



Learning through monitoring in watsan projects

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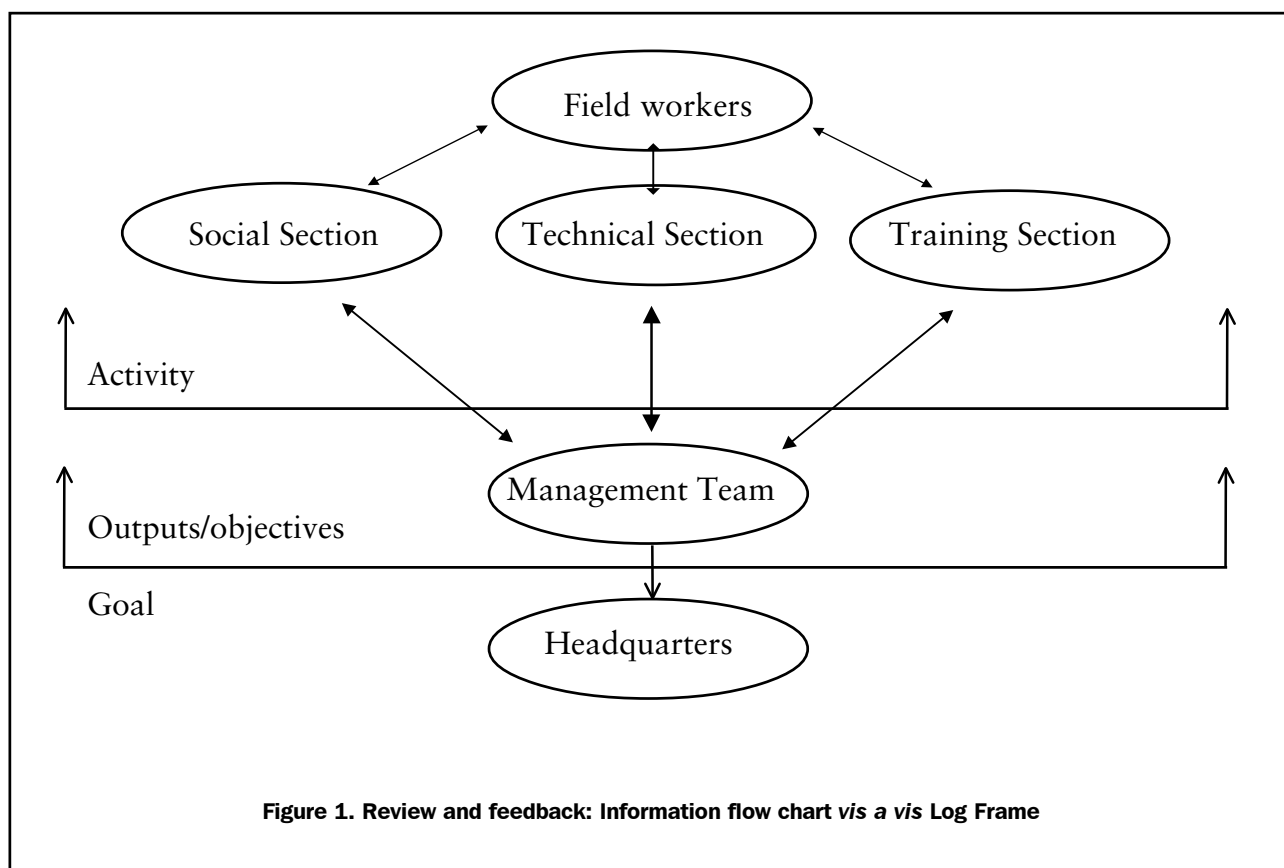
DURING THE LAST trimester of 1998 and the first of 1999, the Self Reliant Drinking Water Support Programme (SRWSP) of Helvetas Nepal had concluded the final monitoring follow-up of 48 projects completed between 1994 to 1997. The main outcome of the exercise was establishment of a system in which post-construction project information is collected, analysed, interpreted as well as recommendations made. The exercise also gave an opportunity to fine-tune the log frame further by measuring the indicators for the Operational Objectives.

The visit made during this follow-up exercise is the last one from the Programme's side to the community in

concern and hence completes all the 25 steps of the SRWSP project cycle (step-wise approach). As such this visit is the last occasion when the community and SRWSP Project interact with each other. This exercise is designed to cover all the set indicators for the operational level objectives of the Programme and in general is held after 1.5 to 2 years of project commissioning. This task looks in to the utilisation of the services both water supply and sanitation, i.e., how the social and technical systems are operating. It also makes a follow-up on the job of the Village Maintenance Worker (VMW) and Women Tapstand Care-takers (WTC),

Table 1. Title

Who all are informed?	How are they informed?	Why are they informed?
Field staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Section meeting · Staff meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · For knowing project trends · For ownership
Other Staff (Admin/Finance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Staff meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · For more ownership
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Management Team Meetings · Circulars · Annual/ Bi-annual Reports · Follow-up reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · For identifying trends · For revisiting program logic · For formulating long term strategies CWSSP → SRWSP → WARM · For micro-policy formulation
Partner NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · NGO meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · For knowing project trends · For ownership
Headquarters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Annual/ Bi-annual Reports · Quarterly Review Meetings · Info-sheet · Follow-up reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To ensure project direction · For guidance and support
Sister organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Annual/ Bi-annual Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Experience sharing
Government partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Annual/ Bi-annual Reports · National Review Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · For guidance and support



and looks into the functioning of the local Water and Sanitation Management Committees (WSMC).

This Paper attempts to describe the process followed, as well as highlights the key learning issues from the exercise.

The process

Soon after it was decided to operationalise the activity, the Programme Management Team formulated guidelines for format development. Accordingly, the first draft of the formats were prepared. The formats were designed based on the project's Logical Frame so as to draw out the set indicators for the fulfilment of the objectives. These were then field tested in three project sites of different sizes in Tanahun District before they were finalised.

For an easy reference, a comprehensive guideline on the use of the formats were prepared and an orientation to SRWSP staff made prior to visiting the projects.

The follow-up used a mixture of several methods- observation, study of office files, technical measurement, minute book study, feedback, interview with key informants such as the VMW and WTCs and their practical tests, checking of tool box, community meetings and feedback.

Recommendations to improve both the social and technical components of individual projects were provided at the time of monitoring itself. This was in the form of instant feedback before departure of the monitoring team from the project area. These feedback were duly minuted by the management committee in concern. Wherever possible, the

structures were cleaned up while inspecting them individually.

The information collected was then analysed by each section (technical, training and social) which was then discussed in the management team, and recommendations formulated.

Presentation and use of information

As this was a very useful exercise to establish a post-construction monitoring system of projects, a separate report containing the process and results was produced. Following table summarises *for whom, how and why* different information is analysed.

Lessons

- Log frame should not be seen as a static tool. It provides only the skeleton. Once operational, the indicators need to be revised considering the practical aspects of data generation. This however should not be an excuse for reducing monitoring tasks.
- The present log frame focuses more on numbers and may not give the full picture of the project at a given time. The major challenge is to maintain a balance between quantitative and qualitative monitoring. Generating accurate numerical data should hence not become an obsession. The management should cautiously

judge the time spent on extracting accurate numerical data *vis a vis* its value.

- Monitoring should get priority in the programme, and not treated as a left over task. Ownership on the part of the staff on the monitoring must be developed. The program staff of all levels and all disciplines should have participated in one or the other way.

- Monitoring proves to be a strong self correcting mechanism.
- Monitoring should be viewed as a motivational activity to the communities. For example minor maintenance work can be carried out at the time of monitoring itself. Similarly instant feedback should be provided to the communities on the status of their projects and areas of improvement.

Table 2: Conceptual tilt for effective monitoring

Staff Level	Conceptual skills	Field based skills
Management	→	/
Field based staff		

- Project logic and information (scenario) based on log-frame indicators need to be shared periodically with the entire team as well as the partner staff. This helps the field based staff understand the project trends and plan for required corrective actions accordingly, as well as to increase ownership over the programme.
- Monitoring becomes effective when it is made multi-disciplinary. Those involved in the process (mostly field level staff) should be oriented thoroughly on issues beyond their professional discipline.

Table 3: Disciplinary tilt for effective monitoring

Staff Category	Technical skills	Social skills
Technical Section Staff	→	/
Social Section Staff		

Conclusion

Now that a system in which post-construction project information is collected, analysed and interpreted as well as recommendations made is well established at SRWSP, this exercise is carried out much more efficiently each year. The whole exercise has proven a significant milestone in operationalising the SRWSP log frame and a strong tool for assessing effects of the SRWSP inputs.

References

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