LOGFRAME GUIDANCE FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

DFID requires all research programmes to have a logframe which is the primary tool used for monitoring progress. DFID produces guidance on logframes. This note aims to provide additional guidance on how logframes should be used in **research programmes**. It is designed to **supplement, not to replace**, the generic DFID logframe guidance.

Language

Wherever possible the language used in a logframe should be **simple** and **concise**. Remember that the team who develop the logframe may have changed by the time it comes to be reviewed so it is important that new people are able to quickly grasp the main things that the programme is aiming to deliver and how they anticipate these will lead to change.

Outputs

Outputs are defined in the DFID logframe guidance as the '***products* or *services** delivered'*. This is where you report the results of what the project actually pays people to do (not a list of activities but the results of these collective activities).

In the case of research programmes, the primary **products** which will be delivered are the research results and the products which present these. It is important that research programmes prioritise producing high quality and relevant research. Without this, any research uptake work will be pointless or even potentially damaging.

As well as producing research results, DFID expects research programmes to provide a research-uptake **service**. This involves ensuring research findings are available and accessible and that evidence-informed discussions are resourced and facilitated. Please note that facilitating discussions is not the same as advocating for specific policy changes. The latter is not an appropriate aim for a DFID-funded research programme.

Capacity building (to do research or to support research uptake) is also a **service** offered by many research programmes.

Thus some research programmes choose to use each of these different aims as outputs for example:

- Output 1: High quality, relevant research is completed
- Output 2: Research is made accessible and evidence-informed discussions are facilitated
- Output 3: Capacity is built to carry out, communicate and to use research evidence

Whatever outputs are chosen, it is important to select indicators which are clearly measurable. Furthermore, wherever possible, indicators should be based on objective measurement rather than based on subjective assessment. Some examples of how output level indicators can be strengthened are given in the table below.

Indicators should be clearly measurable and be just **what** is to be measured (e.g. number of peer reviewed papers published). Indicators should not include how much will be achieved – that's the job of the milestones and target. The key thing to get right is the indicator. If that's really clear and measurable, the milestones and target should flow fairly easily. Quantitative and qualitative indicators are equally valid, as long as they are measurable. Milestones and targets should be realistic and based on an objective and evidence based assessment of likely progress. Some examples of how indicators can be strengthened are given in the table.

Weak indicator	Why is this weak?	Suggested alternative
Number of papers produced	This is not **specific** since it does not define what is meant by 'paper' and it does not include any measure of quality.	Number of peer-reviewed primary research papers made available in open access format.
Policy changes in target countries as a result of this programme's research uptake work	This is not **achievable** – the programme team is not responsible for country level policy changes and thus this should not be included at an output level. Policy level outcomes or impacts may be appropriate but the programme team should not define too specifically what policy change should happen since this will depend on the research results which emerge and the political situation in the countries in question.	Number of seminars involving a panel of research experts discussing the latest research findings have been facilitated within relevant southern policy-making institutions.
Policy makers judge policy briefs to be useful	This is not **measurable**.	Relevant decision makers as identified by stakeholder analysis rate policy briefs as 'useful' or 'very useful' on a five point scale.
Participants who have attended capacity building training report an increase in confidence in writing academic papers.	This indicator is not **objective**. Participants of training often report that they have increased their skills but this does not necessarily mean that there has been an actual increase in skills.	Increase in score awarded to draft papers carried out by experts blinded to whether the paper was written pre or post training.

Outcome

Outcomes are defined as 'Effects or behaviour changes resulting from programme outputs'.

For research programmes, it is important to choose an outcome which (assuming some plausible assumptions which should be made explicit – see below) can be influenced by the programme. There are various ways to categorise outcomes. Confusingly, much of the academic discussion on this topic refers to 'impacts' which are in fact closer to what DFID considers 'outcomes'. Examples of the types of outcomes that research programmes may contribute to include changes to policy or practice; changes to conceptual understanding of a topic; changes in behaviour or attitudes of influential individuals or organisations and so on.

An important difference between research programmes and many other development interventions is that it is usually impossible to define at the outset of the programme what *specific* changes will happen. For example, you will not be able to say at the outset of a programme that policy X, in country Y will have changed in Z way. Indeed, including very specific changes could incentivise researchers to lobby for that policy change instead of focussing on producing quality research. This is clearly undesirable.

What you can say is that policy makers and development practitioners have access to and will have had the opportunity to engage with a new body of quality evidence – suggesting that research uptake activities must have happened to enable this – and furthermore that this is likely to have resulted in some tangible outcomes.

One approach to designing outcome indicators is to define what you would consider as an outcome and consider what level of outcome would represent success for the programme. Some programmes choose to use an indicator such as 'X number of cases studies of outcomes' linked to a definition of types of outcome[i].

Impact

The impact level is defined as a 'Long term wide spread change' which the outcome contributes towards.

The impact statement should clarify how this research programme will contribute to improving the lives of people living in poverty. DFID guidance makes it clear that it is unlikely that it will be possible to measure any change at the impact level which is attributable to the programme within the life of a programme. Thus the impact is mainly there is order to clarify the 'direction of travel' and to explain the logical pathway by which the research programme is anticipated to lead to development impacts. The impact may also be used to guide post-programme evaluations.

The impact statement is not used as a monitoring tool during the life of the project and it is meaningless to define milestones and targets for an impact which the programme team have very little influence on. However, it is good practice to identify indicators and to track these throughout the life of the project.

Assumptions

The assumptions should relate to the achievement of the **next level up** in the logframe. For example, an assumption at the output level will need to hold true in order that the outcome is achieved. Assumptions need to be plausible. There is no point putting as an assumption 'Policy makers will have the capacity and incentive to make use of research evidence' if it is well known that they do not! Try to think widely about what factors you expect to be in place which will enable your output to lead to an outcome or an outcome to lead to an impact. Assumptions are generally also included in your risk register since if any assumption does not hold true, there is a risk that outcomes and/or impacts will not be achieved.

Frequently asked questions

How should gender be incorporated in research logframes?

There are two ways in which gender can be incorporated into logframes. The first is that all logframes should disaggregate relevant indicators by sex. For example, if measuring the number of people trained, this should be broken into number of women and number of men. The second way that gender can be incorporated is to include a gender component in outputs, outcomes or the impact statement and/or to have specific gender-focussed indicators at any of these levels. For example, a capacity building programme which aimed to build skills of University ICT staff choose to run a number of female only workshops while a research programme on growth chose to carrying out a strand of research focussing specifically on the role of female entrepreneurs.

How does the logframe relate to the programme theory of change?

The logframe should be based on a well-thought through theory of change. The theory of change is an articulation of the logical pathway by which the programme outputs will contribute to outcomes and how these are anticipated to contribute to development impacts. The logframe is based on this pathway and sets out the monitoring strategy which will be used to test the theory of change.

Why does it matter to have a good logframe?

In the past, some research programmes have treated the logframe as a 'tick-box' exercise which is separate to their programme delivery. This is not helpful for DFID or for programmes.

A good logframe enables DFID to carry out effective monitoring of programmes via the Annual Reviews and Programme Completion Review. The scoring given for these reviews is based on the logframe indicators and therefore if the indicators do not reflect what the programme is achieving, there is a risk to the programme that

they will receive a poor score. A good logframe can also help the programme to gauge how well they are achieving what they set out to achieve and will allow them to identify areas where they need to make changes in their approach.

Who should write the logframe?

The logframe should be based on a theory of change which has been developed by the entire programme team. It is acceptable for one person to draft the logframe (and indeed this can help ensure that it is consistent and coherent) but whoever writes it will need to consult widely to agree on indicators. Ultimately it needs to be 'owned' by the entire programme team since it will be the primary tool to monitor their performance.

Can the logframe be changed?

Yes! Logframes can and should be changed if programmes realise that their original theory of change needs to be updated and/or if indicators are found to be either over or under ambitious. Logframes can be changed after an Annual Review. For transparency, any change should be identified as a specific recommendation of the review. If a significant downward revision in the results is implied, then any impact on the value for money of the programme should be assessed. However, if there is a need to make a change at other times of the year consult with your DFID programme manager.

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[i]There are various ways of defining outcomes and impacts. Further information can be found in the following sources:

Knowledge to Policy: A freely downloadable book summarising various case studies on policy impact achieved by International Development Research Centre-funded research. The introduction provides a useful conceptual framework for categorising 'Impact'
http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Resources/Publications/Pages/IDRCBookDetails.aspx?PublicationID=70

UKCDS Evaluation of Research Impact page: This page summarises a workshop on evaluating research impact hosted by UKCDS, DFID and IDRC
http://www.ukcds.org.uk/page-Research_Impact_Evaluation-195.html

Economic and Social Research Council Impact Toolkit: A useful toolkit to help in tracking and capturing the impact of research.
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-toolkit/index.aspx

ESRC also have a collection of impact case studies here.
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/impacts-and-findings/features-casestudies/index.aspx