in your bank account and when it will leave. It is very important to make sure that you always have enough cash available.

Financial accountability

Once the budget has been agreed and the activity implemented, the budgeting process is completed by comparing the plan (budget) with the eventual outcome ('actual'), to see if there is anything we have learnt or could do differently next time.
This information allows you to prepare financial reports for different people including: managers, trustees, beneficiaries, donors and the government. Using these reports,

- Staff and donors can monitor whether activities are going ahead as planned (and whether the organisation has enough funds for the future)
- Beneficiaries can monitor whether money is being spent on their real needs
- The government can monitor whether the organisation is acting legally

Budgeting and faith

I am on the board of a small NGO in Cambodia and up until recently they have really been spending money for projects as they have received it. Now the income is getting more substantial they need to be better at planning. So recently we asked them to write a budget and the amount they asked us as a Board to approve was a lot less than the income they were getting from donors. We therefore asked them to write 2 budgets: the actual budget was with the amount of money that we knew we were getting from donors; the other vision budget was with the amount that they had the vision to have faith for. We approved the first one and prayed with them towards getting the second.

[17] See http://tilz.tearfund.org/Publications/ROOTS/Fundraising.htm for a good introduction to fundraising

Case study[18]

It is Friday afternoon and a teenage son – Rudi – rushes in from school asks his mother for $10.00 as he'd like to go out with some friends for the evening. His mother asks him to explain what he will be doing and why he needs $10.00. He says he will take the bus into town, have a burger and then go to the cinema. His mother then took him through the budgeting process, as follows:

- Objective: To have an entertaining evening with friends.
- Activities: Bus journey to town, visit burger bar, visit cinema, bus journey home.
- Resources: Money to cover the costs of bus fares, burger, cinema ticket and popcorn.
- Costs:

Item	Amount ($)	Notes
Travel	1.50	2 x 75c bus fares
Food	3.50	$3.00 burger, 50c popcorn at cinema
Tickets	3.00	
TOTAL	**8.00**	

- Source: Mum
- Realistic?: After she has seen a detailed breakdown of the costs, Rudi's mother decides that his plan is reasonable. She approves the budget, and gives him $8.00, not the $10.00 he originally asked for.

On Saturday morning, Rudi's mother asked how he enjoyed the evening. He reports that the film was very good and that he and his friends had a very entertaining evening even though it did not go entirely according to plan… After going to the burger bar, Rudi and his friends arrived at the cinema to find that all the $3.00 seats were sold out and they had to spend an extra $1.00 each on the more expensive seats. This meant that Rudi did not have enough money left to buy popcorn in the cinema or to get the bus back home again. Fortunately, he met the parents of some school friends in the cinema lobby and they offered to give him a lift home after the film, which he gratefully accepted.
So his "Budget Compared to Actual Report" was:

Item	Original Budget $	Actually Spent $	Difference $
Travel	1.50	0.75	0.75
Food	3.50	3.00	0.50
Entrance Fee	3.00	4.00	(1.00)
TOTAL	**8.00**	**7.75**	**0.25**

We can see the effect of Rudi arriving too late to buy the cheaper cinema tickets. He overspent by $1.00 on the entrance fee, but because he didn't have enough to buy his bus fare back home (and got a free lift home instead), he also made an overall saving of 25 cents.

[18] This is an everyday example of budgeting and using the budget to report on activities. From http://www.mango.org.uk/Guide/budegtingexample and http://www.mango.org.uk/Guide/Reporting

Exercises

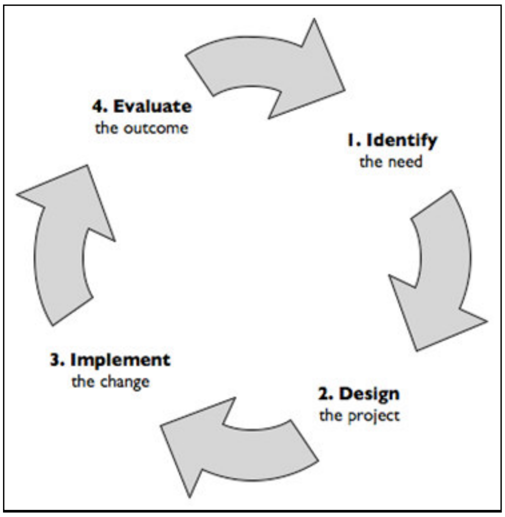
Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Every organisation and every project needs to have a ______, no matter how small. A budget describes the money you plan to _____ and _____ for a set _______ over a fixed period of ____. You should decide how much money the project will need when you make your ________ plan. Your plans need to be _________. A budget is necessary for financial __________, __________ activities and _________. A budget must include all the items you will need, including things that get overlooked. You will also need a _________ forecast which predicts when money will arrive in your bank account and when it will leave. The budgeting process is completed by comparing the plan with the eventual _______. This allows you to prepare _________ _______.

Discussion questions

1. Why should every project have a budget?
2. Does your project have a budget? Who monitors to check that money is being spent the way you planned?
3. If your project does not have a budget, what training would be needed to make it possible to write one? Where could this training come from? Who would need to be involved?
4. What is financial accountability? Is your project financially accountable? How could you improve?
5. What does the Bible teach about financial accountability? What is the attitude toward financial transparency and accountability in your culture? What difference should it make that you are a Christian project?

Part 4: Monitoring progress



We have now reached the third stage of the project cycle: implementation. This section will focus on how you can make sure that your project is on track to meet your goal and objectives through monitoring.

Lesson 9 will introduce a basic framework for monitoring progress of the project through using indicators.

Lesson 10 will provide some guidelines and ideas for monitoring the progress of individual children in your project.

Lesson 9: How can tell whether we are on track to meet our goals?

Summary

- What is monitoring?
- What are indicators and how do they help you keep track of progress?
- Collecting data for monitoring your project and adjusting your plans

What is monitoring?

Monitoring involves two basic activities that allow us to answer the question, 'Are we on target?'. The first is collecting information; the second is careful analysis of that information to find out whether your project is moving towards achieving the outputs you have identified. Monitoring should be *continuous* from the beginning to the end of a project. In fact, it is important to create a good monitoring and evaluation plan in the *design* phase of your project. It will help you make decisions for project improvements from the lessons learned. You may also find that the information you collect shows you changes and adjustments you need to make as your project goes along. This is a third part of monitoring.

An effective monitoring system helps answer the following questions:

- Are we making progress toward achieving our outputs?
- Is the project progressing on schedule?
- Is the project over- or under-achieving the targets?

A good monitoring program should include:

- Detailed indicators (signs of progress)
- Plan for how you will collect the data
- Plan for how you will use the information you have learned through monitoring and how you will adjust the implementation of your project as a result

In general, the cost of a monitoring and evaluation system should be part of the project's budget. A good guideline is to spend 5-10% of the budget on monitoring and evaluating the project.

How can indicators help you keep track of progress towards your goals?

Once your project is being implemented, how will you know you are reaching your purpose and your goal? You need to be able to answer the question, "How do we know whether or not what we have planned is happening or has happened?" To be able to do this, you need some indicators. Indicators are signs that change has taken place: they show that you have made progress towards your goals. The indicators help you to know whether your action plan is working! Indicators are essential tools to use for monitoring how things are going throughout the implementation of your project.

Here are some examples of good basic indicators:

- *Economic*: average income in a community, land area per household, percentage of children enrolled in primary school, percentage of children receiving support through a homework club, etc.

- *Social*: infant mortality rate; literacy rate in your project; percentage of women receiving training in holistic child care practices; number of children going on to secondary education in your program/project
- *Environmental*: fish harvested as a micro-enterprise; percentage of households who are practicing composting; amount of homes using clean water sanitation procedures
- *Spiritual*: crime rate of street children, divorce rate of families involved in the church or community; attendance of children at the program/project.

Good indicators will show you:

- **Quantity**: extent of change, how much or how many of your target audience is meeting indicators (Example: *10% more* girls are becoming literate in your literacy program)
- **Quality**: the kind of change you are seeing (Example: attitudes of girls have improved due to self-confidence in achieving literacy goals)
- **Time**: measured limit as to when the changes should take place (Example: *After 3 months*, 5% more boys were coming to the Homework Club)

Here are examples of well-written indicators:

*Seventy percent (*quantity*) of girls enrolled in the project's literacy program have increased their ability to read/understand practical information (such as assigned homework from school) (*quality*) at the end of 2012 (*time*).*

*25% (*quantity*) of the churches in the rural areas are implementing holistic child development programs that were meeting the needs expressed by the community people (*quality*) in 2011 (*time*).*

How will monitoring help me react to changing circumstances?
Effective monitoring systems will help you to notice and respond to changing circumstances that should influence the goals of your project. It could be that your project will need to change its direction, and the outputs you were looking for, or at least modify decisions based upon the data you have consistently collected, for both stakeholders and beneficiaries of your project. Your monitoring system will be the foundation for future decisions and goals. The data you need to keep track of your progress will depend on the sort of project you are running. Be careful that you are only collecting data that is going to be useful in determining the success of your project or that you can use in improving it. Sometimes organisations waste time collecting a lot of useless data that will not be used in the future.

Ask a guideline, here are some questions to consider:

- What data is collected (Source of data?)
- When is the data collected (How often? Frequency?)
- How will the data be collected? (Methods)
- Who will collect the data and report on it?
- How will the data be analysed?
- Who will use the data? (Management, stakeholders, etc.)

Review

Occasionally, maybe every six months, or in the middle of the project's life, the organization should stand back and review the progress of the project to see how effective it is being at meeting the project's purpose and therefore moving toward meeting the overall goal for the project.

Case study

Rural Pastors Child Development Training

What data is collected?

Information is collected at the end of the introductory module about the course material and then at the 6 and 12 months follow up training after the introductory module completion to see if any projects have been started and what the challenges are for the pastors.

When is the data collected? (How often? Frequency?)

Data is collected at the follow up trainings on progress of developing programs – so a total of 3 times after 3, 6 and 12 months.

How will the data be collected? (Methods)

Questionnaire interview surveys of pastors and then meeting the pastors as a group with all the pastors after 3, 6 and 12 months to understand the challenges of starting a project and where they need support. This information will be verified by asking members of the congregation in the community

Who will collect the data and report on it?

The EFC CC staff

How will the data be analysed?

The EFC CC staff and manager will sit down together and look at the information generated. Is the training really equipping the pastors? Is there anything missing that should be included? Can the EFC CC staff provide the pastors with sufficient help so that they can develop their projects well. Are there gaps?

Who will use the data? (Management, stakeholders, etc.)

The data will be used by all the stakeholders (pastors and management) to determine how children are being helped and how and how training can be improved.

Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Effective monitoring systems depend upon well written ___________. Some good examples of basic indicators might be ones based upon _________, _______, _______________, and for a Christ-cantered program: specifically, __________ objectives for determining the progress in the project. Monitoring your project is an ongoing ___________ and _________ of information to make sure the project is moving towards its goals. Monitoring systems are ___________ and should be created during the _______ phase of the project plan. A project's budget should reflect about _-__% expenditure on monitoring and evaluating the project. Over time, an effective monitoring system will aid you in the overall ___________ of your program and can be used to determine decisions for the future.

Discussion questions

1. What do you understand by monitoring?
2. Give at least 3 examples of monitoring activities. What sorts of monitoring activities are you involved with in your project?
3. How can monitoring and review help you be more effective in your work with children? What answer would you give to someone who felt that monitoring was a waste of time and resources that could be better spent working directly with children?
4. What indicators do you use to check that your project is making progress? If you don't have any, what sort of indicators could you use? (Remember to include QQT!)

Activity

Here are some indicators of success for a Christian educational support centre. For each one, think about what sort of information you would need to collect to see if the indicator was being met. How would you collect the information? Could the indicators be improved? How?

Indicator	Information needed	How will we collect it?
Parents verbally saying that there is change in their children.		
Children reporting change in their attitudes and achievements		
Other parents willing to enrol their children.		
Teachers reporting changes in children.		
Attendance of kids in centre activities.		
Increased number of visitors.		

Lesson 10: How can we monitor the progress of children in our project?

Summary:

- Why should we monitor the progress of children in our project?
- How can we monitor individual children?
- What are ways to document a child's progress?

Why monitor the progress of each child in your project?

In Luke 2:52, we discover a verse which indicates God's great interest in His son's development. The verse states: "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man." This gives us a good reason to make sure that we monitor each child our projects to ensure they are growing to their God-given potential.

We want all children to grow as Jesus did. All the programs we support (in Compassion International) are to have at least these four components. Wisdom addresses our educational (or learning) initiatives, and also the training in biblical values, discernment, judgment, and wise decision-making based on biblical principles. Stature relates to anything having to do with health and physical growth. Favor with God speaks to a child's spiritual nurture and formation. Favor with man refers to social development and the growing ability to build relationships and interact appropriately with other people. Our expectation and prayer is that all the children with whom we work will also grow in these four areas.[19]

How can we monitor individual children?

There are three main kinds of monitoring to use:

- **Diagnostic**. This is about the base-line or starting point. What is the child's knowledge, state or reality when she first arrived at your program? *Example: Look at the ability level of reading for a literacy program enrolment*
- **Formative**. This is about setting ongoing goals and measuring progress to set new goals. What progress do you hope the child will make during her attendance at your program? *Example: Making one or two goals to enable the child to move from Level 1 reading to Level 2 reading in a literacy program and checking to see if she has met them.*
- **Summative**. This is about a level of progress reached at the end of a given time, or at the end of the Project. Did the child reach the goals? *Example: Did she move from Level 1 to Level 2 successfully? Why or why not?*

Traditionally, a child's progress is often documented by the adult involved in the process. Usually the data collected about a child is gathered under controlled conditions or in a standardized method, such as a test.

Khairatu is a 13 year old girl who is enrolled in a child development program that promotes sports activities for children that teach teamwork, collaboration, and physical skills. One aspect of the monitoring and assessment of the participant's progress is to periodically measure how far a child can jump from one line into a sand pit. For monitoring purposes, Khairatu had an opportunity when she arrived to participate in a contest to see how far she could long jump. All the girls between 12 and 15 were going to participate that day. However, Khairatu did not perform well that particular afternoon. Her performance was influenced by the fact that she did not have enough to eat prior to her attendance at the camp. That particular day, she felt weak and hungry. However, her leaders discussed how she felt after she didn't perform as well as some of the other girls. Because her leaders were good listeners, they were able to find out from Khairatu that she had not had anything to eat that day, so they were able to give her a snack to restore her energy and provide needed nutrition. Later on in the program, Khairatu volunteered to perform the tasks and the leaders used the results of her long jump to chart her progress.

[19] Brewster (2010)

In alternative monitoring methods, there is less assessment of memory recall or performance-based information. Instead, there is more of a process of gathering information about the child. Evidence of the child's progress can be collected over time in realistic and consistent settings to document progress and growth in your project. These methods are often considered to be more authentic:

- Product monitoring—the child produces a concrete result, such as artwork or a drama about what she is learning at the project
- Performance monitoring—the child demonstrates a set of skills (e.g. child shows group how to sanitize water safely)
- Portfolio Assessment—child keeps a meaningful collection of creations that reflect her efforts, progress or achievements in one or more areas (depending upon the context of your project). Products and performances are also part of the child's individual portfolio. The artefacts can be stored in a special box, bag, etc. to add to and document the child's progress. (e.g. a child's fine motor skills can be documented on a drawing of a person from the beginning of the year and then again at the end of the year)
- Monitoring for health projects and other holistic programs differ depending upon the type of project/ you are part of.
- Observations: Children can be observed for certain behaviours, performances, etc. over a length of time. This documentation takes the forms of checklists, journal entries about a child's behaviour, etc.

It is important to consider how children can participate and gain ownership of this kind of assessment process, wherever appropriate.

What are some ways to document a child's progress?

It is important to keep accurate reports, journals (often used to document behaviour), checklists, portfolios, documentation through observations about individual child progress depending upon your context. These documents can also be used to interact with the child's caregivers and serve as a "snapshot" of the child's progress. Often, there is a checklist for milestones to document a child's physical development. This can contribute to the holistic picture of the child's progress. Below is an example of some milestones which could be included on a checklist for a five year old child.

- Large Motor Skills: can balance on each foot for 3 or 4 seconds
- Can hop, skip, climb, or jump on one or both feet
- Can catch and throw a large ball
- Walks and runs with coordinated movements

As you monitor the progress of individual children in your project, this will help you to see how effective your activities are at helping the child develop and meet the goals you set. The information should inform future decisions about the project's activities. It will also help you identify children who need extra attention or who are not making progress for reasons outside the project.

Case study

A small NGO in SE Asia had a number of children with disabilities who were being referred to their orphanage for care. They wanted to assess the children to see how they could best work with them.

So they developed a way of measuring children's ability and whether it improved recognising that for some children they may reach a certain point and be unable to get any further. They realised that these abilities were also inter-related e.g. a child who can walk to the toilet can toilet themselves. Here are some of the abilities measured.

1. Ability to move and get around:

a) Can only shuffle on bottom to move b) Can walk with assistance of carers c) Can walk with assistance of walking frame d) Can walk independently.

2. Ability to feed themselves:

a) Need assistance with eating b) Can partly feed themselves with a special handled spoon

c) Can feed themselves with a spoon and fork without any assistance

3. Ability to go to toilet

a) Need to wear nappies/pads at all time b) Need to wear nappies/pads at night but can indicate need toilet in daytime c) Knows when want to go to the toilet but need to be taken to the toilet d) Can get to the toilet without assistance

4. Ability to read/be read to

a) Enjoys looking at picture books and being read to b) Recognizes what pictures represent if asked c) Able to read simple words independently with help d) Able to read

5. Ability to be kind to others

a) Smiles at other children or adults when they are feeling down b) Says encouraging things to other children or adults when they are feeling down c) Helps other children by listening to them

6. Ability to Praise God in song.

a) Smiles when it is time for worship b) Gets excited and claps hands when surrounded by children who are singing choruses d) Can sing songs (even though may be out of tune and/or out of time with the rest) e) Joins in singing with the other children.

After they had assessed the children they realized that they needed help from another NGO that specialized in working with disabled children so that they could do more thorough assessments of the severely disabled children and get aids to help children in movement, washing and feeding.

Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

A child's _________ development is important. The child grows cognitively, physically, social-emotionally, and spiritually. In monitoring a child's progress in your project, you should remember that there are many ways to monitor and evaluate including two basic methods. These are traditional methods and ____________ methods. Keeping a __________ for a child is an example of the alternative method of monitoring a child's progress. In traditional monitoring, it is important to gather accurate information under ___________ conditions by a _____________ method. There are many types of documentation to support a child's monitoring progress. Two of these are _________ and ______________.Effective monitoring and evaluation of individual children contributes to _______ __________ about the project.

Discussion questions:

1. In your context, how can you monitor and evaluate the children in your program? What methods might be successful or unsuccessful in your situation?

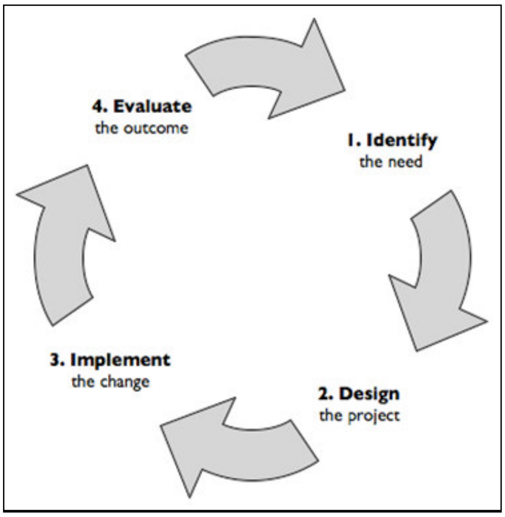
2. Imagine that you have a child who you might have special needs in your project, but you are not trained or equipped to serve that child effectively. How might monitoring help you:

   - Determine if the child has a special need through tracking the child's progress.
   - Decide upon goals for the child that are realistic for the child to succeed.
   - Create an opportunity to enlist the help of outside experts for the child's needs?

3. If someone were to monitor your progress as a worker in your project, how might the Portfolio methodology as described in this chapter inform that evaluator about you? What would your portfolio include?

4. Think of an individual child in your project. Brainstorm and write down some of your ideas on how to monitor that child's progress in a holistic manner (include cognitive, socio-emotional, physical, and spiritual milestones or goals for that child).

Part 5: Learning, evaluation and accountability



At the end of the project, it is time for Stage 4: Evaluation. This is all about thinking about the impact your project had, identifying its successes and challenges that you encountered, and learning from your experience. It is also about letting others know about how your project went.

Although this is the last stage of the project cycle, planning for it needs to happen at the design stage.

Lesson 11 introduces a way of learning called action learning. Although we are thinking about it in this fourth stage of the project cycle, learning should be a part of every stage of the project cycle!

Lesson 12 and 13 will help you to understand the meaning and value of evaluation and give you some practical tools to use to evaluate your own project.

Lesson 14 talks about accountability, reporting and the role of a board of trustees.

Lesson 11: How can we learn from our experience?

Summary

- How can we learn?
- The action learning cycle
- Learning in teams

As we saw in lesson 1, one drawback of the project cycle is that it makes it look as though one stage always follows another. In fact, many of the planning tools can be used at any stage of the project. They should be repeated throughout the project's life to ensure that any changes that might affect project success are accounted for. Findings should also be used for organisational learning and to improve other projects. Learning lessons is a vital activity that should be part of every stage of the life of a project. By regularly measuring, analysing and reflecting on our performance, we can learn lessons that will enable us to either change our project plans or change our approach to other projects.

How can we learn? [20]

The most natural way that human beings learn is from experience, from doing, from living. This is the way children learn. We might call this **action learning**. Simply put it is about learning from our experience, learning from our actions and then applying what we have learned back into our next experience or our next action. It is about ongoing cycles of improved learning and doing. Action learning is an ancient form of learning. We have all been doing this all our lives, usually unconsciously, sometimes consciously. Some of us do it better than others. Through being more conscious of how we naturally learn we can improve the way we learn and help other people to learn more effectively.

The Action Learning Cycle

Action Learning is a continuous cycle - the end of each learning cycle becomes the beginning of the next cycle.

Action: Doing/experiencing and recalling the experience: nobody knows your experience of your actions better than you do. To become more conscious of our "experience" while acting, can impact on the next step quite dramatically.

> Some useful questions: *What significant things happened? Describe the events. Who was involved, what did they do? What picture emerges? How did I/we feel?*

Reflection: Re-examining and thinking about the event or action means to make it more conscious, to analyse it, to evaluate it, to understand it better or on a deeper level. The problem is that we do not do this normally. Often it is only as a result of a crisis that we reflect; that we stop to take a deeper look. A more pro-active approach is vital to become a good action learner. This is very much a "brain storm" activity where we would look at the event from different angles.

> Some useful questions: *Why did it happen, what caused it? What helped, what hindered? What did we expect? What assumptions did we make? What really struck us? Do we know of any other experiences or thinking that might help us look at this experience differently?*

Learning: Reflection is no guarantee that learning has taken place! Very often people "reflect" on practice and repeat the same mistake over and over again. Therefore the distinction between **reflection** and **learning** in the action learning cycle is important; learning here is the process of distilling or drawing out the **core generalised lessons;** moving from "what actually happened" to "what tends to happen as a result of such circumstances". Be careful of jumping to learning before adequate reflecting has taken place.

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[20] The material in this lesson comes from The Barefoot Collective (2009)

Some useful questions: *What would we have done differently? What did we learn, what new insights? What was confirmed? What new questions have emerged? What other theories help us to deepen these learnings?*

Planning: This is the key link between past learning and future action (and learning). The core "insights" from the previous step must now be translated into decisions that will ensure improved practice and these decisions then need to become part of the plan. Planning that is unrelated to learning from the past is nearly always a waste of time!

Some useful questions: *So what does this mean for practice? What do we want? What do we want to do, to happen? How? What are we going to do differently? How will we not repeat the same mistake? What do we have to let go of or stop doing? What steps will we use to build these new insights into our practice?*

It is important to realize that no part of the cycle is more important than the other. All four segments (processes) are important. Good action learning means we consciously give attention to all four segments. The ideal action learning cycle is an upward spiral of learning and increasingly effective action.

Learning in teams

Action learning can be done alone, but it is more effective when done in teams. Very few people are equally gifted in all 4 segments. Most people are more competent in one or two segments of the cycle. It is perfectly okay to be more gifted in one or two segments. The table below summarises the different learning styles that people tend to have. The most effective teams will normally have individuals with different competencies, but will have all the segments represented in the team.

The Activist (Action) Activists prefer immediate action and reflection; learning and planning are seen as a waste of time. All the focus is on getting things done with little or no "thinking" about what is really happening. If something does not work an activist may easily jump into trying something different rather than taking the time to think about what happened.	**The "Navel-gazers" (Reflection)** Navel-gazers prefer to spend lots of time on "serious thinking" and arguing the finer points. They intellectualize very easily and love debates. Organisations developing this specific resistance to learning spend their lifetime debating every single little issue! Unfortunately very little gets done!
The "Easy-learners" (Learning) They want the "bottom line" very quickly. The emphasis is on quick answers - ready made solutions - they jump to learnings very easily, without taking the time to reflect on the actual experience, so that the learnings lack depth.	**The Blue-print people (planning)** They believe everything is in the plan and will spend days and weeks developing "the plan" (the blueprint), often with very little consultation and reflection on the past and often with just as little intention of actually executing the plan. Some do execute the plan, but this makes the do-phase very painful for others because the plan is not something that can be adjusted, it is a **blueprint**, a master plan that has to be followed to the letter. One of the strengths of the Action Learning approach is that it favours regular rethinking and re-planning.

Case study

This activity will help you think about ways in which you learn from your experiences. It is revealing to think about times when we are successful and times when we do not meet our goals. This exercise focuses on a time when we did not succeed, because it can highlight opportunities for trying different approaches.

Complete the questionnaire to discover more about your experience of learning from doing:

Think of a specific goal or task that you failed to reach in the last three years. Please be as honest with yourself as possible. Write it down.

1. Write down the major cause of the failure to achieve the task you have identified

2. Have you described a cause that was due to something about you (e.g. I misunderstood the situation) or something due to other people and circumstances (e.g. not enough support from the team)? Mark your assessment on this ten point scale, where 10 is totally due to me and 0 is totally due to others:

10 8 6 4 2 0

Totally due to me ... Due to others

3. Consider the cause. Is it likely to recur in the future (e.g. I always underestimate the amount of work involved)? Or will the cause never recur (e.g. I've learned my lesson / it was a unique combination of people and circumstances)? Mark your assessment on the scale where 10 is never again and 0 is recurring

10 8 6 4 2 0

Never again ... Recurring

4. Was the failure that you selected typical of the sort of failures that you experience? Mark you score on the scale where 10 is very typical and 0 is a first time.

10 8 6 4 2 0

Very typical ... First time

5. Now thinking more generally, how often do you set time aside just to reflect what you can learn from experiences in your work life? Mark your assessment on the 10 point scale where 10 is very frequently (e.g. monthly), 6 is regular (e.g. every 6 months), 2 is seldom (e.g. less than once a year) and 0 is never.

10 8 6 4 2 0

Very frequent reflection ... Never

6. At the end of a task or project, what do you do to identify lessons to learn from what went well and what didn't? Give an example

7. Describe a time when you changed the way you do something because you thought about the results of earlier action. What was the effect of the change?

8. Look over your responses to the questionnaire. How effective do you think you are at learning from your experiences in order to improve your work?

Very effective learner	Sometime learn, sometimes don't	Not very effective learner

9.

What factors help you learn from experiences?	How could you build on these factors?
What factors prevent you from learning?	How could you overcome these factors?

Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Learning lessons is a vital activity that should be part of ______ stage of the life of a project. We may need to change _______ _____ or our approach to other projects. Action learning is about learning through __________ and applying the learning to our next ______. The ______ ________ _____ is a continuous cycle with 4 stages: ______, __________, ________ and ________. Action learning can be done alone but is more effective in _____. Most people are better at one or two segments. Effective teams will have individuals with different ____________ but all ________ represented in the team.

Discussion questions

1. What is action learning? How is it different from being taught (e.g. in school or college)?

2. How do the four phases of the action learning cycle fit together? Which parts do you do most naturally? Give an example.

3. Looking at the four different learning styles, which one or two best describe the way you learn? What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of these learning styles? What could you do to improve the other segments of the learning cycle?

4. What are the benefits of using action learning in a team setting? Are there people you could try to do action learning with?

5. What other methods can you think of that would help your team to learn better from experience and apply it your work?

Lesson 12: What is evaluation and why is it important?

Summary

- What is evaluation?
- What are some evaluation tools?
- How can children be involved in evaluation?
- When should we plan for evaluation?

What is evaluation?

We saw already that the purpose of monitoring is to ask *'Are we on target?'* Evaluation asks a different question: *'Are we making a difference?'* Evaluation happens at the end of a project.

An evaluation should be a positive experience. It is a good time to affirm positive achievements and to take corrective action where needed, so even more can be achieved in the future. It should not be a fault-finding exercise.

Evaluation is different from monitoring and reviewing in many ways that are summarized below[21]:

	Monitoring	Reviewing	Evaluation
When is it done?	Continuously – throughout the life of a project	Occasionally – in the middle or at the end of the project	Occasionally – at the end or beyond the phase or project
What is measured?	Efficiency – use of inputs, activities, assumptions	Effectiveness, relevance and immediate impact – achievement of purpose	Longer-term impact and sustainability – achievement or purpose and goal and unplanned change
Who is usually involved?	Staff within the organisation	Staff and people from outside the organisation	People from outside the organisation
What sources of information are used?	Internal documents e.g. monthly or quarterly reports, work and travel logs, minutes of meetings	Internal and external documents e.g. annual reports, consultants' reports	Internal and external documents e.g. consultants' reports, national statistics, impact assessment reports
Who uses the results?	Managers and project staff	Managers, staff, donors, beneficiaries	Managers, staff, donors, beneficiaries, other organisations
How are the results used?	To make minor changes	Changes in policies, strategy and future work	Major changes in policy, strategy and future work

As a rule of thumb, monitoring will look at indicators that show if you are reaching your planned results; reviews will look to see if you are achieving your project purpose and evaluation asks whether you met your project goal.

[21] Blackman (2003), p.66

It can be useful to get an external perspective for an evaluation, because they can bring fresh insights. This is not always necessary, although donors may require it after a few years for bigger projects. An evaluation can also consist of a self-review by project staff and beneficiaries or a combination of external input together with project staff and beneficiaries.

Obviously the size and complexity of the project will determine how long it will take to do an evaluation. It might require as much as several weeks of fieldwork by many people, or as little as a few days of work by three or four people.

The reasons for doing evaluation include:

- Accountability to stakeholders (people with an interest in the project such as beneficiaries, donors, the local community)
- Lesson learning
- Personal satisfaction in the work done

An evaluation will need to get input from all the major stakeholders in the project. These may include field staff, headquarters staff, donors and beneficiaries.

What are some evaluation tools?

Most evaluations will need to use a range of different techniques. These include:

- Review of project documents to examine the history of the project and the logic of its design
- Statistical surveys of beneficiaries using structured questionnaires. Questions will usually be yes/no or multiple choice.
- Semi-structured interviews with beneficiaries, including the children, and other stakeholders. Here questions are open-ended to encourage discussion.
- Collection and analysis of data from other sources such as local government health statistics, school attendance records, etc.
- Observation. Looking at how the children behave and appear.

How can we include children in evaluation?

Children from your project will have valuable insight into the impact of the project and how it is run. It is important to find ways of involving them in evaluation. At one end of the spectrum, this could include interviewing children, listening to focus group discussions and so on. At the other end of the spectrum, children can be involved together with adults in planning the evaluation, deciding what questions to ask, collecting information and making recommendations for the future direction of the project.

When should we plan for evaluation?

Ideally, you should include evaluation in your original project design. That way you can include money in the budget for any activities associated with the evaluation. In addition, you will make sure that you have plans to keep the right kinds of records so that you will be able to look back and get a good picture of the progress and impact of the project through its life – for example without a baseline survey and monitoring of indicators it will be very difficult to measure the progress that has been made.

Case study[22]

World Vision's Street and Working Children's project in Yangon and Mandalay in Myanmar seeks to improve the quality of life and status of street and working children, and to reintegrate them into society. It also aims to address the issues that push children onto the streets in Yangon. In 2001, an evaluation of the programme was carried out. The evaluation aimed to assess the impact of the programme and to identify ways in which the children and staff could evaluate and improve it in the future. Until the evaluation, there was limited children's participation in the project. The evaluation process included children at every stage and this had a positive effect of empowering them and giving them a greater sense of ownership in the project.

The evaluation took the following steps:

- **Elections of the Evaluation Team.** Children elected 16 children to be on the evaluation team.
- **Initial Meeting.** Staff and children met together to brainstorm a list of questions. Primary stakeholders were identified and meetings held with them.
- **Questions.** Questions were developed for each stakeholder group that focused on their specific motivations and interests.
- **Choosing questions from the list.** From the lists, eight major questions were selected.
- **Planning the interviews.** The evaluation team planned the interviews in detail, deciding who would do what, how, where and when. The questions were grouped according to particular focus groups.
- **Question Guides.** A guidebook was developed for the interviewers, to give them advice about time, participants, and note-taking.
- **Training.** Children volunteered to be interviewers and were trained to facilitate focus groups.
- **Implementation.** The interview teams were formed, and schedules and question guides drawn up. Focus groups and interviews were carried out. Secondary information about the project was gathered from office records.
- **Results.** The evaluation team held a three-day workshop. The findings were presented in participatory and visual ways. A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) was done using the information from focus groups.
- **Recommendations.** The workshop ended with key recommendations for the project including a step-by-step process to achieve some of them.

[22] From Stephenson et al (2007)

Exercises

Some of the questions an evaluation seeks to answer are about the ___________ the project has made, whether there has been __________ change, and if the ___________ of the work have been met. It is also about the ________ of the work and ________ that can be learned. Evaluation should be a _________ experience. An _________ perspective can be useful for an evaluation. All the major _____________ in a project should have the chance to give input. _________ in the project will have valuable insight and should be included in an evaluation. Planning for evaluation should begin at the ________ _______ stage.

Discussion questions

1. What are the most important differences between monitoring and evaluation?

2. What experience do you have of evaluation in your life (not just at work)? Is it positive or negative? Give examples. How does this affect your attitude to evaluating your project?

3. Who benefits from an evaluation? Explain how each group could benefit?

4. Why is evaluation always done at the end of a project?

5. What would need to happen for your project to be evaluated?

6. What do you think are the main advantages and disadvantages of involving children in evaluation? How could the children you work with contribute to an evaluation of your project?

Lesson 13: How can we get started with evaluating our project?

Summary:

- Principles of good practice for projects working with children

There are many different evaluation tools and approaches that you could use to evaluate your project. In this lesson we will look at a framework for good practice designed by Tearfund for projects that work with children. This framework forms the basis of an easy-to-use evaluation tool, which you will find in place of the case study and exercises section of this lesson. Even if your project has never done evaluation before, if you did not do a base-line assessment at the start of the project, or if you have not been doing any monitoring, you can make a start with this tool.
The Tearfund Child Development Framework for Good Practice is based on eight principles of good practice:[23]

Principle 1: Building relationships

Priority is given to building relationships - with the child, family, community, organisation or institution and between agencies.

Principle 2: Parental responsibilities

Parental responsibilities towards children are encouraged, as is the development of a caring, child-friendly community.

Principle 3: Working at different levels

There is an awareness of what *level* the programme is addressing, whilst consideration is also given to other levels:

- Individual
- Peer
- Family
- Community
- Organisational/Institutional
- National
- Policy/Political
- Spiritual

Principle 4: Identifying needs and priorities

- Children's and parents' needs are identified. This includes listening to and involving children and parents.
- Staff are experienced and trained in ***communicating with children and their families*** and helping facilitate children's ***participation***.
- There is awareness of the spiritual, physical, mental, emotional and social aspects of the child's development (including educational and vocational aspects).

[23] Miles and Stephenson (2009)

Principle 5: Children's participation

- Children's abilities and needs are taken into consideration:

  - ability rather than disability or inability.

  - resilience to change and trauma as well as vulnerability.

  - no prejudice based on gender, age, parentage, ethnicity, social class or caste, religious background or disability.

- Adults co-operate with children, according to age and ability, individually and collectively in the programme, in things that affect them.

Principle 6: Children in context

- Children are considered in the social, political and historical context of their community.
- Parents, caregivers and families are involved and affected.
- The child's community is involved and affected.
- Links (networks) are developed with other local, national and international organisations, including organisations from other sectors.
- The cultural and religious context of the child, family and community is taken into consideration.

Principle 7: Advocacy

- Lobbying and interceding with or on behalf of children and their families takes place at local, national or international levels.
- The programme staff are aware of the importance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant human rights conventions.
- The barriers to advocacy are understood and addressed.
- There is dialogue with parents and caregivers so that they can make informed decisions and advocate for their families.
- There is dialogue with children so that, depending on their age and ability, they can make informed decisions and advocate for themselves and their peers.
- There is awareness of the Biblical basis of advocacy on behalf of children and the importance of prayer.

Principle 8: Child-sensitive indicators

- The impact of work on the children and their families is measured both qualitatively and quantitatively.
- Indicators show how the programme has an impact on the lives and environment of the children (by age and gender) and their families.
- Parents, caregivers and children (according to age and ability) are involved in the evaluation of the child and the care given.
- The programme reflects on and uses the results of the evaluation

Child Development Framework for Good Practice Evaluation Tool

Use these questions to evaluate your project. You can either do this on your own or together with some colleagues. For each answer, give examples that show how you do or do not do these things. At the end of the evaluation, identify areas where you need to change and some practical ideas for making these changes.

1. Building relationships	How is priority given to *building relationships* - with the child, family, community, organisation or institution and between organisations?	
2. Parental responsibilities	How does the programme encourage the development of *parental responsibilities* towards children and a *caring, child-friendly community*?	
3. Working at different levels	At what level(s) does the programme work and how does it consider other levels? ▪ Individual ▪ Peer ▪ Family ▪ Community ▪ Organisational/Institutional ▪ National ▪ Policy/Political ▪ Spiritual	
4. Identifying needs and priorities	a. How are children's (and parents') needs identified? How have children and parents been listened to and involved? b. What experience and training do the staff have in *communicating with children and their families* and *facilitating* children's participation? c. How does the programme try to meet the spiritual, physical, mental, emotional and social aspects of the child's development (including educational and vocational aspects)?	

5. Children's participation	a. How does the programme take into account, children abilities? How are the following addressed? ▪ ability rather that disability or inability ▪ resilience to change and trauma as well as vulnerability ▪ no prejudice based on gender, age, parentage, ethnicity, caste or social class, religious background or disability? b. How do the adults listen to and cooperate with children, according to their age and ability, in things that affect them?	
6. Children in context	a. To what extent is the child considered in the historical, political and social context of their community? b. How are parents, caregivers and families of the children involved and affected? c. How is the child's community involved and positively affected? d. In what ways are links developed (networking) with other local, national and international organisations (including organisations from other sectors)? e. How is the cultural and religious context of the child, family and community taken into consideration?	
7. Advocacy	a. In what ways does the programme lobby with or on behalf of children and their families at local, national or international levels? b. Are the programme staff aware of the importance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights issues and conventions? c. What are the barriers to advocacy work? How can these be overcome? Is there dialogue with parents and caregivers so that they can make informed decisions and advocate for their families? d. Is there dialogue with children so that, based on their age and ability, they can make informed decisions and advocate for themselves and their peers? e. To what extent are the programme staff aware of the Biblical basis of advocacy for children and the importance of prayer?	

8. Child-sensitive indicators	a. How does the programme measure the impact of its work on children and their families? Do the indicators measure quantitative as well as a qualitative impact? b. Do these indicators show how the programme has an impact on the lives and environment of the children and their families? Is the data broken down into age and gender groups? c. How are parents, caregivers and children (according to age and ability) involved in the evaluation of the child and the care given? d. How does the programme reflect on and use the results of evaluation?	

Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

The ________ Child Development Framework for Good Practice can be used to ________ a project, even if you have not been doing ___________ and do not have a _________ assessment. There are _ principles. These are about building ______________, _________ responsibilities, working at different ______, identifying _____ and ___________, children's ______________, children in _______, advocacy and child-sensitive ___________.

Discussion questions

1. Look through the 8 principles of good practice and try to explain why each one is important (use the knowledge you have gained from the other modules of this course)

2. Are any of the principles difficult to implement in your culture or context? Why?

3. What benefits could your project get from doing this evaluation? Are there any risks or challenges that you can foresee? What could you do about them?

4. Who would need to be involved to make the process most valuable? How could you introduce the tool?

Lesson 14: How can we make sure we are accountable to others?

Summary

- What is accountability?
- What sort of reports should we prepare for our project?
- What is the role of a board?

What is accountability?

Any project or organisation needs to be accountable for its activities, its impact and for the way it uses financial resources. This is particularly true for Christian organisations and projects, since we are also ambassadors for Christ and we know that God holds us accountable. Some of the different audiences that your project should be accountable to include your beneficiaries (the children and their parents, the local community), the leaders of your organisation or church, your board of trustees if you have one, and any donors who have provided money for your project.

Reporting on your project

Reports are a good way to communicate with these different audiences. These reports should be produced at least once a year, as well as at the end of the project's life. Sometimes donors will have specific requirements about what sort of report they want to see and when. This reporting will usually be the job of the project leader, but he or she will need the input of the people who are working in the project.

A report will allow people to compare what you said you would do in any plans or proposals, and what you actually did. You can use your indicators, your ongoing monitoring and any evaluation you have done to give a clear picture of the progress you have made. If there are big differences between your plans and what you actually did, you should explain why and what you will change in future plans. You will need to be creative in the ways you communicate with the children in your project about your progress, but it is important that you do share this with them so that you are accountable to them for the work you are doing.

Particularly for your donors and your leaders, it is also important to produce financial reports that show what money you received, how you planned to spend it and how you actually spent it. It is important to show that you are spending money on what you said you would so that people can trust you with more money in the future. It is also important to be demonstrating that you are keeping track of your money properly and spending it wisely, for example, getting good value for money for services.

What is a board?

It is wise and good practice for any organisation to have a group of people who provide leadership and oversight for the organisation together with its director. This is known as governance and is usually done by a board of trustees. In the case of a church-run project, the elders of the church or denomination should be fulfilling this role.

Governance involves ensuring that the organisation is meeting its legal responsibilities and that its resources are used wisely and effectively. For example, a board should help make sure that the organisation is legally registered and complies with local regulations. It should oversee the way that money is spent and check that the right records are kept and inspected as appropriate. The board's role also involves ensuring that the work of the organisation really does contribute to its mission and purpose. The board will help to keep an organisation faithful to its core values and its identity.

A board of trustees should be made up of people who are respected, experienced, committed and gifted to lead the organisation, accept responsibility for it and help it grow. For Christian organisations, they should also be willing to provide Godly leadership. The director/CEO of the organisation should work together with other board members and be accountable to them for the way the organisation is running. The board should support and encourage the director, as well as making sure that he or she is complying with all legal requirements for the organisation and that the organisation is going in the right direction and remaining faithful to its vision and mission.

Although the way that boards work will vary in different contexts and in different kinds of organization, here are some good principles to follow[24]:

Principle 1: Board leadership

Every organisation should be led and controlled by an effective Board of Trustees which collectively ensures delivery of its objects, sets its strategic direction and upholds its values.

Principle 2: The Board in control

The trustees as a Board should collectively be responsible and accountable for ensuring and monitoring that the organisation is performing well, is solvent, and complies with all its obligations.

Principle 3: The high performance Board

The Board should have clear responsibilities and functions, and should compose and organise itself to discharge them effectively.

Principle 4: Board review and renewal

The Board should periodically review its own and the organisation's effectiveness, and take any necessary steps to ensure that both continue to work well.

Principle 5: Board delegation

The Board should set out the functions of sub-committees, officers, the chief executive, other staff and agents in clear delegated authorities, and should monitor their performance.

Principle 6: Board and trustee integrity

The Board and individual trustees should act according to high ethical standards, and ensure that conflicts of interest are properly dealt with.

Principle 7: Board openness

The Board should be open, responsive and accountable to its users, beneficiaries, members, partners and others with an interest in its work.

[24] The principles are from ACEVO, Charity Trustee Networks, ICSA, NCVO on behalf of the National Hub of Expertise in Governance www.governancehub.org.uk

Case study

In Uganda, a number of organisations saw rapid positive results when they decided to improve their governance. Many of the people who were approached as potential board members proved to be good channels for bringing new resources to the organisations. Some of the good things that came as a result include an enhanced sense of community ownership, provision of resources such as food, clothing, stationary, textbooks etc. and free office space, legal advice, medical services, building renovations and remedial tuition for children

In addition, one particular organisation suddenly received a letter from the Ministry of Education telling them to close down in two weeks' time. Following some governance training, this organisation had approached a few influential people to become board members. The organisation called these people, who talked to some highly-placed Education Ministry officials to find out more about the matter. As a result, the problem was resolved and a lawyer got involved, because the organisation had been accused unfairly.

Exercises

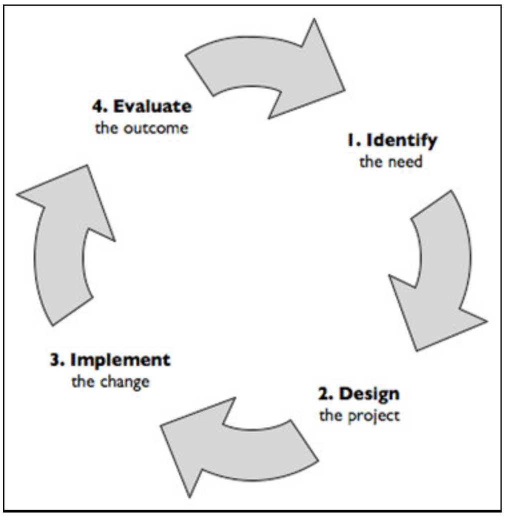
Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

Any project or organization should be accountable for its ___________, its ______ and for the way it uses __________ __________. You should be accountable to ______________, leaders of the _____________, the _____ __ _________ and ______. A good way to communicate is using _______. You should compare what you said you would do and what you _________ ___. You need to demonstrate that you used your _____ wisely. Governance is about ensuring that an organization meets _____ responsibilities, that _____ is spent correctly and that the work being done contributes to the organisation's _______. A board of trustees should be made up of people who are _________, experienced, _________ and gifted to ____ the organization, accept _______________ for it and help it grow.

Discussion questions

1. What do you understand by accountability? Why is accountability even more important for a Christian project?
2. To whom is your project accountable? How does this work in practice?
3. What sorts of reports does your project produce? Who is responsible? Do the reports help to keep you accountable?
4. What ways are there to be accountable to the children in your project? How could you improve these?
5. What is the role of a board of trustees?
6. Does your project or organisation have a board? How does the board interact with the project?
7. What sorts of people do you think would be good as board members for your project?

Part 6: Celebration



The final part of our workbook is still related to the fourth stage of the project cycle and reflecting on a project once it has finished. Celebration is an important part of the life of every project and organisation. It is a time to take stock and thank God and all the workers for what has been achieved. Of course you don't have to wait to the end of the project to celebrate: there will be many occasions for celebration along the way and lesson 15 will help you think about how to incorporate it into the life of your project and your organisation.

Lesson 15: Why is celebration an important part of a project?

Summary:

- Celebrating progress and achievements in your project is important
- Participants in the project benefit from celebrating successes
- Prayer and thanksgiving is part of celebrating life together in projects and in the church

Why should a project celebrate its progress and achievements?

When a project succeeds and is completed, it is important to look back and look forward to the future and to be grateful for the blessings provided through the completion of the project.

- **Looking back**

  Compare what it was like before to what it is like now. For example, if the project has had successful construction on the grounds, pictures of "before" and "after" inspire and affirm those who were involved in its completion. Think of ways to demonstrate the difference between before and after for less concrete project achievements too. For example, what do children now know about Jesus that they didn't know before?

- **Looking forward**

  Celebrate today's successes, always keeping in mind tomorrow's goals. How will the completion or the success continue to bless the beneficiaries involved? What might be the seeds of further development as a result of celebrating the present successes? In the example above, how might the new building space also be used to serve the community or the church in new ways?

What are some practical ways to celebrate successes?

You will be able to think of many different ways to celebrate what your project has achieved. Here are just three ideas.

Events that involve the children of the project and are child-inspired and initiated.

For example: the children can create a drama or play talking about how their lives were before the project came into being, and the changes they have experienced as a result of the success of the project. Children have endless creative ideas including the arts, games, and festive decorations with available resources.

Events that involve the community.

Invite the parents, and neighbours/friends, community leaders, other project partners, pastors, etc. to a service of celebration and thanksgiving.

Give back something to the community to say thank you.

Commit to support the local church who helped the project's dreams to become reality, etc.

Who will benefit from celebrating successes?

- Stakeholders and project staff
- Children and parents/care-givers
- Community officials/health care workers
- Volunteers and families who support the project
- Local churches and their staff who have been supportive or directly involved

Celebrating the successful completion of your project does not mean that you are forgetting about the challenges and difficulties that you encountered. Projects experience all kinds of problems along the way. It is important also to learn from the mistakes to improve projects in the future, as we have already seen. It is good to share what you have learned with other stakeholders. This can happen in a variety of ways, depending upon the context of your project.

- Meetings in the community to share the learning
- Write a newspaper article to share learning with people in the local area
- Write a case study of the project for a newsletter to share with other agencies
- Present a paper at a conference for learning of other project stakeholders

How does prayer and thanksgiving contribute to the celebration of life together in projects?

In the Bible, Nehemiah tells of the wall of Jerusalem that was finally completed after many years of efforts and setbacks. In Chapter 6:15-16, Nehemiah reminds us that it was the power and help of God that inspired the people to complete the wall. He also mentions how the surrounding peoples were afraid and lost their confidence because they saw how the God of Jerusalem had demonstrated his power through his people. In a successful project, those surrounding you will also see the hand of God through you, His servants. It is important to invite them in to join you, to build bridges to the community whenever possible. We are to be His salt and light in a broken world. We are reminded again in John 15:5 that "apart from Me (Jesus) you can do nothing." This is a humbling reminder of our dependence upon God, no matter whether our project is successful or unsuccessful. The Apostle Paul in his epistles constantly reminds us to trust God in all circumstances and to count it all joy!

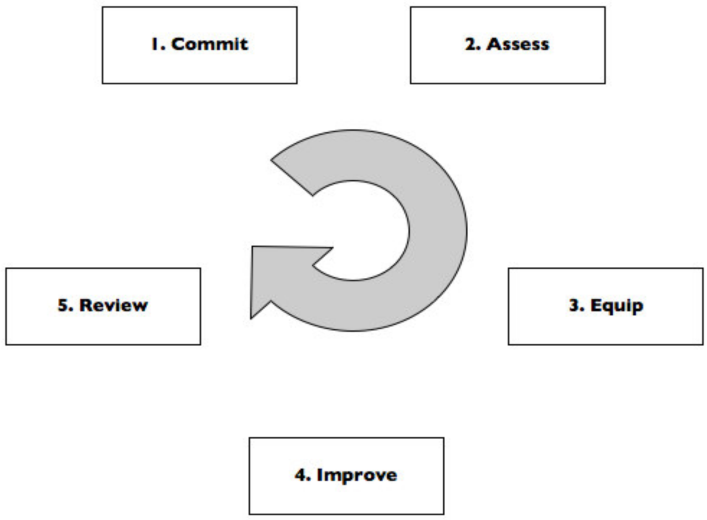
Taking regular opportunities for prayer and thanksgiving as a project for all that God is doing will being honour to God and will breathe life into your work. You don't have to wait until all the needs have been met. It can be very encouraging to periodically stand back from the work and look at what has been achieved and thank God and all those who are involved.

Case study

Viva's Quality Improvement System (QIS) is an effective capacity building tool for use in networks of Churches and Christian organisations and projects working with children at risk. It introduces international quality standards, relates them to biblical principles and provides a framework for organisations to make improvements towards those standards. In addition, it ensures that organisational structures and systems are in place to ensure a level of accountability.

QIS enables organisations and projects to make improvements in 6 areas that are of central importance for work with children at risk. These 6 areas are Child Protection, Child Wellbeing, Project Planning and Design, People Care, Financial Accountability and Governance.

Through QIS, organisations are encouraged to engage in a process of continual improvement in each of the 6 areas. For each QIS unit, the following cycle is used:



1. Understanding the area and committing to change,
2. Self assessment against meeting standards in that area
3. Equipping or Training in that area and setting improvement objectives,
4. Improving: Coaching and Peer to Peer Mentoring
5. Review: Celebration of improvements in each of the 6 areas and external verification

The bible tells us 'to encourage one another and build one another up' (1 Thessalonians 5:11) Through QIS, participants are encouraged to visit each other, pray with one another and learn from each other, supporting each other on the QIS improvement Journey. The process of organisational change and improvement is a challenging one in terms of time and resource commitment. It is therefore important in the process of implementing QIS, that time is taken to celebrate the improvements that organisations make in each of the key areas.

Organisations in the network are called to a special celebration ceremony and certificates are given to acknowledge and mark the improvements that have been made. It is a time when Project Leaders can acknowledge and applaud the achievements of their peers and feel proud of the changes that their own organisations have made.

Exercises

Fill in the gaps in the summary of the lesson:

When a project succeeds or is completed, it is important to ____ ____ and ____ ________. This activity of reflection can be included in the ____________ of your project. Practical ways to celebrate successes should involve _________ in the planning and implementation. One might invite a variety of people to a celebration, including: ________ or __________, and __________ leaders. Some participants in the project who would benefit from celebrating successes are _____________, ________ ______, ______________, and ___________. If a project has experienced difficulties and setbacks, it is important to share the ________ learned with others to avoid mistakes in the future. Sharing could occur at a ________ or you could write a ____ _____ for a newsletter to share with other agencies. Prayer and _____________ should mark a celebration. No matter if a project experienced difficulties or setbacks, the Apostle Paul reminds us to give thanks in all ______________.

Discussion questions:

1. Look at Nehemiah Chapter 12 which tells about the dedication of the wall in Jerusalem. Discuss how the dedication was celebrated. Why did Nehemiah dedicate the wall to God?

2. How can you dedicate your project to God?

3. What creative ways can you think of to celebrate the success of projects you have completed?

4. Why is it important to celebrate small victories and successes along the way to chart the progress of your project? How do small victories remind you of your larger goals? How are they milestones to chart progress for your stakeholders and beneficiaries?

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Further Resources

See resources on budgeting and financial management at www.mango.org

See www.civicus.org for resources on planning (including action planning and strategic planning), and budgeting

Hope, Ann and Sally Timnel. 1996. *Training for Transformation* also contains excellent resources and ideas for participatory approaches to all stages of the project cycle

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