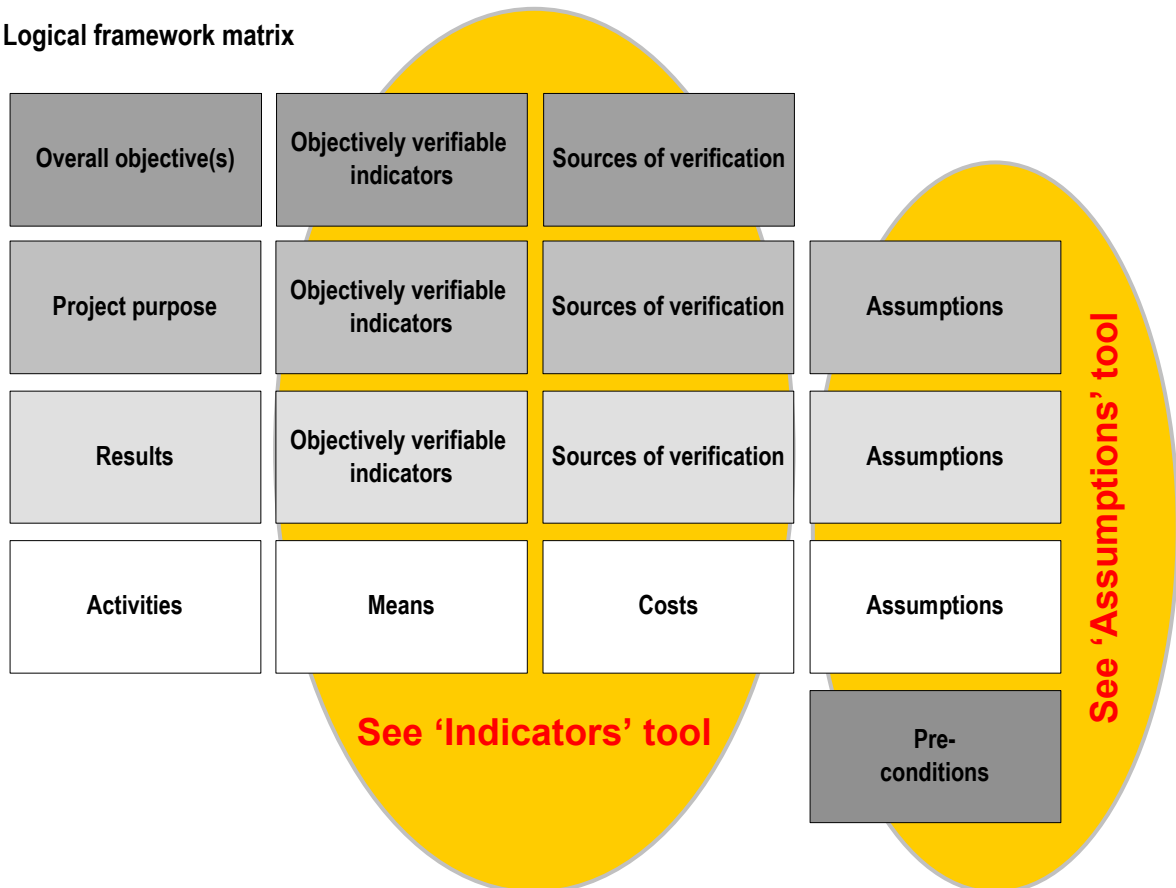MDF

Logical Framework (or LogFrame)

What is it?

The Logical Framework is a widely used tool to describe major elements of a project; it gives answers to questions about the why, what and how of a project and also about the who, where and when. The description is presented in the form of a 4x4-matrix.

The longer term overall objectives, the project purpose, the mid-term results, and the activities of a project are systematically presented in the first column of the matrix (in their vertical logic). The second and third column of the matrix present the corresponding indicators and their sources of information. The fourth column presents important assumptions that are beyond the direct control of the project but that need to be fullfilled for succesful implementation. Establishing a logical framework is only possible after thorough analysis of problems, objectives and strategies (see Problem Tree Analysis tool).

Logical framework matrix

Overall objective(s)	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of verification	
Project purpose	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Results	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Activities	Means	Costs	Assumptions
			Pre-conditions

See 'Indicators' tool

See 'Assumptions' tool

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> **Sustainability factors**
>
> In the formulation of projects and programmes sustainability aspects need to be kept in mind right from the start. Factors that ensure sustainability, formulated by the European Commission, are:
> - Ownership by beneficiaries – does the target group support the project?
> - Policy support – is there an appropriate sector policy by the government?
> - Appropriate technology – is the chosen technology affordable and is it possible to use it under the local conditions?
> - Environmental protection – are there any harmful environmental effects to be expected as a result of the implementation of the project?
> - Socio-cultural issues – will the project promote equitable distribution of access and benefits?
> - Gender equality – have sufficient measures been taken to ensure that the project will meet the needs and interest of both women and men?
> - Institutional and management capacity – is there sufficient capacity and resources with the implementing agency to continue service delivery in the longer term?
> - Economic and financial viability – do the benefits of the project justify the costs involved?

# Description of the logical framework

1   The intervention logic

The first column renders the intervention logic, which is the basic strategy underlying the intervention. It contains the positive states to be realised by the intervention as well as the overall objective to which the intervention is to contribute.

The intervention logic runs from the means to the overall objective: through the availability of the means, activities can be carried out; by the execution of the activities, results are achieved; the results will lead to the project purpose; and through the project purpose, the intervention contributes to the overall objective.

Overall objective: a high level objective to which the intervention will contribute (e.g. overall sub-sector objectives). Other interventions and activities will also contribute to the realisation of this objective. It is the wider positive effect to which the achievement of the project purpose will contribute.

Project purpose: the objective to be reached by the intervention. There should be a fair chance that this objective will be realised by the project intervention.
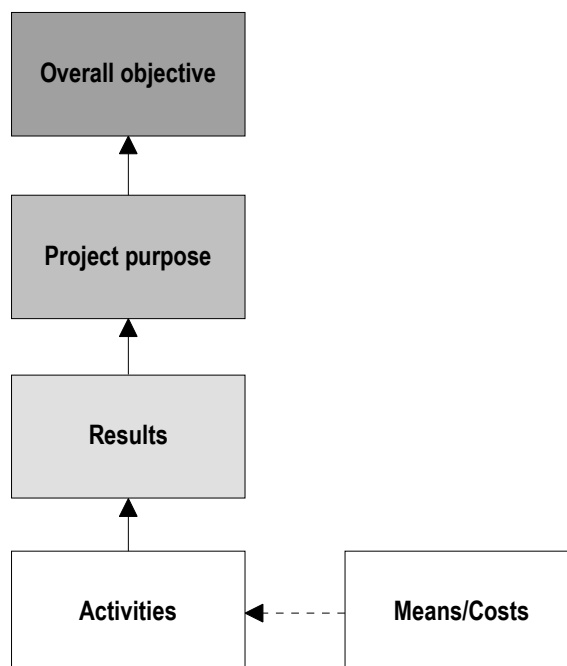
Sustainable benefits for the beneficiaries (taking into account gender, age, race, and ethnicity) are always the underlying purpose of the project. These should be tangible benefits expressing how the beneficiaries use the project results.

Results: products or services resulting from the activities. The results together will lead to the realisation of the project purpose. The results refer to the outputs that the project organisation will deliver to the beneficiaries (taking into account gender, age, race, and ethnicity) and include aspects of the quality of those outputs that are determinant for their use by the intended beneficiaries.

Activities: the activities that have to be executed by the project organisation in order to reach the results. The set of activities that is needed to produce the specific result.

The physical and non-physical **means** and **costs** (inputs) necessary to carry out the activities.

Different organisations use different terminology for the same concepts. An overview:

Differences in terminology

MDF terminology	Other terms used
Overall objective	Goal Development objective Long-term objective
Project purpose	Short-term objective Specific objective
Results	Outputs Immediate objectives Intermediate results
Activities	Actions
Assumptions	Risks Development hypothesis
Objectively verifiable indicators	Targets, performance indicators, variables
Sources of verification	Means of verification Means of assessment Sources of information

2   Objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs)

The second column of the logical framework renders the objectively verifiable indicators. The indicators present an operational description of the overall objective, project purpose and results, in terms of the variable (what will change?) and target value (how much?), target groups/beneficiaries, place and time. The indicators are in fact a precise definition of the intervention logic. Since the activities are defined as concrete actions, no indicators are formulated; the necessary means are in stead defined here. See further the 'Indicators' tool.

3   Means and costs

Means are physical and non-physical resources (inputs) that are necessary to execute the planned activities and to manage the project. A distinction can be made between human, physical and financial resources.

Costs are the financial translation of all identified means. The presentation of costs is preferably made according to a standardised budget format. The contribution of the donor, the government of the beneficiary country and possible other donors are specified in one ore more currencies (in accordance with the requirements).

4   Assumptions and preconditions

The fourth column renders the assumptions. Assumptions refer to external factors that may influence the intervention but that are beyond the direct control of the project organisation(s), but that are very important for the realisation of the results, the project purpose and the overall objective.

In the logical framework, relationships between the assumptions and the intervention logic are presented as follows:
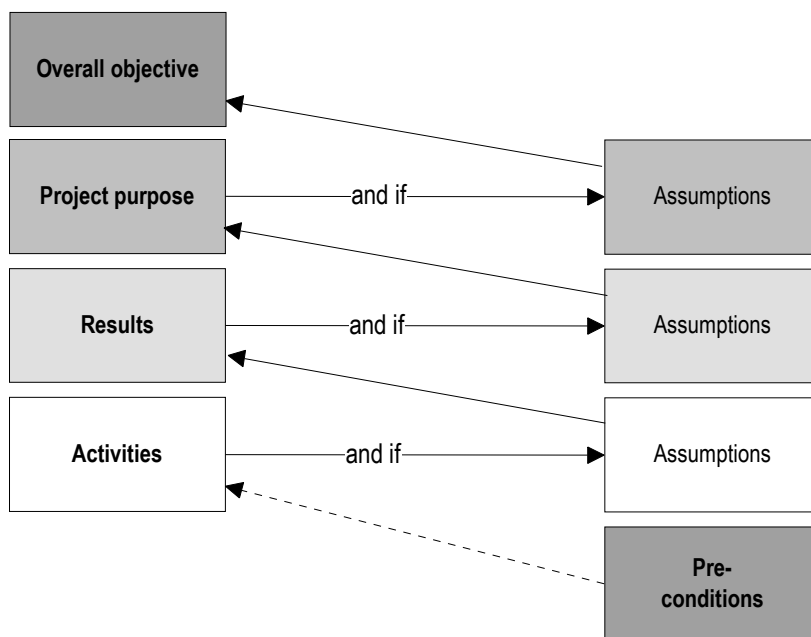
This scheme reads as follows:

- if the preconditions are complied with, then the activities can be started;
- if the activities are realised, and if the assumptions at the activity level have come true, then the results will be realised;
- if the results are realised, and if the assumptions at the result level have come true, then the project purpose will be realised;
- if the project purpose is realised, and if the assumptions at the project purpose level have come true, then the overall objective will have significantly been contributed to.

See further the 'Assumptions' tool (for how to deal with assumptions), and tools for Institutional analysis, such as the 'Environmental scan' and the 'Institutiogramme' (to identify assumptions).

Clarification of important aspects of the intervention logic

What is the importance of the overall objective?	The overall objective describes the perspective of this intervention and other ones contributing to it. At this level, the influence of those in charge of the project is limited.
What is the importance of the project purpose?	The project purpose is the focal reference - in terms of sustainable benefits for target groups - which facilitates the management of the intervention and the monitoring/ evaluation of its success or failure.
When is the project ended?	When the project purpose is achieved, i.e. - the 'product' is realised and 'sold' to the benefit of the target group, - and it is estimated that the product will continue to exist.
Why is only one project purpose established?	Only one project purpose is established in order to prevent the intervention from becoming too complex and extremely difficult to manage. Instead of one intervention featuring two different purposes, it is preferable to plan separate (parallel and inter-related) interventions.
How are the results determined?	The results are either deduced from the diagram of objectives or from specific studies.
How are the activities determined?	Activities are determined by - deducing them from the diagram of objectives; - specific studies; - consultation with the parties involved.
Why need activities to be determined?	Activities need to be determined to a sufficient level of detail in order to be able to: - draw up a tentative working schedule and to calculate the likely duration of the intervention; - deduce the necessary human and physical resources, incl. who's going to be responsible for which activities; - establish the budget.

What can you do with it?

Basic (sub-) questions

- Can contribute to improved planning of a project or programme
- Promotes objective-led rather than activity-led planning.
- Facilitates linkages between micro-planning and macro-planning.
- Facilitates management of diverse activities unified by common objectives.
- Forces those involved to be explicit about the implications of carrying out planned activities, in terms of resources, assumptions and risks.

Results

- Complete project plan including a logical framework, a budget, an activity plan and plans for monitoring

How to use it?

Process

The logical framework assists people who are preparing a project, programme or even a complete sector policy to formulate and structure their considerations in a better way, and to clearly describe the intervention in a standardised way. It forces people to think things over, logical, communicate and allows people to ask questions. The logical framework has no other aspirations. For example, if the intervention is based on poor policies or wrong criteria, the logical framework will reveal contradictions and missing links, but it cannot change or replace them.

The logical framework is a tool that can contribute to improved planning of a project or programme. The success of an intervention depends on many other factors, for example the competence, the know-how, attitude (participatory) and the organisational capacity available within the project team or within the organisations involved in the execution of the project or programme. Therefore, the discipline imposed by the logical framework can never replace the professional qualities of those who use these tools.

A complete project plan includes a logical framework, a budget, an activity plan and plans for monitoring:

Detailed budget	Activity schedule (incl. division of responsibilities)	Monitoring plans
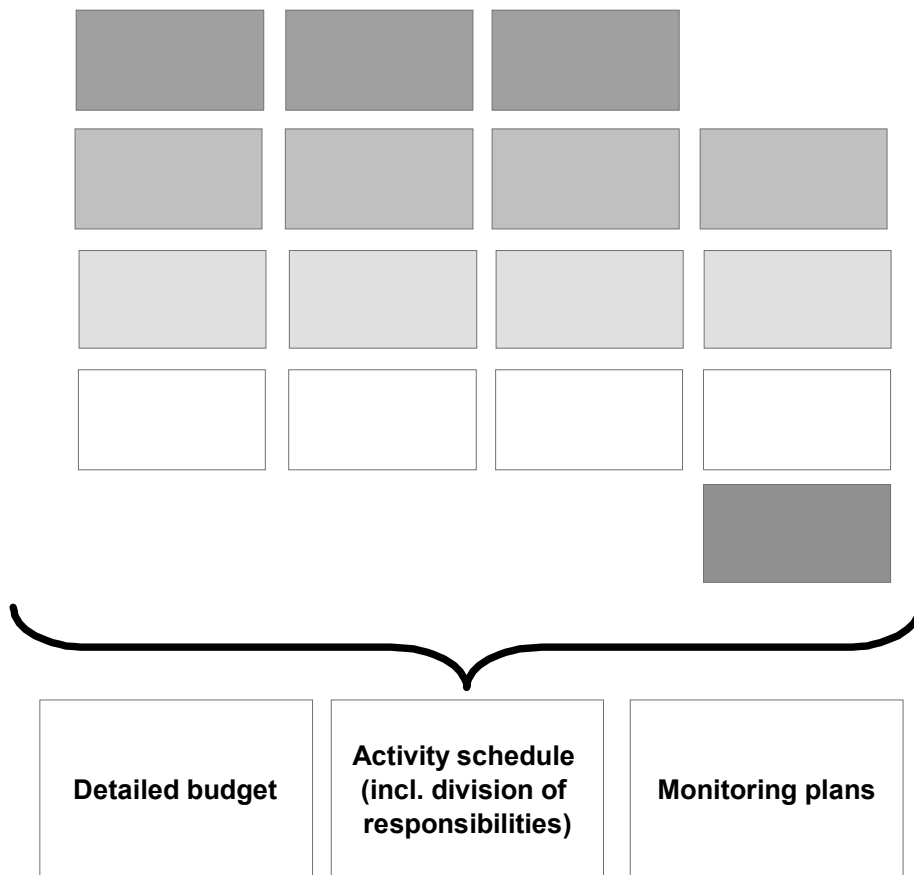
The focus of this tool is on the use of OOPP and the logical framework in the phases of identification and formulation. However, logical frameworks are also very useful in the

subsequent phases of the project cycle. They can be used to appraise project proposal, they serve as an instrument to monitor projects and they can serve as the basis for project evaluation. Over the years that a project is implemented, it will be further detailed and regularly updated. If these adaptations and changes are incorporated in the project's logical framework, this will provide insight in the project's track record.

Groundwork

Logical Framework shall be preceded by and based on a thorough analysis of the situation that is supposed to change with the effort of a project. On its own, LogFrame is often not a sufficient analysis tool to prepare a project; other specific analysis tools are required, suitable to the situation, sector and context of a project.
In the project cycle, developing a logical framework can start once project identification was done and strategic options have been selected.

Follow up

In most cases a Logframe for a project needs to be completed with a budget and a time schedule, based on the identified activities. Furthermore, the organisational implementation modalities need to be defined and decided: (who is going to be responsible during the implementation for what and under which conditions?).

Requirements and limitations

The LogFrame is a powerful and flexible tool for reflection, analysis and communication with respect to projects and programmes and is not limited to specific sectors or types of organisations. Creative and flexible facilitation by an experienced person is often needed for optimal use.

The development of any project requires the involvementof the various stakeholders, preferrably including also people from target group, or client level. LogFrame can be very useful to facilitate the communication between these various parties involved.
Once developed, the LogFrame needs to be updated on a regular basis (every one or two years) to adapt it to a dynamic environment and to include aspects of learning throughout the implementation of a project.
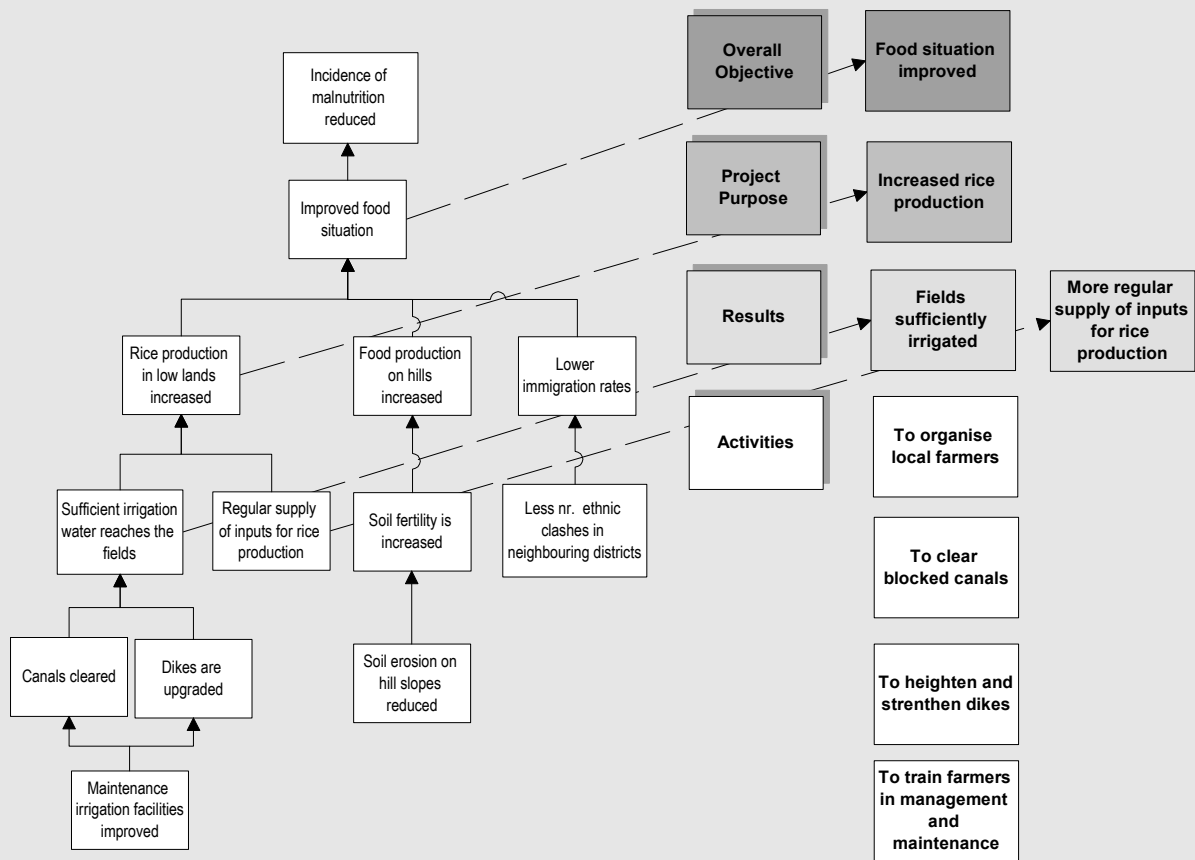
Limitations

- Over-attachment to a Logframe can turn it into an inflexible blueprint.
- The administrative requirement of donor agencies to present project proposals with a LogFrame may lead to nice looking but meaningless LogFrames, disconnected from the reality.
- The Logframe assumes hierarchical cause-effect logic, in particular between realisations by the project organisation and the response of target group or clients on those achievements. A thorough understanding of the context, based on experience and studies in the specific situation and type of development are a prerequisite for sound planning; the quality of a LogFrame depends to a large extent on these conditions.
- The Logframe emphasises assessment of effects rather than understanding the process of change.

- With participatory approaches to Logframe construction, the inexperience and broad base of participants may lead to the setting of unrealistic targets or to valuable activities being overlooked.
- The Logframe seeks indicators for planned/expected effects but overlooks evidence of unexpected effects or events or processes that may influence the outcome of the project.

Example

Demonstration case: relation between objective tree and logical framework

The stakeholders decided that they will develop a project for the irrigation system

O O	Reduced incidence of malnutrition Food situation improved	OVI Average 500 kg. White rice consumed per year per household (800 in total); same (indexed) price; in lowlands of Bogo; from 2004-2007	SoV Survey by Ministry of Agriculture in 2006	**Assumptions**
P P	Increased rice production	OVI Average husked rice production in kg. Increased from 2.000 to 4.000 kg. Per ha.; 240 small farmers (owning <2 ha.) in 7 villages; from 2003-2007; in lowlands of Bogo district Dubia	SoV Extension workers' reports	Agricultural production on hills improved or at least stabilised Fewer people immigrate from neighbouring districts
R	1. Fields sufficiently irrigated	2. More regular supply of inputs for rice production	3. Increased and applied knowledge on new agricultural practices	Enough labour to harvest the rice production
OVI	The quantity of irrigation water reaching the fields is in growing season 15.000 litres per ha. of 240 small farmers (owning <2 ha.) in 7 villages; from 2002-2003; the lowlands of Bogo	Seed and fertiliser available 1 month before planting season; 480 bags of 140 kg. urea and 480 bags of 50 kg. seed; 240 small farmers (owning <2 ha.) in 7 villages; from 2002-2005; in lowlands of Bogo	Average score of male and female farmers on test about the agricultural practices is 5 in 2002 and will be 9 in 2003	
SoV	V-notch measurements in the irrigation canal taken at random at different intervals during the growing season.	Annual survey at distribution points	Results tests done by extension workers and NGOs	
A	1.1 To organise local farmers associations 1.2 To clear blocked canals and stop the leaking 1.3 To heighten + strengthen dikes 1.4 To train farmers in management and maintenance	2.1 To organise purchase of inputs 2.2 To organise inputs distribution	3.1 To organise extension service 3.2 To train extentionists 3.3 To train farmers (male and female) in new agricultural practices	Access roads in good condition. Traders continue to supply inputs. Social relations permit farmers to organise themselves.

Preconditions:

Government is willing to support the project by making the extension workers of the Agricultural Department available

Steps to determine the intervention logic

1. **Identification of the project purpose**
   The project purpose is always an expression of sustainable benefits for the project's or programme's target groups.

   Select the objective from the objective tree that is situated on top of a cluster or in case of a combination of several clusters, find or formulate an objective that covers them all (see analysis of strategies).

   In case more project purposes would be selected, a logical framework must be made for each different project purpose.

2. **Identification of the overall objective**
   Select from the objectives tree an objective, which is situated higher than the project purpose, describing in broad terms the perspective in which the intervention will be executed. Usually, this will be an objective at the sub-sector policy level.

3. **Identification of results**
   Select from the objective tree the objectives that - following the means-end logic - lead to the project purpose.

   It is possible to add other results that are also needed to realise the project purpose. These additional results are identified through a complementary analysis of opportunities and risks of the situation.

4. **Identification of activities**
   Select from the objective tree the objectives that - following the means-end logic - lead to the results and translate them into activities.

   It is possible to add other activities that are needed to realise the results. These additional activities are identified by means of a complementary analysis of opportunities and risks.

The different stakeholders will have to negotiate to come to the intervention logic. All parties should agree on the chosen objectives and activities (see scoping in par. 3.3). Differences in race, age, ethnicity and gender will play a role. The facilitator has to make sure that needs and interests of all stakeholders are considered.