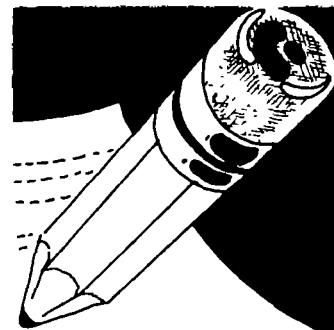# Documenting, Evaluating and Learning from our Development Projects

A Participatory Systematization Workbook

Daniel Selener

with Christopher Purdy and Gabriela Zapata

International Institute of Rural Reconstruction
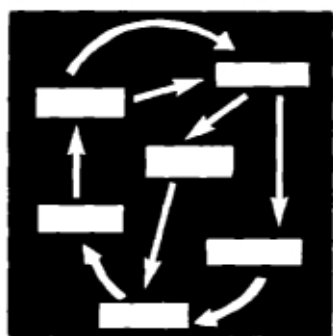
Documenting, Evaluating and Learning from our Development Projects

A Participatory Systematization Workbook
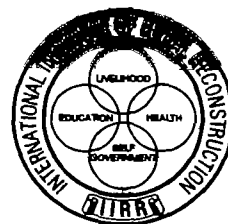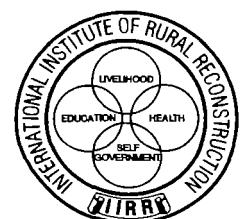
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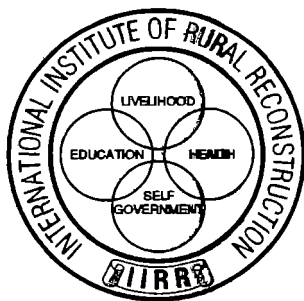
International Institute of Rural Reconstruction

This workbook was developed by the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of development organizations worldwide.

IIRR is a nonprofit, nongovernment organization devoted to improving the quality of life of the rural poor in the developing nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. IIRR grew out of the revolutionary grass-roots development movement founded by Dr. Y.C. James Yen in the 1920s in China.

IIRR Program Areas include:

- Integrated community-based rural development
- Environment, natural resources and agriculture
- Community health, reproductive health and nutrition
- Rural enterprise development
- Institutional capacity building

IIRR has offices in the Philippines, Ecuador, Kenya, and the U.S. This workbook is available in English and Spanish from:

We hope you find this workbook useful. If you need additional information, please write to one of the above addresses.

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Contents
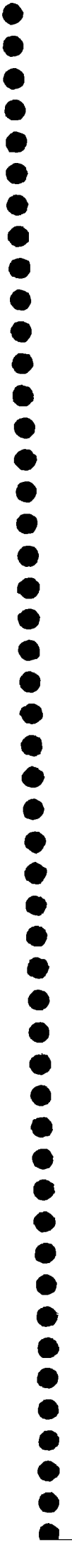
Introduction to Systematization

Introduction

I n spite of a growing interest and need, there are few clear, practical guidelines on how to design, follow-up and evaluate development processes in a participatory way. In general terms, formal evaluations of development projects focused almost exclusively on measuring results, and without the active participation of the beneficiaries.

Staff of non-government organizations (NGOs), grass-roots organizations (GROs), and government agencies (GAs), need to understand the operating processes of projects in which they are involved. Development organizations workers, as well as beneficiaries, often reflect informally on how projects have been designed and implemented and can be improved. But this knowledge is rarely documented, analyzed and shared in a systematic way to improve the project through on-going learning about its processes and results.

Many researchers and development practitioners are departing from the traditional practice of measuring only project results, and seeking a more dynamic and comprehensive understanding, of its processes as well, partly through the active participation of the project beneficiaries themselves. *Systematization* satisfies these needs.

Systematization is a continuous process of participatory reflection on a project's processes and results, undertaken by both project staff and participants. This systematic analysis generates lessons which are fed back to improve the project. It is a process that strengthens the learning and organizational capacity of development organizations, which in turn, promotes the implementation of more effective development projects. Furthermore, when the projects' experiences are documented, they can be shared with other organizations.

What does this workbook provide?

This workbook provides:

- an understanding of the concept of systematization

- methods to plan for, follow-up, evaluate and improve processes and results of development projects

- some useful tools for conducting the systematization process

Workbook contents

This workbook is divided into the following sections:

Section 1: What is systematization?

Section 2: Objectives of systematization

Section 3: Planning of systematization

Section 4: What to systematize: areas of analysis

Section 5: Sharing lessons learned

Section 6: Toolbox

We suggest that you read the whole workbook once before using it. This will facilitate a better understanding for subsequent use.

Section 1

What is Systematization?

Section 1 What is Systematization?
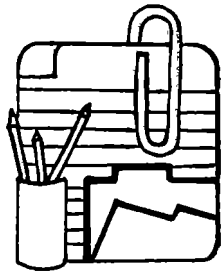
Task: Read this section, discuss it with your colleagues, and be sure that everybody understands the basic concepts of systematization.

This section will explain:

☞ What do we mean by systematization?

☞ Why should we undertake it?

☞ Who can participate in the systematization?

☞ When is the best time to start the process?

What do we mean by systematization?

Definition of systematization

Systematization is a methodology which facilitates the on-going description, analysis, and documentation of the processes and results of a development project* in a participatory way.

New knowledge is generated through a systematic learning process, which is then fed back and used to make decisions about actions to be implemented to improve project performance. The lessons learned are shared with others.

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*   In this workbook, by "development project" we mean any kind of either structured and formal or informal development activity, which may or may not be a typical "development project".

Systematization is:	Systematization is not:
• a continuous process	• a one-time evaluation
• a comprehensive process	• an external evaluation
• a participatory exercise	• an impact evaluation
• a planning tool	• a simple descriptive exercise
• a monitoring and evaluation tool	• a mere documentation
• a problem-solving tool	

Why should we systematize?

The systematization process allows us to continuously analyze project activities, generate knowledge to improve its implementation and impact, and share lessons learned.

What we have been doing: ☹	Why should we systematize: ☺
• "Losing" the experience • Not analyzing projects continuously • Not using lessons learned to improve project performance • Evaluating projects only at their completion	It allows us to: • Preserve the experience • Monitor and analyze processes, activities and results throughout the life of the project • Use lessons learned to improve project performance

The five on-going activities of the systematization process are:

- description of project

- analysis of project activities

- decision making and action to improve
  project performance

- documentation

- sharing lessons learned

All these activities must be documented in order to ensure that information is preserved for analysis, learning, and sharing with other organizations.

**The five main
activities of
systematization**
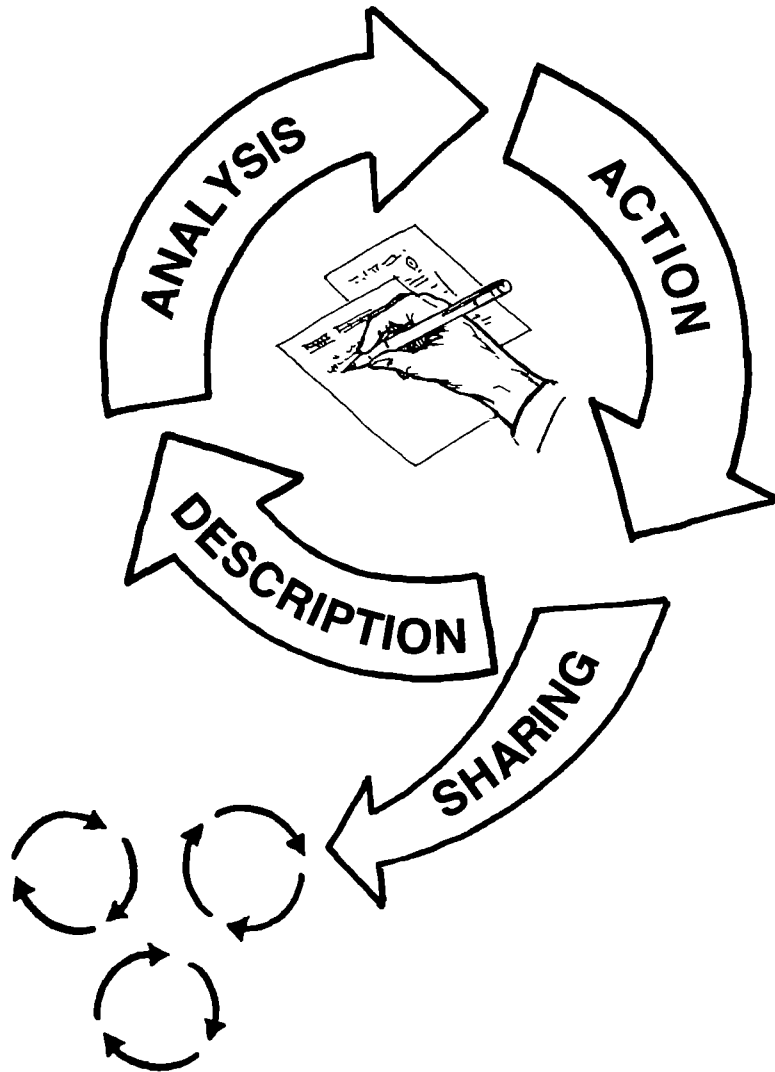
Who can participate in the systematization process?

Anyone who is involved in the design and implementation of a development project can participate in the systematization process. This can include:

- project beneficiaries
- community leaders
- development workers
- facilitators
- technical staff
- social workers
- educators
- researchers and evaluators
- government officials
- donors

When can we start a systematization process?

Ideally, systematization should begin with the planning of a project and continue throughout its life.

If this is not possible, systematization can be started anytime after a project has begun. However, systematization cannot be conducted at the end of a project, as most of the experiences and the opportunity to improve the project on an on-going basis, will have been lost. Such end-of-project activity would be limited to an impact evaluation.

Section 2
Objectives of Systematization

Section 2 Objectives of Systematization
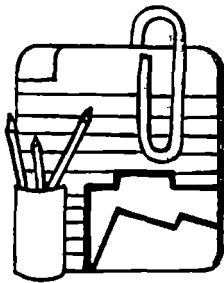
> **Task:** Read this section with your colleagues and be sure that everyone understands and agrees on the objectives of systematization.

This section provides answers to the following questions:

☞ What are the objectives of systematization?

☞ Why is it important to systematize?

☞ What activities have to be conducted to achieve these objectives?

What are the objectives of systematization?

Objectives of systematization

There are six related objectives of systematization. Each objective, while important in and of itself, is also a step toward achieving the next objective. We describe each objective below:

Six objectives of systematization

1. Preserve information

2. Improve project performance and results

3. Promote empowerment, self-reliance and sustainable development

4. Contribute to mutual understanding and cooperation

5. Enhance organizational capacity

6. Strengthen civil society

---

❶ Preserve project information through documentation

Preservation of information

In recent years, development workers and project beneficiaries have expressed the need to describe, analyze and document their accumulated development experiences. In their daily work, these people often reflect on how development projects are planned and implemented, as well as on their impact and how they can be improved. Such informal lessons are rarely documented, so the experience and knowledge gained is lost over time. The systematization process facilitates the documentation of these experiences so they can be used for analysis and learning in an organized and coherent manner. The information also serves as a basis for writing reports, articles, papers and training materials.
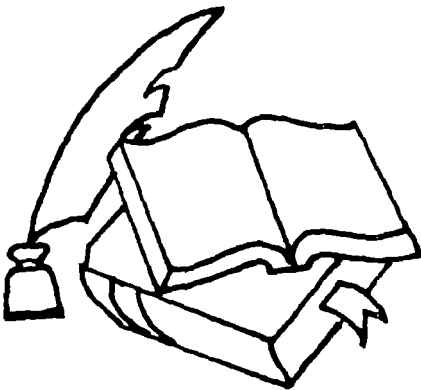
❷ Continuously improve project performance and results

Improvement of project performance and results

On-going reflection and analysis enable organizations to learn from their successes and failures, as well as from the different factors that hinder or facilitate project performance. The lessons learned through this process are fed back into the project to improve its performance which, in turn, will contribute to achieving better results and impact.

REFLECTION

LEARNING

ACTION

REFLECTION

LEARNING
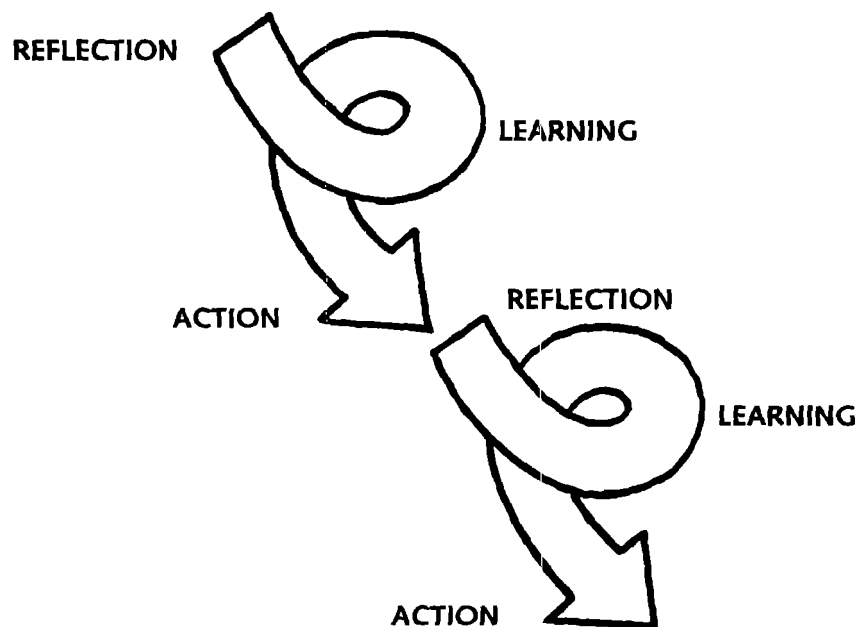
ACTION

❸ Promote empowerment, self-reliance and sustainable development through active participation

Active participation

The process of systematization requires a high degree of participation by all parties involved in the description, analysis and decision making of a project. If genuinely participatory, this process can promote the empowerment of the intended beneficiaries, encouraging them to actively participate in defining and fulfilling their needs. At the same time, this process can promote self-reliance and sustainable development, where changes and improvements are based on consensus.

❹ Contribute to mutual understanding and cooperation between communities and development organizations

Mutual understanding and cooperation

Because systematization is a participatory process, it facilitates reaching a common understanding between community members and the development organization staff, about the nature of community problems and the actions to be taken to solve them. On-going dialogue and partnership in the process of reflection, planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities is essential.
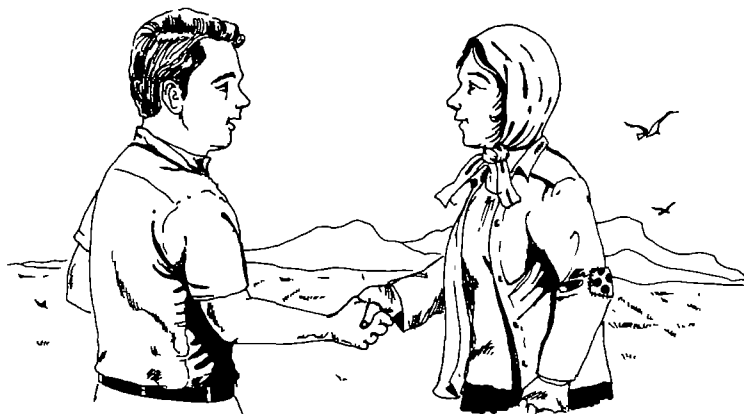
❺ Enhance organizational capacity through development of skills

Enhance organizational capacity

Systematization helps participants to develop their ability to plan and implement activities, learn, and manage resources efficiently. It also facilitates common understanding of a project by its staff. This process also allows organizations to develop skills for networking with other organizations (NGOs, GROs, GAs, donors), thereby promoting cooperation and sharing of knowledge.

❻ Strengthen civil society through the sharing of lessons learned

Strengthen civil society

Sharing lessons learned is important for organizations to play a meaningful role in civil society. Organizations are part of a global system that must be strengthened in order to have a wider impact on development policies that affect their interests locally, regionally, nationally, and even internationally.

Sharing knowledge and experiences with other organizations saves time and resources as it will make these organizations less likely to make similar mistakes. In this way, systematization facilitates institutional learning, common problem-solving, capacity building and networking. Furthermore, if information is shared with donor agencies, it gives them a better idea of the needs of various organizations and enables them to allocate resources more effectively. Sharing of lessons may be done through workshops, conferences, training courses, publications and formal or informal networks.
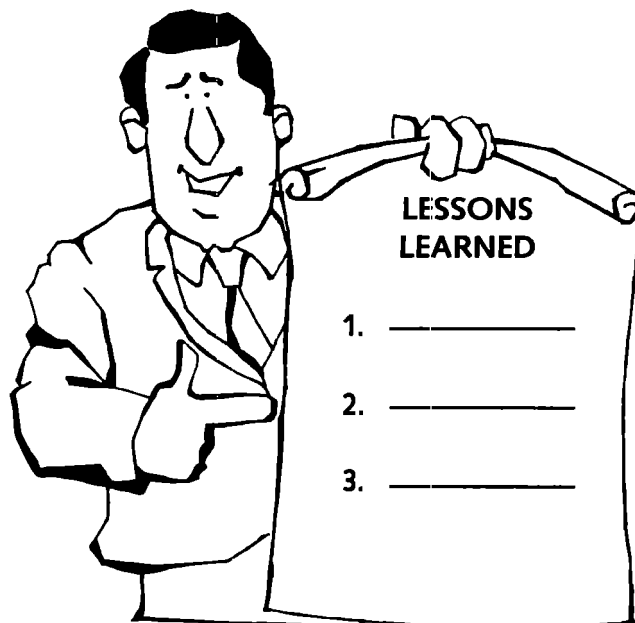
Achieving objectives:
activities of systematization

In order to achieve these objectives, there are specific activities which must be performed. The activities are summarized below:

Objectives	Activities
1. Preserve information.	Document project activities.
2. Improve project performance, results and impact.	Analyze project design, implementation and results continuously and implement actions for change.
3. Promote empowerment, self-reliance and sustainable development.	Insure genuine participation by all parties involved.
4. Contribute to mutual understanding and cooperation.	Project participants and staff work together in planning, implementation and evaluation.
5. Enhance organizational capacity.	Use lessons learned to: 1) better design and manage planning, administrative and financial systems, 2) collaborate with other organizations.
6. Strengthen civil society.	Network, collaborate with other organizations, exchange and share information, and conduct advocacy.

Section 3

Planning of Systematization

Section 3   Planning of Systematization

I n this section we will share information on how to plan a systematization process. This section is divided into three parts:

☞   Principles which guide systematization

☞   Aspects to consider before starting the systematization process

☞   Solutions to possible obstacles encountered during systematization

Principles which guide systematization

Principles of systematization

1. Relevance and need

2. Integrated and global

3. Historical perspective

4. Relativity of information

5. Plurality of opinions and knowledge

6. Use of local and scientific knowledge

7. Participation
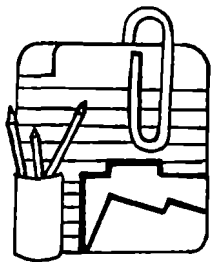
Task: Meet as a group to discuss the following principles and see how they relate to the systematization of your project.

❶ Relevance and need

You should undertake systematization of a project only if all participants, especially project beneficiaries, perceive it as useful and necessary. Otherwise, you may be embarking on a process which may serve little purpose.
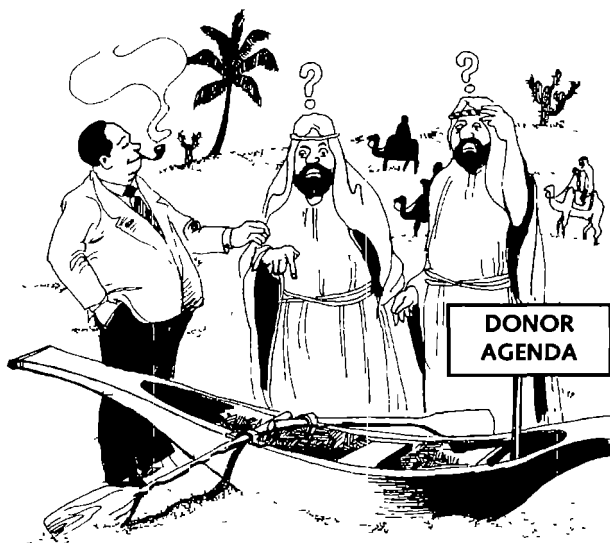
❷ Integrated and global

The project should be analyzed within the broader context of society including, among others, the social, economic, political, and cultural aspects that influence it. Therefore, information obtained during the systematization process should be analyzed from a global perspective.
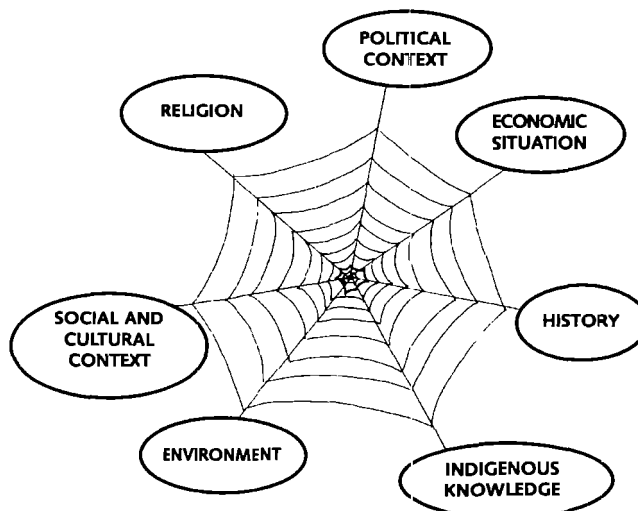
❸ Historical perspective

It is important to consider the historical roots of the problem that the project intends to solve. By understanding the historical trends, and learning from the successes and failures of the past, people can play a more effective role in determining their futures.

1950's

1970's

1990's
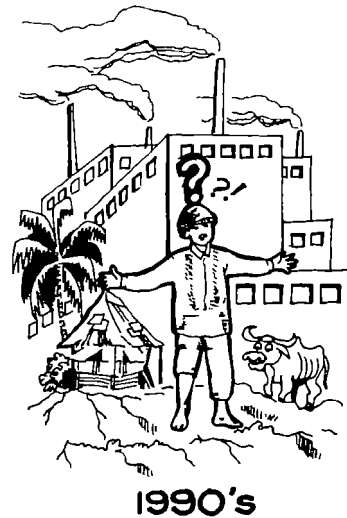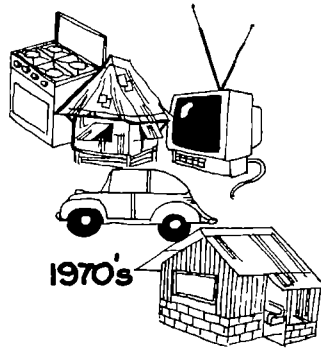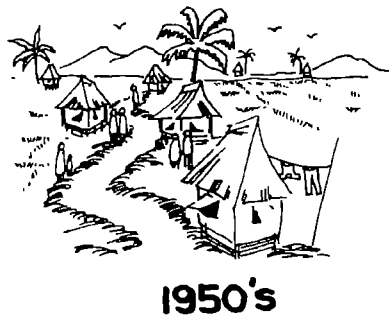
❹ Relativity of information

There needs to be an awareness that implemented activities and lessons learned may be relevant or applicable for a particular situation only. This would need to be considered in any plans for future replication as well as sharing of information.
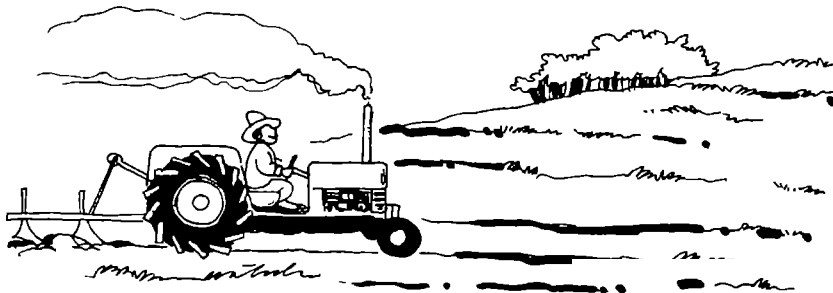
❺ Plurality of opinions and knowledge

Remember that there exists a wide variety of interpretations of reality. Each person sees the world through a personal "lens" which is a product of a variety of factors such as culture, education, gender and age. This plurality of knowledge and perspectives enriches the systematization process.
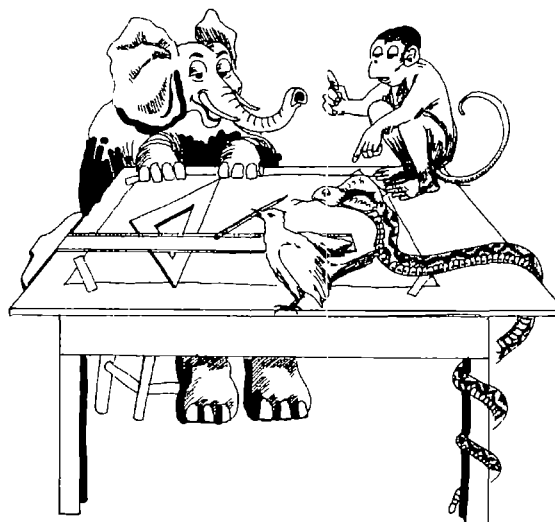
❻ Use of local and scientific knowledge

Systematization allows for the gathering, organization, synthesi, and use of local -or indigenous- and scientific knowledge that has been useful in the community. This knowledge can be historical, economic, technical, social or political. Systematization also allows for the generation of new knowledge in regard to the project implemented.

GATHERING

USE

ORGANIZATION AND SYNTHESIS

LOCAL AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE
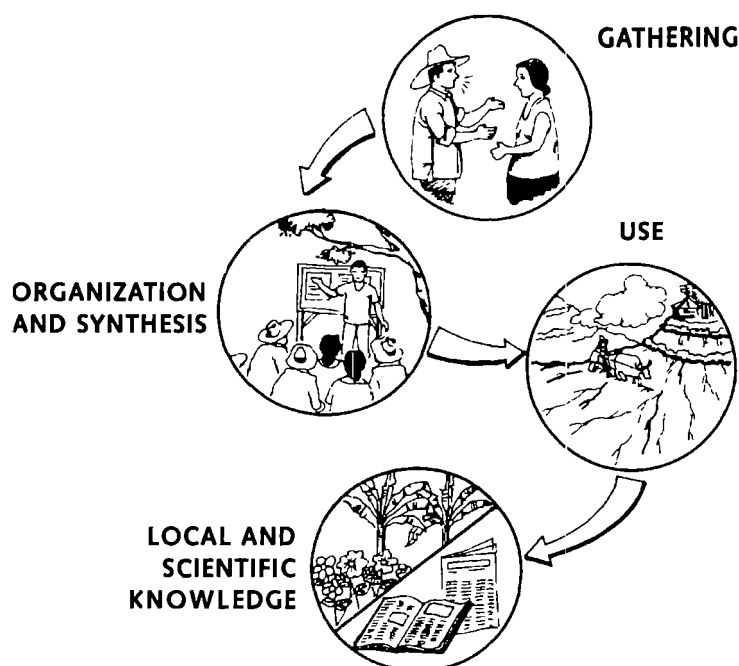
❼ Participation

The description and analysis of a project should be conducted in a participatory way, which takes into account everyones point of view. No individual should be responsible of documenting and systematizing a project. Instead, the generation of knowledge and lessons should include the different perspectives of all participants about the project. This will increase the likelihood that decisions made are accepted and respected by all, while promoting democratic processes.

Aspects to consider before starting the systematization process
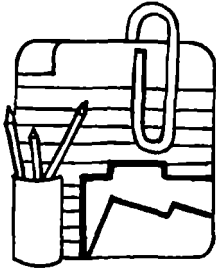
> **Task:** Before starting the systematization process, you must carefully analyze the following aspects with project staff and beneficiaries.

The aspects to be considered before starting the systematization process are:

Why are you going to systematize the project?
What aspects of the project will be analyzed?
Who will coordinate the process?
Who will participate in the systematization process?
What methods and tools will be used?
What kind of data will you use?
How will you record and organize the collected information?
What procedures and time frame will you use?

❶ Why are you going to systematize the project?

Although this may seem a simple question, it is important that participants understand the reasons for systematizing the project, so that the purpose is clear to all involved. Differences of opinion should be discussed and clarified before starting.

Possible reasons to systematize:

- Improve project performance and avoid problems
- Learn about project dynamics
- Democratize project decision making
- Evaluate processes and impact
- Other:

  ....
  ....

❷ What aspects of the project will be analyzed?

You can systematize an entire project or just a specific component, such as different kinds of activities, training, community participation or a given phase of it. Whatever the case, be sure that everyone is clear about what you are going to systematize and that this aspect is perceived as relevant and necessary by all involved.

You will also need to decide how general or detailed you want your information to be. Therefore, you must carefully select for systematization those aspects which are most relevant to your needs. While you may wish to emphasize certain aspects over others, it is recommended that you dedicate some time and energy to each area. The more time you spend on each aspect, the more useful the systematization process will be. You will find possible areas of analysis in Section 4 of this workbook.

Examples of possible aspects or topics to systematize:

- A whole project
- Cost-benefit analysis of a credit program
- Process of adoption of low-input agricultural technologies
- Process and impact of a training program
- A community-based health project

---

❸ Who will coordinate the process?

You need to appoint someone to coordinate the systematization process. This preferably should be a person from within the organization or group. However, an outside facilitator may also be an option. The person's responsibilities will be to coordinate meetings and schedules, draw up workplans, organize and motivate participants, document and distribute information, facilitate analysis and perform other related tasks.

> **Possible coordinators:**
>
> - A community leader or member
> - A staff member from the development organization
> - A staff committee
> - An external facilitator
> - Other ....

❹ Who will participate in the systematization process?

It is possible to involve everybody who is or has been part of a project. However, in most cases, organizations or communities prefer to strategically select individuals or representative groups who are willing and able to participate in the process and who represent diverse views and experiences. While you need to decide beforehand who will participate, you can always include new participants at any time during the systematization. Keep in mind that the more varied the backgrounds of the people involved, the more valuable the process is.

> **Possible participants:**
>
> - Community leaders and members
> - NGO or GRO staff
> - Government workers
> - Facilitators
> - Technical staff
> - Researchers and evaluators
> - Other ....

❺ What methods and tools will you use?

You will need to decide what methods and tools you will use to elicit and analyze information and make decisions. You should choose tools that you and your colleagues know and are familiar with already, and that will be useful to systematize your project.

<table>
<tr><th>Possible methods:</th><th>Possible tools:</th></tr>
<tr><td>

- Meetings
- Field trips
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Others
  ....
  ....

</td><td>

- Problem tree
- SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
- Planning matrix
- Advantages and disadvantages table
- Pros and cons chart
- Logical framework
- Others.....................

</td></tr>
</table>

⑥ What kind of data will you use?

You will need to decide if quantitative and/or qualitative data are going to be used in each area of analysis. The decision must be made based on the type of issue that will be described and analyzed. We recommend using a combination of both.

Quantitative data utilize numbers (or statistics) and generate figures with which one can make broader generalizations and comparisons about the information gathered, if the samples are representative enough. These data are often more revealing and communicative if presented in the form of charts, diagrams or trend lines, rather than simply as totals or averages.
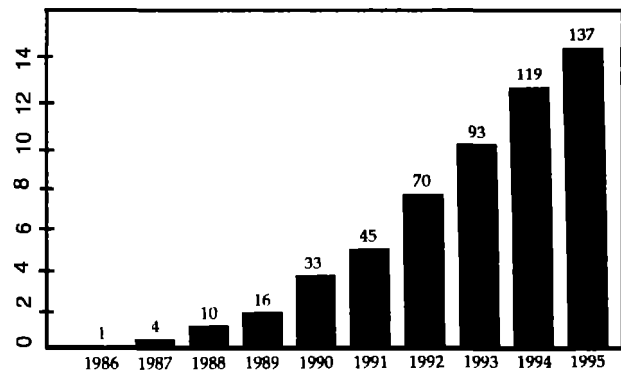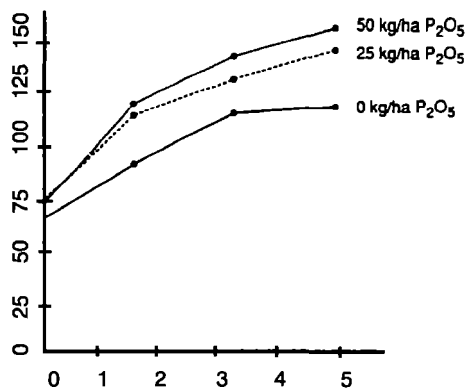
Examples of quantitative data

- Tons of grains produced
- Kilometers of road built
- Number of children vaccinated
- Number of courses offered

Qualitative data focus more on personal and group perceptions, opinions, feelings, impressions and reactions, and are very important to use in project systematization.

Examples of qualitative data

- Opinion of community leaders
- Experiences with the strengths and weaknesses of a project
- Life stories
- People's vision of the improvements resulting from the irrigation project in the community

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❼ How will you record and organize the collected information?
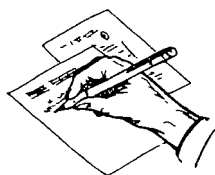
Before starting, you should know how you will record and organize collected information. You may wish to appoint one or more people who will be responsible for documenting and organizing important information.
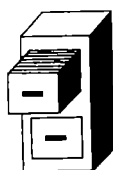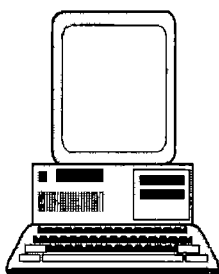
Possible ways of recording and organizing information:

- Written documents
- Computer files
- Videos or photographs
- Audio recording

---

❽ What procedures and time frame will you use?

You will need to establish the procedures and time frame to be used in the systematization process in order to keep it well planned and organized. The procedures should include a general plan of themes you will discuss and activities you will undertake. This includes topics to be discussed only once as well as those to be discussed continuously.

Your time frame should be a schedule of these activities for the whole systematization process. You may need to allow more time in the initial stages in order to train people, become familiar with the principles of systematization and be able to implement it.

ACTIVITIES	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Planning												
2. Description and analysis of conceptual framework												
3. Description and analysis of general context												
4. Description and analysis of characteristics of participants												
5. Description and analysis of project implementation												
6. Etc. etc...												

Solutions to possible obstacles encountered during systematization

Based on past experiences in systematization, you may face the following constraints when planning and implementing a systematization process:

☞ lack of staff time

☞ lack of staff skills

☞ lack of financial resources

Below you will find a brief description of these problems as well as possible solutions.
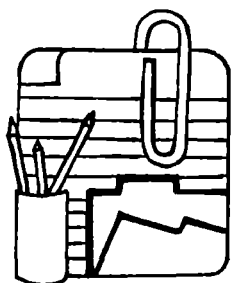
❶ Lack of staff time

Many organizations feel there is a lack of time to systematize. Development organizations seldom allocate time for such activities because of the perception that development activities must produce tangible outcomes (e.g. teach a course or install a water pump). Exercises like dialogue and reflection are often seen as taking time away from hands-on activities. The limited number of staff often have so many responsibilities, that this additional assignment is perceived to be burdensome.

In addition, beneficiaries themselves are busy with their day-to-day tasks and don't always have time to participate in the systematization meetings.
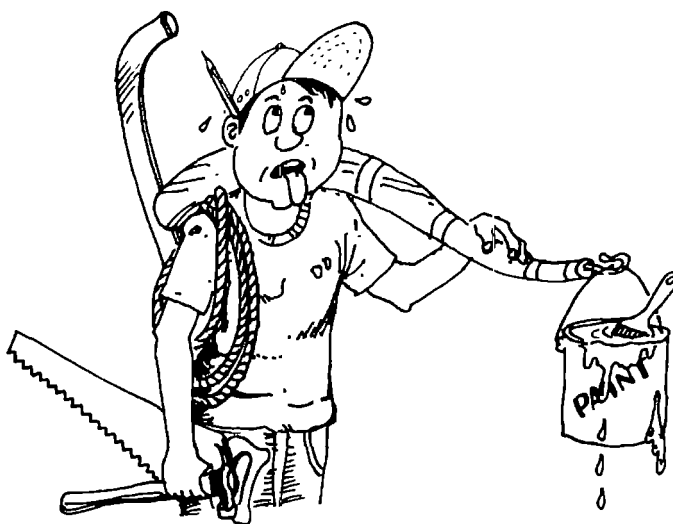
Possible solutions

Solutions for lack of time

● Of course, organizational commitment to the process of systematization is a key factor which will ensure that the necessary time is found.

● Adapt existing meetings to the needs of your systematization process.
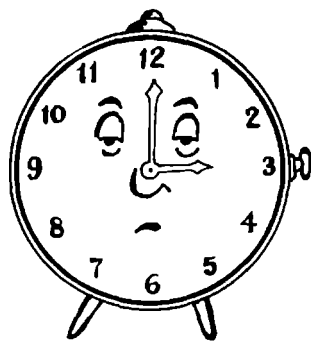
- When the project is designed, incorporate systematization as one of the on going activities, thereby ensuring that enough time is allocated to undertake the process throughout the life of the project.

- Demonstrate that systematization does have tangible results and impacts and will be a useful exercise to which time should be allocated.

- If organizations focus on the most important aspects of a project to be systematized, the collection of information to analyze will be optimized, and the possibility of redundant work will be diminished.

- Contract the services of an external facilitator to assist with the coordination of the systematization process, although it is better to have an internal facilitator when possible.

- Be flexible about the needs and schedules of beneficiaries; they will know what times are most convenient for them, perhaps weekends or evenings.

❷ Lack of staff skills

Many people feel that systematization is too complicated and that they lack the necessary skills to systematize, such as facilitation, analysis and writing. They feel that systematization is a task to be conducted by outside experts.

Possible solutions
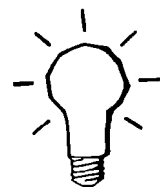
Solutions to lack of staff skills

- Choose the most motivated and skilled person in your organization to coordinate the systematization process, or rotate this responsibility, thereby drawing upon a wider range of abilities. You may also choose a person who has the interest and ability to learn how to facilitate reflection processes.

- Provide specialized training to staff, especially coordinators, about facilitation, analysis and documentation, to strengthen their abilities and confidence in systematization.

- Use suggestions in this manual to build up staff skills within your organization or project.

❸ Lack of financial resources

It is possible that organizations which want to conduct a systematization may feel that they lack the financial resources to do so. Although systematization is not an expensive activity, some costs may be expected such as paper, photocopies, photographs, recording, refreshments, transportation and other costs.

Possible solutions

Solutions to lack of financial resources

- Include systematization costs in the project budget submitted to donors, justifying the need and benefits of systematization. Systematization costs may easily be incorporated in "monitoring and evaluation" line items.

- If the implementation of the project has started and funds were allocated already, consider submitting a separate brief proposal to cover the costs involved in systematization.

- Include systematization costs in different line items in the budget, for example, for the staff time which will be involved or for office materials.

What to Systematize: Areas of Analysis

Section 4 What to Systematize: Areas of Analysis

S o far in this workbook we have:

☞ defined the concept of systematization,

☞ presented its goals,

☞ responded to common questions about the process, and

☞ provided suggestions to plan its implementation.

In this section we will share two aspects:

- introduction to the four areas of analysis for systematization and,

- analytical framework for systematization.

Adapt the areas of analysis to meet your needs

This section presents the four areas of analysis which will be useful to document, describe, analyze and improve your project.

The proposed model is not rigid, but flexible. You should not feel you must "box in" your development project to fit the framework provided here. On the contrary, you should modify it by adding or taking out areas of analysis to meet your organizational and project needs.

Remember that systematization is comprised of five on-going activities
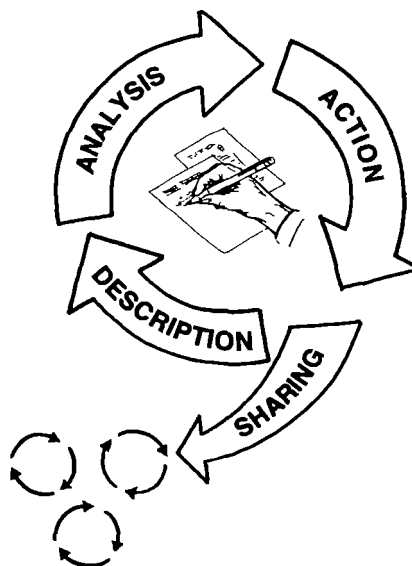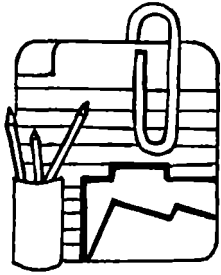
Task: Start by reading the different questions listed below. Then choose and adapt those relevant to your project. Include the new questions posed by the participants to meet the specific needs of the project. Then answer these questions using the tools you have selected.

Basic process of systematization

```
        ┌──────────────────────┐
   ┌───▶│   Choose relevant     │
   │    │  questions or aspects │
   │    └──────────────────────┘
   │               │
   │               ▼
   │    ┌──────────────────────┐          D
   │    │  Describe and analyze │          O
   │    │  information about the│          C
   │    │       project         │          U
   │    └──────────────────────┘          M
   │               │                       E
   │               ▼                       N
   │    ┌──────────────────────┐          T
   │    │  Decide on actions    │          A
   │    │  to be taken to        │
   │    │  improve the           │          T
   │    │  project, based on     │          I
   │    │  carefully analyzed    │
   │    │  information and        │          O
   │    │  lessons learned       │          N
   │    └──────────────────────┘
   │               │
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   └────│  Implement actions    │
        │  to improve project   │
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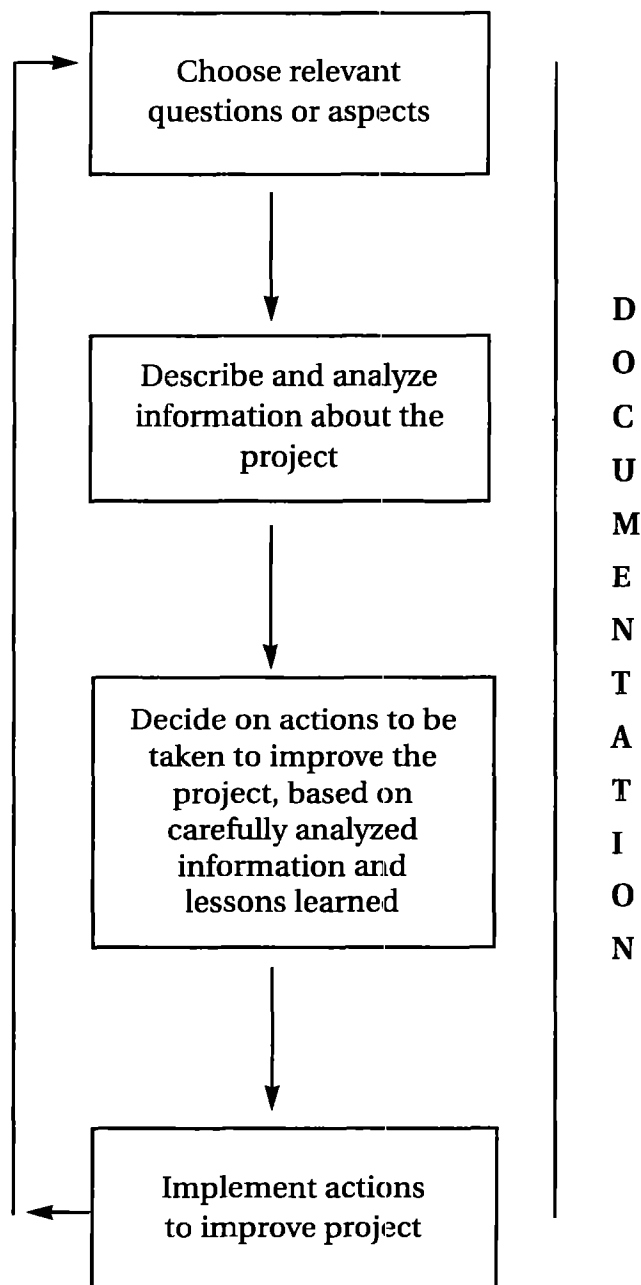
Introduction to the four areas of analysis for systematization

There are four areas of analysis that you could systematize. These are described below:

Four areas of analysis:

1. Conceptual framework
2. General context
3. Characteristics of participants and project
4. Project implementation, results and impact

---

❶ Conceptual framework

Conceptual framework includes the ideology of an organization and the strategy chosen to achieve its goals and objectives.

Ideology: is the set of philosophical principles and ideas (political, cultural, social, economic) which guide an organization or a project. The ideology of your organization will have an important effect on any project that you implement and systematize.

Strategy: is the general plan that guides the actions to be implemented to achieve the organizational mission to promote social, political, or economic change.

❷ General context

Organizations and the projects they implement, are influenced by the environments in which they operate. The general context includes all the local, regional, national and international conditions (including historical, political, economic, social, and cultural characteristics) which may affect an organization or a project's performance.

❸ Characteristics of different participants and nature of the project

There are many aspects of a project which greatly influence its performance and outcomes. These include:

- characteristics of participants involved in the project, such as their history, interests, and the roles they played.

- the nature of the project, including goals, objectives and activities.

❹ Project implementation, results and impact

The implementation refers to the project activities carried out to achieve project goals and objectives. Results and impact refer to the achievement of goals and objectives and to the solution of problems. Both areas must be analyzed in light of lessons learned.

Analytical framework for systematization

This analytical framework is a general guide for the areas of a project that should be described, analyzed and documented as part of the systematization process. We remind you that the key questions provided in the workbook can be modified. Also, you should add new questions to meet your organizational or project needs.

In section 6, there are some examples of tools that can be used to describe, analyze and improve your project. In addition, you and your colleagues should try to use other tools that you might find useful to systematize the project.

Analytical Framework for the Systematization of Development Projects
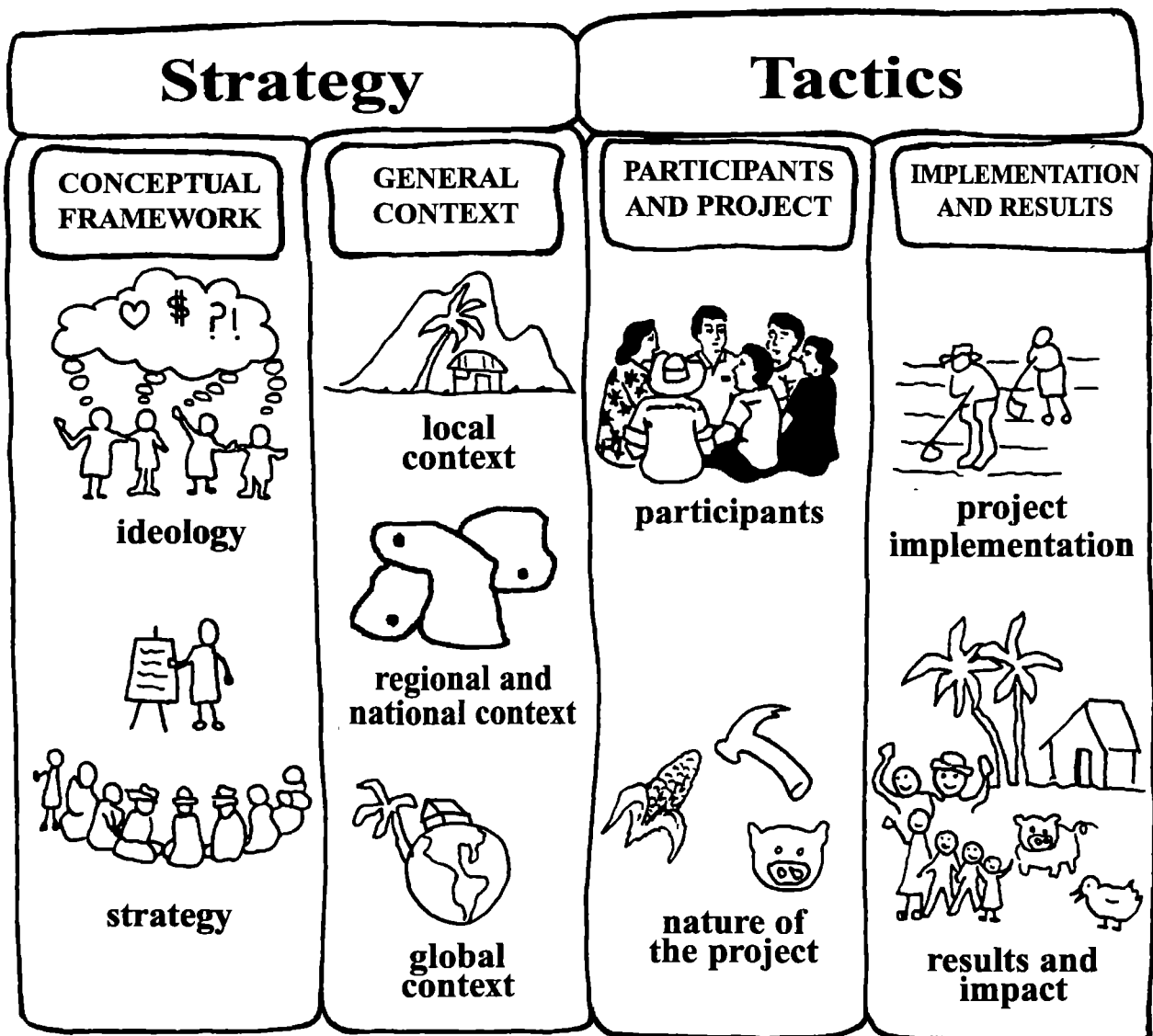
Strategy

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

ideology

strategy

GENERAL CONTEXT

local context

regional and national context

global context

Tactics

PARTICIPANTS AND PROJECT

participants

nature of the project

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

project implementation

results and impact
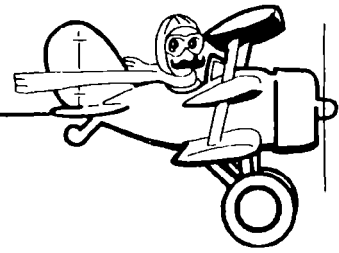
❶ Conceptual framework

As mentioned before, this area of analysis is composed of two parts: ideology and strategy.

Ideology

In this section, you will elicit information about the organizational mission and vision, general goals and objectives, and the values and assumptions espoused by the organization or project, and how these may influence the project you are systematizing. This is important because a shared mission, vision and organizational objectives between staff and beneficiaries, facilitates common understanding, and therefore, a more efficient and effective project.

?	**Ideology: key questions**
☐	1. What are the general goals and objectives, values and assumptions of your organization? Why do you believe these principles will help achieve your organization's objectives? How do these guide or influence the project?
☐	2. What is your opinion of the present society?
☐	3. What is your view of the future society if no changes occur to modify current trends?
☐	4. What is the view of the ideal society?
☐	5. What is the mission and vision of your organization?
☐	Other questions developed by you: ....

Strategy

In this section, we will address issues to design and analyze the general plan of action, or project implementation strategy, of your organization. This is important because it will help you have a clear framework of the strategies that guide the actions of your organization or project.

?	Strategy: key questions
☐	1. What kind of development work does your organization do (e.g. relief, service delivery, research, capacity building, empowerment, training)? Why?
☐	2. What development strategy is being used (e.g. grassroots development, economic development, agricultural development)? Why?
☐	3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy you are using?
☐	4. How do you justify the selection of the strategy used by your organization? Why do you think this strategy has possibilities of guiding your organization to achieve its general goals and objectives?
☐	5. What aspects of your development strategy are participatory and which are not (e.g. decision making, implementation, evaluation)?
☐	6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each aspect addressed in the previous question?
☐	7. With whom does your organization work (e.g. government, directly with communities, farmer organizations, NGOs)? Why?
☐	Other questions developed by you: ....

> **REMEMBER!!!**
> Describe, analyze and feedback
> lessons learned to improve project
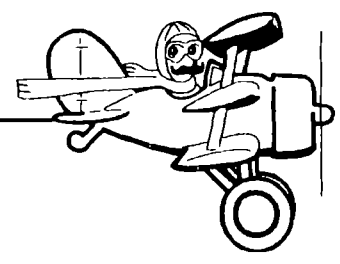
❷ General context

In this section you will obtain information about the historical, political, economic, social and cultural characteristics of the different contexts -community, regional, national and global or international- which influence your organization and project. This is important in order to understand the environments in which you work and the influence they may have in achieving project objectives. Remember that these characteristics should be described and analyzed in relation to the goals and objectives, and to the implementation of the project.

Local or community context

The local or community context refers to the community or group of communities where the project is going to be implemented.

?	**Local or community context: key questions**
☐	1. Where does the project takes place?
☐	2. What are the basic social and economic conditions (e.g. health, education, income) of the community? To what can these conditions be attributed? What effects do these conditions have?
☐	3. What are the major sources of income for most people?
☐	4. What is the land tenure situation? What is the use of the land?
☐	5. What local resources exist that have not been tapped (e.g. water, labor, indigenous knowledge)?
	More questions ➨

Local or community context (continued)

☐   6.   What is the local/community power structure? How does this affect the community and the project?

☐   7.   How are the economic resources and social services distributed in the community? What are the reasons for this?

☐   8.   What's the average income of a typical family?

☐   9.   What opportunities exist in the area to improve the quality of life?

☐   10.   What are the most important traditional means of production?

☐   11.   What are the most important alternative means of production?

☐   12.   What infrastructure exists in the community (e.g. water, roads, electricity)?

☐   13.   What is the relationship between the community and other communities in the area?

☐   14.   What other projects exist nearby and what positive or negative influences might these have?

☐   15.   What does the community think about development projects?

☐   Other questions developed by you:

          ....

          ....

Regional context

The regional context refers to the general situation of the province, state, or area where the project is going to be implemented. If the project is implemented at a regional level, you may find many of the questions in the previous section (local or community context) relevant, provided you adapt them to your needs.

?

	Regional context: key questions
☐	1. What economic opportunities exist in the region?
☐	2. What kind of government does the region have?
☐	3. What is the regional power structure (including politicians, landowners, business community)?
☐	4. What are the basic social conditions (e.g. health, education) in the region?
☐	5. In the case of a community project, how does the regional situation compare with your community?
☐	Other questions developed by you: ....

National context

The national context refers to the general situation of the country where the project takes place. Analysis of the national context will allow us to know how it may affect, positively or negatively, the project design, implementation and results.

?	National context: key questions
☐	1. What is the *political* situation of the country (e.g. type of government, level of administrative centralization or descentralization, corruption, human rights, social or political movements)?
☐	2. What is the *economic* situation of the country (e.g. economic policy, external debt, main sources of revenues, unemployment, inflation)?
☐	3. What is the *social* situation of the country (e.g. average wages, health, levels of education, infant mortality, nutrition, access to water and electricity)?
☐	Other questions:.....................................

Agrarian issues:

☐	4. What kinds of agrarian policies does the government have? Has the government undertaken an agrarian reform? What have been the results?
☐	5. What is the relationship of the government with farmer organizations (e.g. are they supported or not)?
☐	6. What is the relationship of the government with farmer enterprises (e.g. mechanisms of support, surplus purchasing)?
☐	7. What is the relationship of the government with the rural sector as compared to the urban/industrial sector (subsidies, support investment, tax concessions)?
☐	8. Are there food imports? What kinds of imports? Why? What impact do these imports have on agricultural production and commercialization?

more questions ➤➤

National context (continued)

Urban issues:

☐ 9. What kinds of urban policies does the government have?

☐ 10. Is there rural migration to urban areas, and what is its impact?

☐ 11. What is the government's policy toward the urban and industrial sectors (e.g. subsidies, nationalization, tax concesions)?

☐ 12. What is the situation of marginalized urban areas?

☐ 13. Are there any special urban issues to be addressed (e.g. street children, public sanitation, schools, drugs)?

☐ Other questions:
....
....

Cultural/ethnic issues:

☐ 14. What ethnic groups exist in your country/region and what are the relationships among them?

☐ 15. What position does the government take regarding the cultural recognition and promotion of these different groups?

☐ 16. Are minority and ethnic groups included in determination of policies that affect them? How?

☐ Other questions:
....
....

Global context

The global context refers to the international situation and its effects on the country and on the project.

?	**Global context: key questions**
☐	1. What is the global economic situation and how does it affect the country and the project? How will it affect your project in the future?
☐	2. What political and economic relationships has your country had with other countries in the region and worldwide (e.g. colonization, agreements, commercial treaties, alliances, conflicts)? Are these relationships positive or negative? What has been the impact? Will these relationships continue?
☐	3. What are the countries which your country "depends" on, and how do the policies of those countries influence the country and the project?
☐	Other questions..
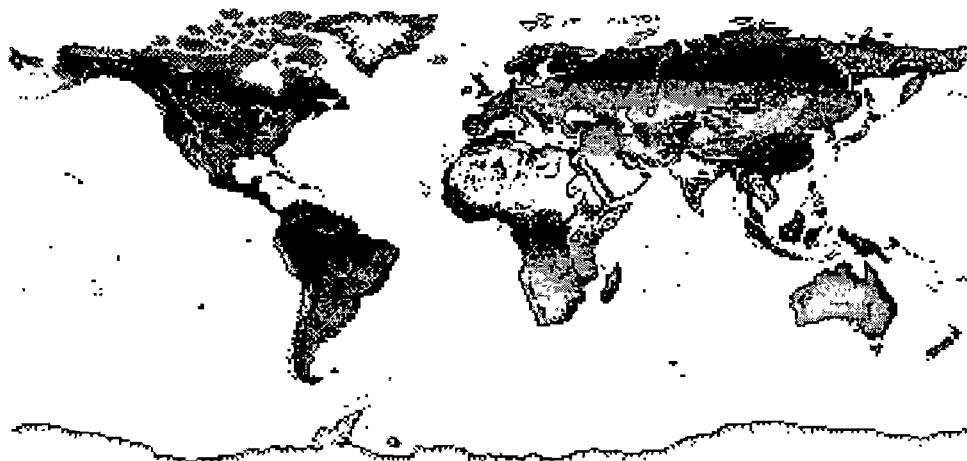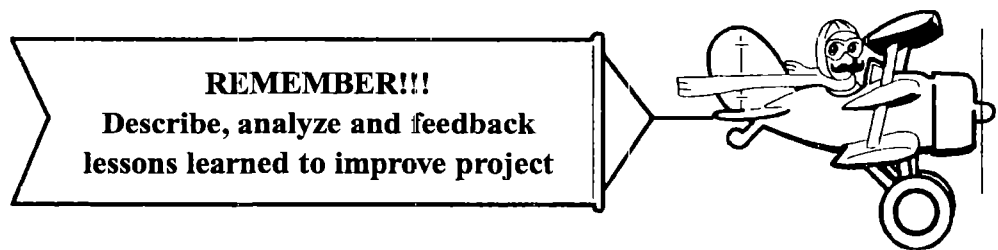
❸ Characteristics of participants and nature of project

This section is divided in two parts:

- characteristics of different participants in a project and

- nature of the project.

It is important to know about the characteristics of the different participants involved in the project to better understand with whom we are working. Likewise, it is fundamental to have relevant information that will allow us to better plan, implement and evaluate a project, based on community needs.

Characteristics of participants

This includes characteristics of participants such as:

a) Grassroots organizations (GROs) and its members

b) Non-government organizations (NGOs) and government agencies (GAs)

c) Facilitating team

d) Donors

e) Other organizations

a) Characteristics of GROs and their members

?	**GROs and their members: key questions**
☐	1. How, when, and why was the GRO formed?
☐	2. Who are its members and what is their background (e.g. small or large farmers, artisans, entrepreneurs)?
☐	3. How are the leaders selected?
☐	4. What are the power relations within the GRO?
☐	5. What are the relations between the GRO and the rest of the community?
☐	6. What relationship does the GRO have with other GROs in the area?
☐	7. What is the institutional capacity of the GRO?
☐	8. What expectations does the GRO have about the project?
☐	9. What lessons have been learned about the GRO and its members? How will these lessons be fed back to the project?
☐	Other questions: ....

b) Characteristics of NGOs and GAs

This section refers only to those NGOs or GAs which implement and/or support projects through technical assistance, training, etc. For information on NGOs which are donors only, please see the following section. In case there is more than one NGO or GA involved in the project, you should ask questions for each organization.

?	NGOs and GAs: key questions
❑	1. What is the institutional capacity of the NGO or GA to implement and support the project?
❑	2. What is the organization's record in implementing projects? What kind of projects are these?
❑	3. What is the organization's relationship with the community or GRO?
❑	4. What is the NGO relationship with the government?
❑	5. What is the organization's relationship with donors?
❑	6. What is the NGO or GA relationship with NGOs?
❑	7. What internal problems has the organization had in the past? What effects have these had?
❑	8. Why is the organization interested in implementing or supporting the project?
❑	9. How does the organization plan to support the project (e.g. technical assistance, evaluation, training)?

more questions ➤➤

NGOs and GAs (continued)

☐ 10. What are the main accountability procedures or control mechanisms instituted by the organization at different levels (e.g. funding agency to NGO, NGO to community, GRO to beneficiaries? How do these controls influence the project participants?

☐ 11. What lessons have been learned about NGOs and GAs and how are these fed back into the project?

☐ Other questions:

....

....

c) Characteristics of facilitating team

The facilitating team can be composed of individuals from the NGO, GRO, or GA. They are the link between the community itself and other participants in the project, and facilitate project design and implementation.

?

	Facilitating team: key questions
☐	1. Who are the facilitators?
☐	2. How was the facilitating team formed? Who selected its members?
☐	3. What role do people play in the facilitating team?
☐	4. What is the motivation of the members of the facilitating team to work on the project?
☐	5. How does the facilitating team perceive the project?
☐	6. Does the facilitating team actually facilitate or hinder the achievement of project objectives? How and why?
☐	7. What is the relationship among members of the facilitating team?
☐	8. What is the relationship between the project beneficiaries and the facilitating team?
☐	9. What lessons have been learned about the facilitating team and how will these be fed back into the project?
☐	Other questions: ....

d) Characteristics of donors

This section refers only to those organizations (NGOs, governments, foundations, bilateral and multilateral agencies) which provide funding for development projects. These questions can be answered together with the donors, or just be based on the perceptions of the participants and facilitating team about the donors.

?	**Donors: key questions**
❑	1. Who are the project donors?
❑	2. What kinds of projects have the donors financed in the past?
❑	3. What is the donor's reputation?
❑	4. What has been the nature of the donor's relations with other participants in the project?
❑	5. Why is the donor interested in supporting this project?
❑	6. What type of support, other than financing, does the donor plan to provide (e.g. technical assistance, evaluation, training)?
❑	7. What are the main accountability procedures or control mechanisms established by the donor? What influence do these have over the organizations with whom the donor works?
❑	8. What implications could the support of certain donors have for the project?
❑	9. For how long will the donor financially support the project?
❑	10. What lessons have been learned about donors and how will these be fed back into the project?
❑	Other questions: ....

e) Characteristics of other organizations

This section refers to other organizations which may play a role during project design, implementation and evaluation, providing information, technical assistance and other resources.

?	**Other organizations: key questions**
☐	1. What other organizations could collaborate with the project? What advantages or disadvantages may result from this collaboration?
☐	2. What are the most important characteristics of these organizations and what type of work do they do?
☐	3. Is there some compatibility in the work of both organizations? If so, what supportive role could the external organization play?
☐	4. Are there any organizations which you should not collaborate with? Why?
☐	5. What lessons have been learned about external organizations and how will these be fed back into the project?
☐	Other questions: ....

Nature of the project

This section focuses on why and how the project was designed and how it is being implemented.

| ?	**Nature of project: key questions**
☐	1. Where is the project located? Why was this place chosen?
☐	2. When and why was the project initiated? How long will the project last?
☐	3. How was the project designed? What methodologies and tools were used? Who was involved in the process? What mechanisms have been used to ensure the active participation of the community in the design, implementation and evaluation of the project?
☐	4. What are the main problems that the project is attempting to solve? What are the causes and consequences of these problems?
☐	5. What are the proposed solutions to the problem? Why do you think these will work?
☐	6. What problems were identified but are not being worked on? Why?
☐	7. What are the goals or general objectives of the project?
☐	8. What are the specific objectives of the project?
☐	9. Who are the main project beneficiaries (e.g. farmers, street children, women)?
☐	10. What are the main activities of the project?
☐	11. What is the schedule of activities?
☐	12. Who are responsibe for implementing the different project activities? Why were they chosen?
	more questions ➡

Nature of the project (continued)

☐ 13. What indicators are being used to evaluate the implementation of activities?

☐ 14. What are the expected results of the project? What qualitative and quantitative indicators will you use to verify achievement of results?

☐ 15. What is the project budget, and the cost per activity? What other kind of internal or external resources are needed (human, institutional, material)?

☐ 16. How are the lessons learned from other organizations being used in the project?

☐ 17. How does the project relate to the mission of the organization?

☐ 18. Does your project have a monitoring and evaluation component? How and when will these activities be implemented?

☐ 19. What mechanisms have been established to ensure project sustainability after funding ends?

☐ 20. What processes do you expect the project to catalyze (e.g. empowerment, community organization)?

☐ 21. What factors may facilitate or hinder the achievement of project goals and objectives?

☐ 22. What factors may facilitate or hinder the implementation of project activities?

☐ Other questions:

....

....

REMEMBER!!!
Describe, analyze and feedback
lessons learned to improve project
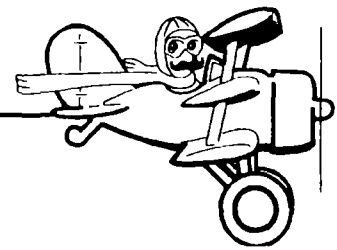
❹ Project implementation, results and impact

In this section, the questions presented will assist you to describe and analyze:

- the practical implementation of the project and

- the results and impact.

This is important because it helps you to learn how the project is being implemented in order to improve its performance.

Project implementation

It is important here to continuously analyze the performance of the activities being implemented. You should also understand the dynamics and changes in project activities that are influenced by internal and external factors to the project.

Especially in this section, you should emphasize the on-going analysis of project activities and the generation of lessons to be fed back to improve project performance and results. There are three areas to analyze:

- goals and specific objectives of the project
- implementation of activities and project improvement
- roles played by different participants

| ?	Project goals and objectives: key questions
❏	1. Which goals and specific objectives are being achieved? Which ones are not?
❏	2. How appropriate are the original goals and objectives?
❏	3. Which goals and objectives need reformulating? Why?
❏	4. Which factors are facilitating or hindering the achievement of goals and objectives?
❏	Other questions: ....

? Implementation of activities and project improvement: key questions

☐ 1. Which planned activities have been implemented? Which ones have not been implemented and why?

☐ 2. What are the programmatic areas and specific activities that should be modified to improve project performance? Why should these changes be made? How are these changes going to be implemented?

☐ 3. What additional human, material, institutional or financial resources are needed to make these modifications? Or, in what way will these changes save resources?

☐ 4. What factors facilitate and hinder project improvement?

☐ 5. Which unplanned activities have been implemented? Why?

☐ 6. In general terms, what have been the strengths and weaknesses of project design and implementation? How have weaknesses been surmounted and strengths built upon?

☐ 7. Where there any unexpected events that have had an impact on project activities? How have people responded?

☐ 8. What opportunities have presented themselves during the project? Have they been taken advantage of? Why or why not?

☐ 9. What strategies did you use to overcome unexpected problems during project implementation?

☐ 10. What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of the project? How are these lessons fed back to the project and acted upon to improve the project? Which ones were not fed back and why? Is this an on-going process?

☐ Other questions:

....

....
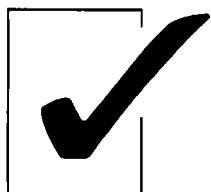
? Roles played by different participants: key questions

☐ 1. Who participated in the implementation of the project?

☐ 2. What was the role played by the community in the implementation process? What was the nature and level of participation? How did the community perform its role?. Explain.

☐ 3. What was the role played by the GRO in the implementation process? How was it performed and why?

☐ 4. What was the role played by the facilitating team in the implementation process? How was it performed and why?

☐ 5. What was the role played by the NGO or GA in the implementation process? How was it performed and why?

☐ 6. What was the role played by the donor in the implementation process? How was it performed and why?

☐ 7. What were the roles played by other organizations in the implementation process? How were they performed and why?

☐ 8. What was the level of collaboration among different participants in the project? What benefits or problems resulted from this collaboration?

☐ Other questions:

....

....

Project results and impact

Results and impact should be analyzed at two different levels:

- achievement of goals, objectives and results

- solution of problems and satisfaction of needs in the long term, or impact.

? Achievement of goals, objectives and results: key questions

- [ ] 1. Which of the projects goals and objectives were achieved? Which ones were not achieved? Why?

- [ ] 2. How do you explain any differences between planned objectives and achieved results?

- [ ] 3. What results (positive and/or negative) were achieved that were not planned? Why?

- [ ] 4. How were results and impact measured? What indicators were used?

- [ ] 5. Was there a good match between the objectives sought and the strategies and methods used to achieve them?

- [ ] 6. Were the planned activities appropriate to achieve the goals and objectives of the project? Were these activities socially and culturally appropriate? Why?

- [ ] 7. What processes were catalyzed by the project activities (e.g. empowerment, community organizing, tiredness, lost of confidence)?

- [ ] 8. In which stages of the project was genuine participation achieved? What were the advantages and disadvantages of community participation?

More questions ➤➤

Achievement of goals, objectives, and results (continued)

☐ 9. Who benefited the most and the least from the project? Why?

☐ 10. How effectively were human, material, and financial resources used?

☐ 11. Is the project sustainable and self-sufficient after the project ends? How has this been demonstrated?

☐ 12. To what degree were the activities of the project institutionalized?

☐ 13. To what degree did the GRO build its organizational capacity to initiate, design, implement and manage new projects? How has this been demonstrated?

☐ 14. How did the external context (local, regional, national and international) influence the achievement of project results and impact?

☐ 15. What influence have the lessons learned and fed back to the project had on the achievement of results and impact of the project?

☐ Other questions:

....

....

?

Solution of problems and satisfaction of needs: key questions

1. What impact did the project have on the solution of community needs? What effect did it have on the standard of living of individuals, families, and the community? How was this measured? How does the community feel about these changes?

2. What impact did the project have on the structural problems of the community?

3. How do benefits compare with original community expectations?

Other questions:

....

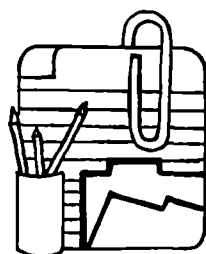..

Section 5

Sharing
lessons learned

Section 5 Sharing lessons learned

This section will help you summarize the lessons learned to enable sharing with others. It also explains the reasons for sharing lessons learned during the systematization process.

> **Task:** Read and respond to the following questions and decide what information about the project is important to share, and what would be a good way to do it.

❶ Why is it important to share lessons learned?

There a number of reasons to share lessons learned:

- Present successful alternative development models, for planning and replication purposes, which have been well analyzed and documented, and based on practical field experiences.

- Facilitate others in learning from your mistakes, thereby helping them to avoid making similar errors.

- Permit others to learn from the problems that were encountered in the project, and how were they solved.

- Increase the impact of your project by positively influencing the design and implementation of other projects, and the policies of other organizations.

- Promote networking through the exchange of knowledge and information, thereby increasing cooperation among different organizations.

❷ What knowledge can be shared with others?

In order to share and support the work of other organizations, you must first choose the most relevant information that you feel will be useful for others to know and learn about. This information can be divided in two categories:

- project-related information and

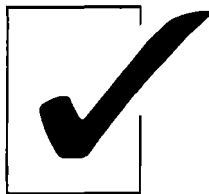- systematization-related information.

? •

Project-related information: key questions
❑ 1. What were the most important lessons learned about the project?
❑ 2. What generalizations, assumptions, ideas, and perspectives about the project are important to share with other organizations?
❑ 3. What theories have been generated based on the project experiences?
❑ 4. What problems or obstacles did your organization face that can be avoided by other organizations or projects?
❑ 5. What advice would you give to others starting similar projects regarding project design, implementation and evaluation?
❑ Other questions: ....

?

Systematization-related information: key questions

☐ 1. What were the most important lessons learned about the systematization process itself?

☐ 2. What advice would you share with other organizations before starting a systematization process?

☐ 3. What problems did you experience that can be avoided by others?

☐ 4. What other information would have been useful for your systematization that was not provided in this workbook? Knowing what you know now, what would you change about the systematization process?

☐ Other questions:

....

....

❸ How can information be shared?

The information you obtained and the lessons learned can be shared in differents ways:
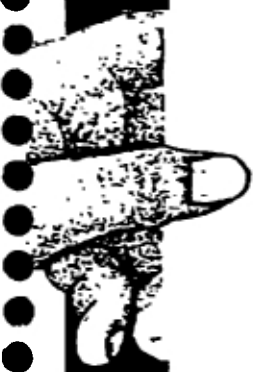
- **Conferences and seminars:** Incorporate or facilitate information in meetings organized by your or other organizations.

- **Training courses and workshops:** Provide specialized training based on the lessons and information you have learned.

- **Exchange visits to projects:** Promote exchange visits among technical staff, extension agents, farmer promoters and participants from different projects. These activities have to be well organized and with the purpose of analyzing specific topics.

- **Publications:** Consider publishing the results of your systematization.

- **Formal and informal networks:** Share your experiences with networks for their libraries and other general purposes.
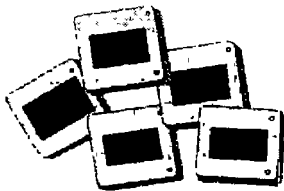
- **Learning materials:** Design materials which others can easily use in their own projects.

- **Filmstrips, videos, and slide shows:** Produce an audiovisual about the project which can be shared with others.

- **Pamphlets:** Provide brief and clear explanations of your project, its methodologies and results.

- **Posters:** Print large and easy-to-understand posters that explain key successful concepts and practices based on the project's experiences.
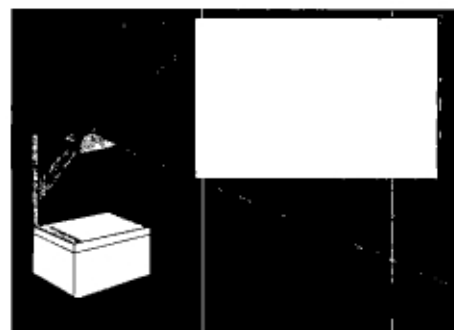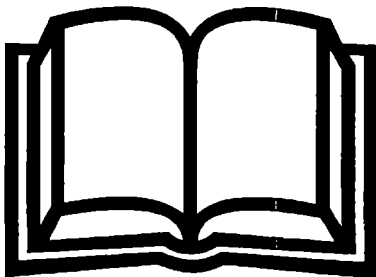
Section 6

Toolbox

Section 6 Toolbox

I n this section, you will find a number of tools that can be used to respond to and analyze the questions in Section 4.

However, you should not feel limited to use only these tools, but rather, view them as guides to facilitate the question and answer process. They should be kept simple and short and should be adapted for easy use. For example, you may combine different parts of some tools to design new ones.

These tools are very useful in conducting organized processes of description and analysis, and will allow you to progressively document the project experiencies.

The toolbox is divided in two sections:

● description tools and

● analysis and decision-making tools.

Description tools

There are at least two possible ways to generate information to help answer a question:

● Brainstorming

● Group dialogue and discussion

❶ Brainstorming

The steps to follow for brainstorming are:

1. Present the question to the entire group and ask for ideas and responses. State clearly that all ideas are valid during this first stage of the brainstorming; no idea is "wrong". Use a board, hang a large piece of paper on the wall or use whatever else is convenient, and write the different ideas on it.

2. Once all the ideas have been presented, explain that you will use a consensus-reaching tool to focus on those ideas and responses that are most important. One example is the following:

   - Each person in the group will have five points which they may assign to one or more of the ideas from the brainstorming. They may assign all five points to one idea; one point to one idea and four points to another, or one point to each of the five ideas, etc. If the number of generated ideas is greater than 20, you may wish to give each participant 10 points instead of 5.

   - Go around the group and ask each person where they will assign the points. Mark the number of points next to the chosen idea.

   - At the end of the "voting", the points can be added up, revealing which ideas are the most important according to the votes it received.

   - If there are differences of opinion, it is important to provide an opportunity for ideas to be presented, heard and discussed.

Example of a brainstorming exercise

Question: What strategies do you use to overcome unexpected problems in the project?

Brainstorming results

- Field visits
- Read relevant materials
- Discuss issues with beneficiaries and staff
- Call the boss
- Confront the issue head on
- Analyze the problem and make a decision
- Hire a consultant

Voting	Points
• Field visits	20
• Read relevant materials	3
• Discuss issues with beneficiaries and staff	8
• Call the boss	2
• Confront the issue head on	0
• Analyze the problem and make a decision.........	12
• Hire a consultant	5

Results

1) Field visits

2) Analyze the problem and make a decision with beneficiaries and staff

---

Note that in this case the staff decided to join two ideas: "analyze the problem and make a decision" with "discuss issues with beneficiaries and staff."

❷ Group dialogue and discussion

Through open dialogue and discussion, you can analyze and respond to many areas and questions during the systematization process.

The steps you can follow for group dialogue and discussion are:

1. Select a facilitator in the group to present the questions, lead discussions and make decisions such as when to move on, stop, let someone else speak, etc.

2. Assign someone to take detailed notes of the ideas discussed.

3. The facilitator should then pose a question and ask for people's thoughts and opinions about the issue.

4. Participants are then encouraged to respond freely, explaining their points of view and justification.

5. Other participants are likewise free to ask questions, probe for details, and otherwise respond with new ideas or comments about aspects already presented.

6. Once the topic has been well discussed and defined, the note-taker should share the main ideas or decisions that have been discussed.

Analysis and decision-making tools

This tools are designed to help you describe and analyze the answers to different questions and facilitate decision making to improve the project.

You can combine different parts of some tools to create new ones, which fulfill your own project needs.

These tools are useful to conduct basic project planning, on-going analysis and decision making, among other things.

Your analysis can look at various aspects of a given project like:

- positive and negative aspects

- advantages and disadvantages

- strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

- causes and effects

- impact and implications

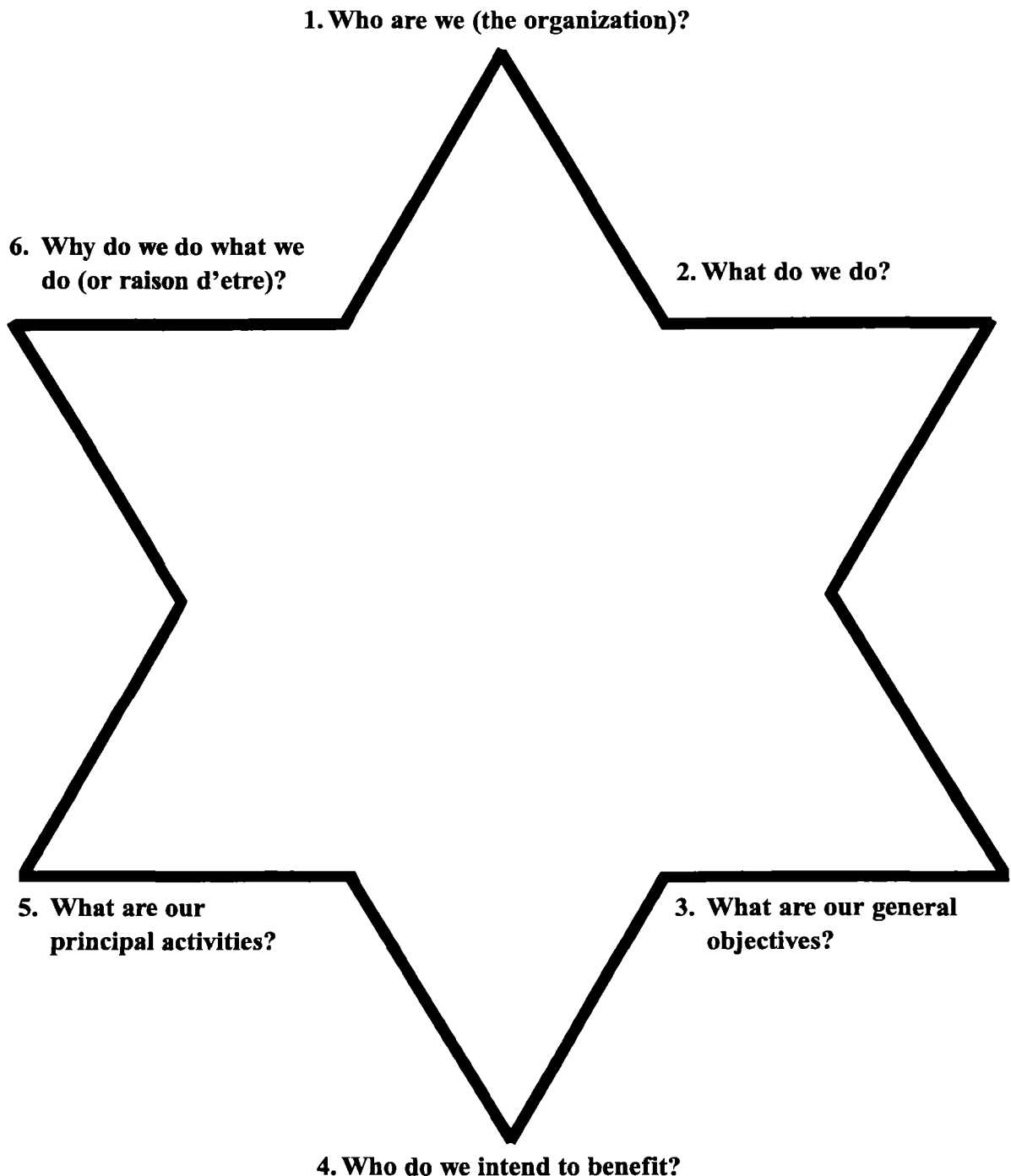Some examples are presented in the following pages.

EXAMPLE 1: DEFINITION OF MISSION STATEMENT

The institutional mission is a brief statement that includes the ideals, general objectives and activities that guide the organization. Following we present an example with the parts that should be included in the mission statement and the order in which they may be worded.

1. Who are we (the organization)?

6. Why do we do what we do (or raison d'etre)?

2. What do we do?

5. What are our principal activities?

3. What are our general objectives?

4. Who do we intend to benefit?

Mission statement of Huacharina Foundation

(1) The Huacharina Foundation is a private, non-profit, indigenous organization, (2) aimed at the strengthening of community actions, (3) to improve the standard of living, (4) of the peasant families of 20 communities of the Latacunga region, in Ecuador, (5) through training and technical assistance, (6) to recover the cultural values of the indigenous people's in pursuit of community-based, participatory development.

EXAMPLE 2: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES CHART FOR ONE ACTIVITY ONLY

Aspect/Activity:	
ADVANTAGES (+)	**DISADVANTAGES (-)**

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES CHART FOR ONE ACTIVITY ONLY

Aspect/Activity: Train 30 farmer promoters in soil and water conservation

ADVANTAGES (+)	DISADVANTAGES (-)
- Potential for wide replication of the technologies. - The farmer promoters trained have previous experience in soil and water conservation in their own farms. - Technologies shared have had good results and are well adapted to the farmers' reality. - Materials and inputs needed to apply the technologies are locally available and at a low cost.	- It is possible that the farmer promoters trained may not be able to replicate the experiences at a community level. - There are no funds to pay the farmer promoters to disseminate the technologies after the course ends. - There is no transportation for the farmer promoters to visit the communities to share what they have learned.

EXAMPLE 3: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES CHART FOR MORE THAN ONE OPTION

Aspect/Activity:

OPTIONS	ADVANTAGES (+)	DISADVANTAGES (-)

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES CHART FOR MORE THAN ONE OPTION

Aspect/Activity: Training in soil and water conservation.

OPTIONS	ADVANTAGES (+)	DISADVANTAGES (-)
1. Train 30 farmer promoters in soil and water conservation.	● Potential for wide replication of the technologies. ● The farmer promoters trained have previous experience in soil and water conservation in their own farms. ● Technologies shared have had good results and are well adapted to the farmers' reality. ● Materials and inputs needed to apply the technologies are locally available and at a low cost.	● It is possible that the farmer promoters trained may not be able to replicate the experiences at a community level. ● No funds are available to pay the farmer promoters to disseminate the technologies after the course ends. ● There is no transportation for the farmer promoters to visit communities to share what they have learned.
2. Produce leaflets on soil and water conservation.	● Low cost. ● Potentially wide dissemination. ● Easy to photocopy.	● The majority of farmers do not read. ● Pamphlets are not reinforced by any field-level practice.
3. Outreach by government agricultural extension agents.	● Allows for a personal relationship to be established. ● Extension agents can give practical demonstrations of soil and water conservation techniques.	● The government has almost no funds to pay extension agents' transportation costs. ● Extension agents cannot serve many farmers.

EXAMPLE 4: CAUSES - EFFECTS - POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS CHART FOR ONE PROBLEM ONLY

Aspect/Activity:		
CAUSES	**EFFECTS**	**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

CAUSES - EFFECTS - POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS CHART FOR ONE PROBLEM ONLY

Aspect/Activity: Unrealistic project goals and objectives

CAUSES	EFFECTS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
• External consultants designed the project. • Participatory rural appraisal was poorly conducted. • Project beneficiaries were not included in project design and decision-making.	• Established goals and specific objectives do not meet real community needs. • The community has not accepted the project. • Time and money have been lost.	• Modify original goals and objectives. • Meet with community leaders. • Include project beneficiaries in revision and replanning.

EXAMPLE 5: CAUSES - EFFECTS - POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS CHART FOR MORE THAN ONE PROBLEM

Aspect/activity:

OPTIONS	CAUSES	EFFECTS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

CAUSES - EFFECTS - POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS CHART FOR MORE THAN ONE PROBLEM

Aspect/activity: Problems identified in project implementation

OPTIONS	CAUSES	EFFECTS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
1. Staff is not performing as expected.	● Poor hiring process. ● Salaries are low. ● Poorly trained staff.	● The project is not achieving its intended goals and objectives. ● High turnover. ● The staff committment to the project is low.	● Hire new staff. ● Begin training. ● Raise salaries.
2. Unrealistic goals and objectives.	● External consultants designed the project. ● Participatory rural appraisal was poorly conducted. ● Project beneficiaries were not included in project design and decision-making.	● Established goals and specific objectives do not meet real community needs. ● The community has not accepted the project. ● Time and money have been lost.	● Modify original goals and objectives. ● Meet with community leaders. ● Include project beneficiaries in revision and replanning.
3. Money will run out before project ends.	● Budget was not properly calculated in project design stage. ● Inflation was higher than expected.	● There are activities that were not implemented but were critical for achieving project objectives.	● Sell one of the project vehicles. ● Implement needed activities before spending the vehicle money.

EXAMPLE 6: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES CHART FOR ONE ACTIVITY ONLY

Aspect/Activity:	
STRENGTHS	**WEAKNESSES**

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES CHART FOR ONE ACTIVITY ONLY

Aspect/Activity: Collaborative implementation of the project with another NGO

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• More ideas are introduced to the project. • The other NGO has worked in the project area for a long time and has good relations with the community. • Partner NGO has very good reputation with donors.	• Collaborative decision-making process is slow. • There are problems between both organizations in project implementation due to the lack of good coordination.

EXAMPLE 7: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES CHART FOR MORE THAN ONE OPTION

Aspect/Activity:

OPTIONS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES CHART FOR MORE THAN ONE OPTION

Aspect/Activity: Collaboration with partner NGO

OPTIONS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. Implement the project alone, without a partner NGO.	• Complete control over the project. • Control over the funds. • Less bureaucracy.	• We do not have much experience with this kind of project. • Communities where the project is going to be implemented do not know us
2. Implement the project with partner NGO.	• More ideas are introduced to the project. • The other NGO has worked in the project area for a long time and has good relations with the community. • Partner NGO has very good reputation with donors.	• Collaborative decision-making process is slow. • There are problems between both organizations in project implementation due to lack of good coordination.
3. Collaborate in certain activities only.	• We can complement each other, based on existing needs. • We do not "commit" ourselves to work together for a long time, if the partnership does not work.	• Since there is no formal committment, they may not assist us when we need it.

EXAMPLE 8: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS CHART FOR ONE ACTIVITY ONLY

Aspect/Activity:	
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS CHART FOR ONE ACTIVITY ONLY

Aspect/Activity: Implementation of a micro-credit project.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• The credit model has been successfully tested. • Staff has good experience. • The approval process for loans is quick. • The interest rates are reasonable. • Banks demand too many requirements, and we are less bureaucratic	• The national economy is in shambles. • Lots of NGOs are giving credit. • Low staff motivation.

EXAMPLE 9: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS CHART FOR MORE THAN ONE OPTION

Aspect/Activity:		
OPTIONS	**OPPORTUNITIES**	**THREATS**

OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS CHART FOR MORE THAN ONE OPTION

Aspect/Activity: Facilitation of post-harvest technology workshop

OPTIONS	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
1. The workshop could be facilitated by our own staff.	We allow our staff to be respected as professionals.	Low attendance to the workshop because our staff is young and inexperienced in the subject.
2. The workshop could be facilitated by an extension agent of the Ministry of Agriculture.	We could start a positive relationship with a government agency.	The Ministry extension agent says she will come, but she might not show up.
3. Hire an external consultant.	We would have the opportunity to choose the best person to facilitate the workshop.	We foster dependency on outside people that do not belong to the organization.

EXAMPLE 10: ANALYSIS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY:	
INDICATOR:	
IS THE ACTIVITY BEING IMPLEMENTED? YES PARTIALLY NO	
HOW MUCH OF THE INDICATOR WAS ACCOMPLISHED?	

HOW ARE WE IMPLEMENTING THE ACTIVITY?

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE ACTIVITY?

PROPOSED CHANGES	JUSTIFICATION

ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE THE ACTIVITY

ANALYSIS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY:	Evaluation of credit applications
INDICATOR:	In one year, 50 credit applications will have been received and evaluated to benefit the poorest people in the area.

IS THE ACTIVITY BEING IMPLEMENTED? (YES)   PARTIALLY   NO

HOW MUCH OF THE INDICATOR WAS ACCOMPLISHED?

43 applications have been evaluated in 9 months, but not from the poorest people.

HOW ARE WE IMPLEMENTING THE ACTIVITY?

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• The established criteria has been respected • The evaluation of the credit application is being completed in the one week allocated.	The evaluation criteria are not appropriate to benefit the poorest people.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE ACTIVITY?

PROPOSED CHANGES	JUSTIFICATION
Change the evaluation criteria	The present evaluation criteria benefit people who have more resources but, according to project objectives, we need to benefit the poorest.

ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE THE ACTIVITY

1. Meet with project staff and representatives of project beneficiaries.

2. Establish new evaluation criteria.

3. Adopt them in the project.

EXAMPLE 11:

Name: PROJECT PLANNING MATRIX

What is it? It's a 10 column table that includes important components for the planning of a project.

Why is it useful? It's a tool that helps to analyze and organize the necessary information for designing a project aimed at solving priority problems in the community.

It is especially useful in answering questions N° 5,7,8,10,11,12,13,14 and 15 of section "Nature of Project"

What information is included? It should include the objectives of the project, their justification, expected results, indicators, means of verification, activities to be implemented, schedule of activities, resources needed, budget and who is going to implement the planned activities.

How is it done? The matrix can be done by a group of 6–8 community representatives and 1–2 project staff.

Time needed: 1 to 2 days.

PROJECT PLANNING MATRIX

OBJECTIVES	JUSTIFICATION	EXPECTED RESULTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ACTIVITIES	SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES	INPUTS	BUDGET	PERSON IN CHARGE

PROJECT PLANNING MATRIX
IMPROVEMENT OF VEGETABLES PRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES	JUSTIFICATION	EXPECTED RESULTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ACTIVITIES	SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES	INPUTS	BUDGET	PERSON IN CHARGE
Improve the quality of vegetables produced by the community, by improving soil fertility	The quality of vegetables is worsening, due to decreased soil fertility, which lowers the price of our vegetables, affecting our standard of living	Improved quality of vegetables, leading to higher prices	In 1 year, at least 20 families will have adopted worm humus to improve soil fertility • Beds for worm humus production established	• Participation in a humus production course	• Extension agent will offer a course on worm humus production • Prepare worm beds	• January • February	• Instructor • Land and worms	• 1 round-trip ticket to the community $45 • Purchase of worms $600	• Community leader will search for an instructor • 20 families
			In 2 years, these families will have improved the quality of their vegetable production thus increasing their price by 30%	• Dialogue with community members • Price of vegetables sold	• Produce and use worm humus as organic fertilizer	• From October onwards	• Family labor	• Maintenace of worm beds $ 100	• Families youth

EXAMPLE 13

Name: .   SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

What is it?   It's a matrix where community members include their points of view on four main aspects of a given topic: 1) strengths, 2) weaknesses, 3) opportunities, and 4) threats.

Why is it useful?   It is useful to identify, analyze, compare, and visualize in a comprehensive way, different aspects that the community consider important. The process of conducting the SWOT exercise, helps clarify the positive and negative aspects of the analyzed issue.

What information is included? Describes and analyzes the internal strengths and weaknesses of a community, organization, or project, and the opportunities and threats of the external context.

a) Internal strengths and weaknesses:

- Of the comunity, organization or project, in regard to an aspect or project considered important.

- Of a given issue in regard to the project.

b) External opportunities and threats:

- External to the community or organization, in regard to some aspect related to the project.

- That can influence project implementation.

How is it done?   Usually it is conducted in a group, through brainstorming and the use of cards, on which each participant writes his/her own opinion. Then the cards are displayed on a big piece of paper with the SWOT matrix, and topics are discussed in the group.

Time needed: 2-3 hours

SWOT MATRIX

ISSUE TO BE ANALYZED:

STRENGTHS (internal)	OPPORTUNITIES (external)
WEAKNESSES (internal)	**THREATS (external)**

Example of a SWOT exercise conducted by a community about the feasibility of building a community health center to solve health problems.

PROBLEM: Lack of health services in the community

PROJECT ANALYZED: Construction of a health center

SWOT MATRIX

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
• We have a community house that can be transformed into a health center. • Currently, we have two community members trained as health paraprofessionals. • In a weekend, the community can repair the community house.	• We can sign an agreement with the Ministry of Health, to provide a doctor and a nurse. • We can write a project proposal to get funds to repair the community house. • A neighboring community already built their center and can help us.
WEAKNESSES	**THREATS**
• We don't have a doctor in the community. • We don't know how to write proposals. • We don't have money to finance the construction on our own. • The community house is too small. • The people who live far from the center will not be able to come easily. • We do not have funds to buy medicines, and don't know where to buy them.	• The Ministry of Health takes a long time to consider agreements, and then, they end up not signing them. • The process of getting money from NGOs is very bureaucratic. • Doctors do not like to work in our community because it is far from the city and proper accomodation and services are not available. • Doctors prescribe expensive medicines that we cannot buy. • Doctors charge too much.

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Acknowledgements

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A request: Please write and let us know what you think of this workbook, what worked, what didn't, and what you think could be improved in future editions. Our address is:

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I n spite of a growing interest and need, there are few clear, practical guidelines on how to design, follow-up and evaluate development processes in a participatory way. In general terms, formal evaluations of development projects focused almost exclusively on measuring results, and without the active participation of the beneficiaries.

Staff of non-government organizations (NGOs), grass-roots organizations (GROs), and government agencies (GAs), need to understand the operating processes of projects in which they are involved. Development organizations workers, as well as beneficiaries, often reflect informally on how projects have been designed and implemented and can be improved. But this knowledge is rarely documented, analyzed and shared in a systematic way to improve the project through on-going learning about its processes and results.

Many researchers and development practitioners are departing from the traditional practice of measuring only project results, and seeking a more dynamic and comprehensive understanding of its processes as well, partly through the active participation of the project beneficiaries themselves. *Systematization* satisfies these needs.

Systematization is a continuous process of participatory reflection on a project's processes and results, undertaken by both project staff and participants. This systematic analysis generates lessons which are fed back to improve the project. It is a process that strengthens the learning and organizational capacity of development organizations, which in turn, promotes the implementation of more effective development projects. Furthermore, when the projects' experiences are documented, they can be shared with other organizations.