



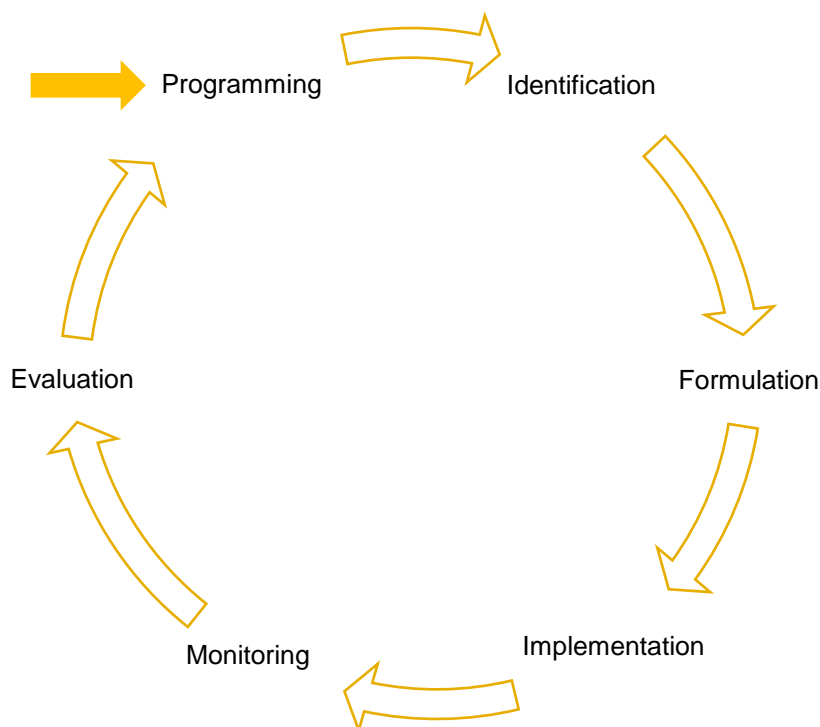
Project Cycle Management: Phases of a project cycle and Swiss Women's League procedures

Project Cycle Management (PCM) is a term used to describe the management activities and decision-making procedures used during the life cycle of a project (including key tasks, roles and responsibilities, key documents, and decision options).

PCM helps to ensure that:

- projects are relevant to an agreed strategy and to the real problems of target groups/beneficiaries;
- projects are feasible, meaning that objectives can be realistically achieved within the constraints of the operating environment and capabilities of the implementing agencies; and
- benefits generated by projects are likely to be sustainable.

Six phases of a project cycle



Explanations

1. Programming

The programming phase establishes the link between the individual project and the overall strategy of the organisation. **How does the NGO or development actor want to realise the main purpose of the organisation (as expressed in its vision and mission for instance) over the next couple of years?** To answer this question, many organisations go through a participatory process with their beneficiaries and with other stakeholders. This often leads to a long-term **strategy** document, that contains

general orientations about what activities and projects the organisation will do, in what regions, with what target groups and counting on what means (own resources, donor funding, etc.).

Some organisations limit this reflection to their activities in the field. Other take a step further and develop a long-term vision for all aspects of their work: human resources management, financial management, quality management, external communications strategy, lobbying strategy and so on

2. Identification

In this step, the idea for the project is initiated and the organisation verifies whether this idea really responds to the needs of the (future) beneficiaries. In other words, the pertinence of the project is checked. This means that we have to see if it fits our strategy on the one hand. But more importantly it has to be based on a thorough knowledge and analysis of the situation in the target region and of the needs of the beneficiaries.

As a result of this phase, an initial draft of the project is elaborated which contains all elements of the intervention logic:

- What activities do we want to do?
- To achieve what tangible results (outputs)?
- What is the purpose of our project?
- How will our project contribute to improving the overall situation in the intervention area? What will the impact be in the long run?

In other words, the first column of the **logical framework** is elaborated. In PCM the idea is that there is a cause-and-result chain. The activities lead to the tangible outputs, and through the combination of these outputs we will realise the purpose of our project. At this stage, we also have a look at the resources we will need and try to estimate what the overall budget of the project will be.

3. Formulation

Once the basic concept of the project is determined and approved, it is time to go into detail. Often, this comes down to writing a detailed project proposal. In the concept of PCM, models are used for establishing:

- The narrative proposal, which gives an overview of the project and explains in detail:
 - What the situation is of the target groups in the area of intervention;
 - Who the partners are;
 - What the objectives are;
 - How the objectives fit in the donor's policy/the country development strategy;
 - What activities will be executed;
 - What the risks are and how they will be dealt with;
 - How the partners will collaborate with local authorities and other stakeholders;
- The budget proposal, detailing every expense and sometimes regrouping them per activity or output;
- The logical framework of the project;
- A detailed planning of the activities;
- Other documents to explain how the organisation manages its projects, such as partner identification forms, registration forms for beneficiaries and target groups, the official NGO registration and so on.

It is at this stage that we can integrate the whole logical framework approach as a participatory approach to determine the various elements of the project:

- Validating and detailing every element of the intervention logic (first column of the logframe)
- Thinking about how the project will be monitored and evaluated (second and third columns of the logframe);
- Reflecting about risks and assumptions (fourth column), and how to deal with problems should they occur (and what their possible impact will be).
- Practical organisation like who does what and when? How will the communication and reporting be organised? Who is responsible for what?

4. Implementation

The purpose of the implementation stage is to:

- Deliver the results, achieve the purpose(s) and contribute effectively to the overall objective of the project;
- Manage the available resources efficiently; and
- Monitor and report on progress.

The implementation stage of the project cycle is in many ways the most critical, as it is during this stage that planned benefits are delivered. All other stages in the cycle are therefore essentially supportive of this implementation stage.

The key documents required/produced during this stage include progress reports, specific reviews/study reports (e.g. mid-term evaluation), and completion report (at end of project).

5. Monitoring

The monitoring and implementation phases are often taken as one because they are so intertwined. In any case it is clear you can't speak of consecutive phases because they go together. Monitoring is about checking whether your project is going as planned, meaning that:

- You're doing the activities according to plan;
- You're getting the outputs that you want; and
- You're spending the budget according to plan.

Monitoring is not about the fundamentals of your project, i.e. the question whether you're doing the right things in the first place.

To monitor the project's outputs, you're using the indicators of the logframe. To monitor the progress of the activities, you're using the project's planning. To monitor expenses, you're using the project's accountancy and compare it with the budget.

In the concept of PCM, monitoring is needed to adapt your project flexibly to the ever-changing needs and the ever-evolving situation in the field. Monitoring should allow you to take project management decisions on the go:

- Change the activities that you do, or change the order of the activities, or put an end to certain activities because they don't lead to the results that you expected.
- Verify whether outputs are achieved in time and change priorities and/or reroute resources (to make sure they will be achieved).
- Avoid financial mismanagement or expending too much or too fast. Maybe the cost of certain activities may have to be reviewed and other solutions may have to be found. In other cases, the costs will turn out to be lower than expected, and additional activities may be organised to exceed the original objectives of the project.

6. Evaluation

While monitoring is about checking whether the project is executed according to plan, evaluation is about the very reasons why you've developed your project in the first place. Do the results of your project effectively lead to the desired change in the lives of your beneficiaries? Was your intervention strategy effective? What are the expected and unexpected effects and impact of your project? What can you learn from the way you organised your activities? What can you learn from your project that you could use for consecutive projects and actions?

Evaluations can be:

- Internal evaluations: conducted by the organisation itself.
- External evaluations: conducted by an external evaluator, either an individual or a (specialised) organisation or firm. Often donors will require you to do external evaluations because they are supposedly more independent and reliable. On the other hand, external evaluators may not understand the situation as well as the local staff or partners do. Often, time and financial constraints also weigh on the quality of the evaluation and many evaluators rely heavily on the project team anyway, which beats the point of independency.

Projects with a long duration often have mid-term or several intermediary evaluations in addition to the final evaluation. In order to do a good evaluation, the evaluators need access to information from the monitoring system. One of the most common problems is that no baseline situation has been established at the onset of the project, making it difficult to appreciate the evolution of the project and of the situation of the beneficiaries.

In addition to providing an evaluation report, most evaluators will organise a feed-back meeting of some sort. This is important for people to learn about the findings of the evaluation and the good things and bad thing about the project. This way they can take the information along for the next project.

SLCW procedures

Programming	Partner organisations to decide
Identification	Partner organisations to decide
Formulation	Final proposal must be submitted to the Programme Responsible person of the Swiss Women's League at least 2 months prior board meeting in Switzerland . They generally take place annually in in April and November. Sufficient time must be allowed for queries, adjustments, and a possible pre-evaluation (for new partners) by the consultants before final submission. -> For details, please contact Swiss Women's League.
Monitoring	Ongoing monitoring by the project team during implementation. By the consultants at least one monitoring visit per project period (about half-way through). Can be combined with interim evaluation if one is planned. If necessary, the consultants can monitor the projects more frequently.
Evaluation	The consultants conduct different types of evaluations: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pre-evaluations / Pre-assessments: For partners who have submitted a project proposal and are eligible for funding. This is done before the application is submitted to the Swiss Women's League management.2. Intermediate evaluation (or monitoring visit in the case of projects with a one-year duration): Here, after about half of the project duration,

	<p>the project is evaluated (exchange with project staff, beneficiaries, discussions, etc.).</p> <p>3. Final evaluation: A final evaluation is carried out approximately three months before project end. This should provide information on whether the cooperation with the partner should be continued or not. Both steps must be justified. If further cooperation is recommended, then recommendations for any adjustments (region, beneficiaries, content, etc.) must emerge from the evaluation. These then form the basis for a new project proposal, which the partner organization can prepare. Sufficient time must therefore be planned.</p>
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