Indicators of success and assumptions in technical assistance projects

Salomé Lachat

Indicators of success and assumptions in technical assistance projects

By **Salomé Lachat**

Attorney at law (Paris bar)
Formerly European patent attorney (EPO Munich)
PhD in economics (Rennes)
LLM (private law and business law)
LLM (criminal law)

Summary

Logical frameworks are planning aids for projects pertaining to technical assistance. They ask for identifying and defining indicators of success and assumptions, which are included in the project ToR and in the project follow-up reports. Their consequences, in particular legal, remain underestimated by service providers, donors and recipients. Indicators of success cannot be considered separately. They should be attached to the sources of verification. To be useful, indicators of success and sources of verification must avoid any confusion with assumptions or expectations and meet various criteria like objectivity, robustness, and perenniality.

Les cadres logiques sont des aides à la planification de projets d'assistance technique. Ils imposent l'identification et la définition d'indicateurs de succès et d'assertions qui sont repris dans les cahiers des charges et les rapports de suivi des projets. Leurs conséquences, notamment juridiques, restent sous estimées par les prestataires de service, donateurs et donataires. Les indicateurs de succès ne peuvent être considérés isolément. Il faut les rattacher aux sources de vérification. Pour être utiles, les indicateurs de succès et les sources de vérification doivent éviter toute confusion avec des assertions ou des expectations et répondre à différents critères comme l'objectivité, la robustesse, la pérennité.

Keywords

Activity; Assumption; Assumption out of the reach of the service provider (AOR); Assumption within the reach of the service provider (AWR); Donor; Inception report; Indicator of success; Logic of intervention; Logical framework (logframe); Management information system; Matrix; Monitoring; QQT-Matrx; Recipient; Result; Service provider; Sources of verification; ToR (Terms of reference)

Table of contents

Summary (English & French)
Keywords
Table of contents
Table of figures
1. Logical rules
1.1. Indicators of success
1.1.1. Morphology of indicators of success
1.1.2. Success in performing activities
1.1.3. Success in meeting objectives
1.2. Assumptions
1.2.1. Morphology of assumptions
1.2.2. Where to find assumptions?
1.2.3. Usefulness of assumptions
2. Technical rules
2.1. Assessing indicators of success
2.1.1. Indicators of success should be objective
2.1.3. Sources of verification should not be deceptive
2.1.3. No counterexample should be known
2.2. Assessing the performance of the project (monitoring)
2.2.1. Authorizing the passage to the next activity
2.2.2. Evidencing the actual performance of activities
Facit

List of figures

Figure 1 : Upper and lower matrices of a logical framework
Figure 2 : Transition from results to objectives
Figure 3 : Identifying indicators of success and sources of verification
Figure 4 : A MIS - matrix
Figure 5 : Jumping from a performed activity to the next activity
Figure 6 : ToR, assessments, and monitoring

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Lachat, S. (Salomé)
1948
Indicators of success and assumptions in technical assistance projects
1. Logical framework
2. Indicators of success
3. Sources of verification
4. Assumptions

Indicators of success and assumptions are a management information system twined with logical frameworks organizing technical assistance projects.

Preparing and implementing a technical assistance project, like for example, a project pertaining to upgrading a legislation, imply establishing a temporal succession of five events, *ie* assumptions, activities, results, specific objectives and an overall objective. These events are gathered within a logical framework, or logframe, or project planning matrix. The first one (assumptions) is in the last column of the matrix and the four others are in the first column entitled *logic of intervention.*

For example, the following series of events may occur when performing a technical assistance project aiming at upgrading a law:

Assumption:	The Government wishes that the country satisfies the conditions for becoming a member of an international Convention (For example TRIPS). It welcomes a technical assistance project.
Activities:	A service provider is selected for writing a draft law A service provider writes a draft law The draft law is endorsed by the recipient (The domestic patent office)
Results:	The draft law is delivered to the Government The draft law is upgraded by the Government The upgraded draft law is endorsed by the Government The upgraded draft law is submitted to the Parliament
Specific objective:	The Parliament passes a law in compliance with the provisions of the International Convention
Overall objective:	The volume of external trade of the country increases

The logical framework and the initial methodology were first described by L. Rosenberg and L. Posner in 1979. The latter methodology was taken again by GTZ in 1987 before spreading to USaid, then to the World Bank and other donors, to be finally adopted by the projects relative to technical assistance of the European Union (EuropeAid)[1].

Usually a set of matrices connecting inputs (assumptions, activities) with outputs (results, particular objectives, overall objective) is adopted while some donors are promoting the use of one matrix only[2]. It is accepted that where these outputs are achieved, they would automatically cause achieving the objectives of technical assistance project.

Accordingly, in technical assistance contracts, a first matrix ***(upper matrix)*** distinguishes a long term overall objective to which contribute the short term specific objectives stemming from the results. It clarifies the passage from results to objectives. It means that there is a mechanistic design of the changes occurring automatically when all of the necessary ingredients are present.

[1] L. Rosenberg & L. Posner are represented as inventors by FAO that indicates the role of GTZ in the creation of the project planning matrix; see: FAO, FAO corporate document repository, Annex 13: The logical framework, http://www.fao.orglWairdocs/x5404e/5005e0p.htm . See also the ZOPP guide published by GTZ, http://hq.unhabllat.org/governance/htmlbookslzopp_e.pdf. According to other sources, http://www.leamusa.com, the inventor would be R. Moses Thompson in 1979.

[2] For example, DIFID, *Guidelines on humanitarian assistance*, May 1987, proposes a sole 4x4 matrix with a final assumption in the first row. In DIFID, *Humanitarian guidelines for NGOs*, 2007, p. 21, both the indicators of success and the final assumption in the first row are "*not essential*".

Each matrix ***(lower matrix)*** of a set of matrices proposes to reach at least one result based on activities and assumptions. It is usual to prepare several lower matrices, each of them corresponding to a result as it may be seen at figure 1 below.

Each result calls for a lower matrix. The same results appear in upper and lower matrices. This vision is effective when objectives are physical like, for example, assistance for fighting against a disease, training, upgrading a legal system… It is it much less effective when it is wished to increase governance, transparency, fighting against corruption…

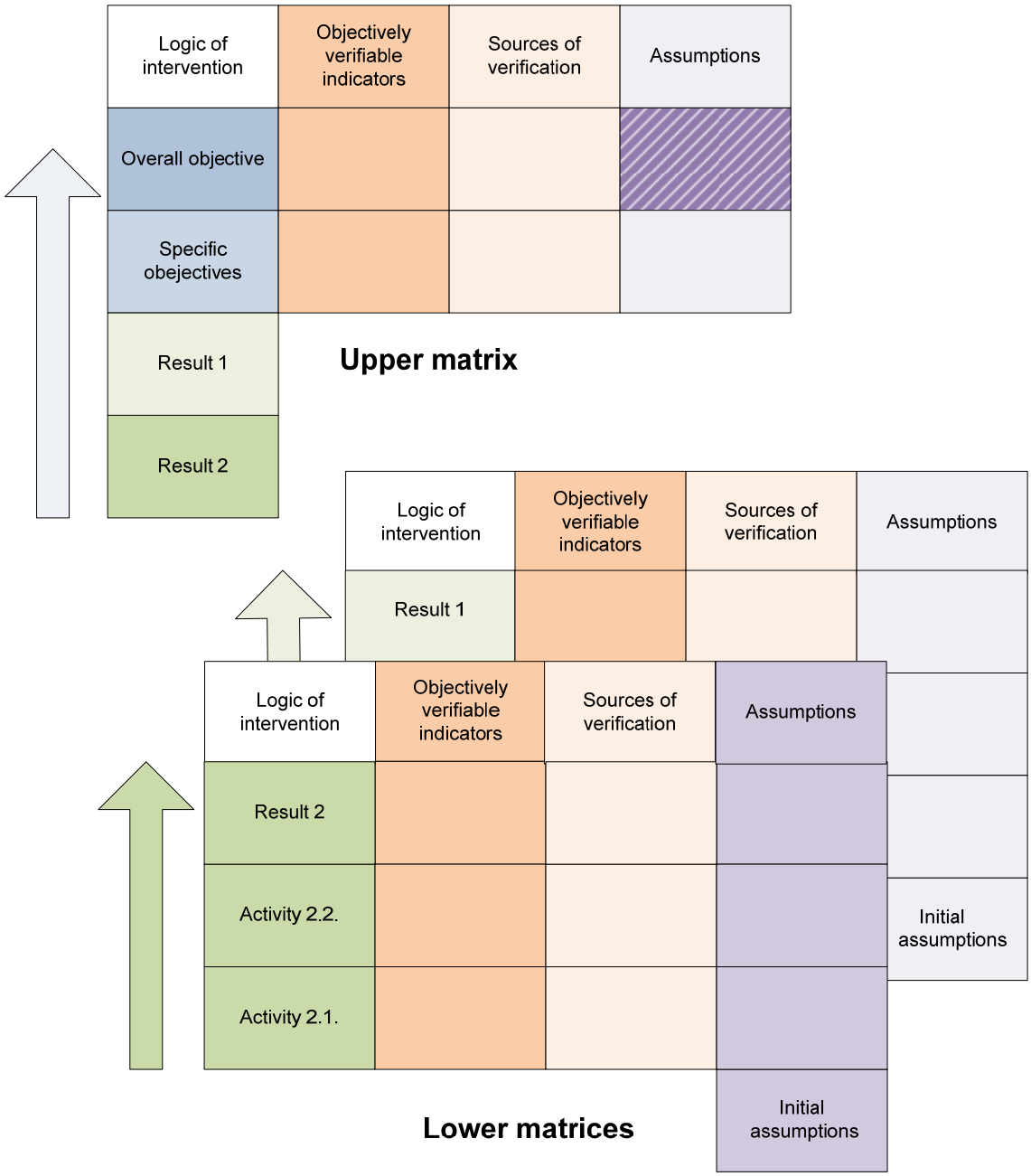

Figure 1
Upper and lower matrices

Another difference between upper and lower matrices lies in their columns, even if all of them have four columns. The upper matrix proposes the logic of intervention of the donor that is interested in reaching objectives. Accordingly it stipulates the indicators of success, their sources of verification, and assumptions relative to the passage from results to specific objectives contributing to the foreseen overall objectives. The lower matrices reveal the logic of intervention accepted by the service provider. It presents the conditions of passage from a performed activity to the following activity which is to be performed. This may occur because an activity was successfully performed or because the commitments of the recipient and/or the donor to meet certain assumptions are met.

According to a logical framework, activities are performed by a service provider usually selected by the donor, while the results, the specific or overall objectives are expected from the mere project performance without assistance of the service provider. The service provider agrees with the goals of the project. On the basis of this consent, donors want that service providers share the risk of absence or weakness of the results. Service providers may refuse this request despite the potential threat of being blacklisted by the donors.

A mechanistic design of the implementation of project ToR forces to monitor whether the expected results are automatically present according to the logic of intervention. This means checking whether particular objectives and the overall objective, were reached. Results belong to the lower matrices while objectives appear in the upper matrix as it may be seen at figure 2.

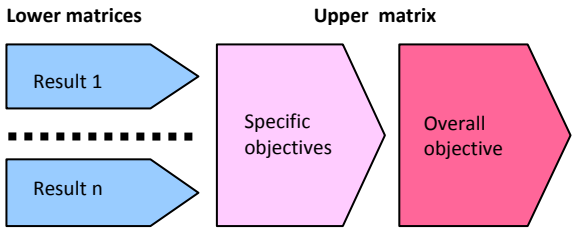

Figure 2 : Transition from results to objectives

An objective tool for assessing the actual results is preferred for avoiding disputes between recipient, service provider, and donor. However, a result is not always measurable *per se*.

For example, a new law may have been passed but it does show effect only after several years. The quality of a law is assessed through its use[3]. The mere fact that a law is passed and becomes an integer part of the legal system of a country is an indicator proving that the service provider has carried out the necessary activities but is neither an assessment of the quality of this law, nor a guarantee that changes will occur.

Another example: it is necessary that a certain percentage of the population be vaccinated before one disease moves support, which is only possible if there is no virus mutation. The percentage of the vaccinated population is an indicator proving that the service provider has carried out the necessary activities.

The service provider is not stripped. It is required from the expert writing the ToR that the indicators are objectively verifiable. They identify the source of verification.

For example, will statistics from an independent source be used for checking whether an indicator of success is fulfilled, recommended statistics sources will be put down in the logical framework.

Objectively verifiable indicators of success are indicators of the performance of the activities for which the service provider is remunerated within the framework of the project. As of the response to the invitation to tender for performing the project, potential service providers can dispute the indica-

[3] On assessment of law quality, see: S. Lachat, *L'évaluation des lois de propriété industrielle et intellectuelle*, Humanisme & Entreprise, June 2007, pp 17-40.

tors of success contained in the ToR if they submit substitutes. Moreover, at the beginning of a project there is usually an inception phase which asks for an inception report offering the opportunity to propose objectively verifiable indicators of success substituting for the indicators of the ToR. The inception report is supported by a *plan of execution* that precisely describes the activities to be undertaken by the service provider. This plan of execution is binding on the service provider.

Under these conditions, all of the parties to a project, *ie* the donor that finances the project, the recipient for the benefit of which the project is carried out, the expert charged of drafting the project ToR, and the service provider that carries out the project ToR seek objectively verifiable indicators of success. The description of the indicators of success (second column), *i.e.* the statement of the conditions to be met, is supported by the indication of the sources of verification (third column) within the logical framework. These sources will have to be accessible when the indicators of success are used.

It is advisable to lay down the logical and technical rules to which indicators of success and assumptions must satisfy to be valid. This will lead to submit new support matrices in addition of the two sets of matrices recommended for working with logical frameworks. As a result, new tools for managing a technical assistance will be designed.

1. Logical rules

A logical framework is read from bottom to top - like a house which is built from its foundations to its roof -, and from left to right. With logical frameworks, foundations are the initial assumptions which authorize beginning the performance of the activities leading to results. Once an activity (a series of activities) has/have been performed, indicators of success authorize undertaking the next activity (series of activities). The upper matrix of a logical framework supposes that at least one specific objective is mechanically obtainable as soon as the results identified as necessary are reached because the activities programmed in the lower matrix have been performed. The upper matrix may imply indicators of success and assumptions. However no activity is to be performed by the service provider.

The following lines are structured as follows: The first section describes the two categories of indicators of success. The second section presents the characteristics of assumptions.

1.1. Indicators of success

Indicators of success are tools that tell whether performed activities have achieved the results that are needed for reaching the objectives stipulated by the upper matrix. Objectives describe the new balance that the project seeks to reach. They are the *raison d'être* of the project and are defined by the donor, possibly according to a proposal made by the expert writing the ToR, and accepted by both the recipient (more precisely *endorsed* by the recipient) of the technical assistance and the service provider. The donor must be able to show the recipient that it undertook all necessary steps so that the objectives are achieved. Accordingly, a project implies indicators of success and sources of verification accepted by all of the parties.

An indicator of success reports at best on the present, but may report more generally on a passed transitory state.

Indicators of success are:

- Either authorizing the passage from an activity to another after the successful performance of the first one by the service provider using the resources provided by the donor,
- Or documenting that a result or an objective has been reached. No activity is to be performed.

Accordingly, two categories of indicators of success appear according to whom (either the service provider that undertook the activities or the donor that selected the right logic of intervention) is successful.

1.1.1. Morphology of indicators of success

The typical morphology of an indicator of success is of the type "*If indicator of success X relative to activity Y is satisfactorily fulfilled using sources of verification recommended by the project ToR, then the service provider may begin carrying out activity Z*". It follows the well known "*if X is true, then do Z*" pattern.

Sometimes conditions of the type "*If the condition set by the indicator of success X is satisfactorily fulfilled, and if the condition set by the indicator of success Y is met, then activity Z may be undertaken"* are used.

> For example it may be read "if ten judges attended five hours basic training in fighting against counterfeiting, and if twenty customs officers attended fifteen hours of basic training in seizures by customs, training may be deemed carried out, and may actually understood being an indicator of success allowing a study tour".

Usually, logical frameworks do not use "If…, then… - statements" because the reader knows that the second columns of the matrices stipulate conditions (no need of "if-statement"). Neither the "then-statement" (allowing to performing the next activity) is needed because it is the only reason why indicators of success are called for.

1.1.2. Success in performing activities

A first kind of indicators of success may be identified. They are pertaining to the commitment of the service provider to reach the results foreseen in the inception report if the prescribed activities are carried out. The proof that results are reached is brought by the use of indicators of success.

> For example, a draft amendment of the company law is submitted to the Parliament by the ministry of Justice. The indicator of success will be the actual proposal for an amendment put forward to the ministry of Justice within the time window foreseen by the ToR. The service provider cannot be responsible for the local administrative incompetence which buries the proposal.

The service provider is responsible for the performance of the activities and the result, because the absence of identification of an activity necessary to reach a result is ascribable to the service provider as soon the inception report is produced. This latter inception report applies even if the ToR propose an incomplete succession of activities to be undertaken in order to reach a certain result.

The service provider answers to the invitation to tender by a technical proposal often independently elaborated from the experts that should perform the fieldwork. Experts may use the inception report for identifying the possible absence of certain activities. This inception report is submitted for acceptance to the donor and the recipient.

It follows that the passage from activities to results, which corresponds to the **lower matrices** of the logical framework,

- Has been worked out by a first expert that has been drafting the ToR on behalf of the donor,
- Was possibly criticized by the writers of the tender document, and
- Was subject to the comments of the experts in charge of the actual performance of the project.

The definition of new or at least upgraded indicators of success was possible until the delivery of the inception report. In other terms, all precautions were taken for identifying relevant Indicators of success and their sources of verification.

1.1.3. Success in meeting objectives

Beside indicators of success relative to the performance of the activities listed in the inception report, there are indicators of success showing that objectives were achieved. These indicators of success are essential to the relation between donor and recipient. The service provider cannot be liable for the transition from results to objectives that are stipulated in the project ToR. Moreover, modifying this articulation often implies an additional investment that can be carried out by the donor only. Accepting the ToR involves the adhesion of the service provider to the mechanistic effect providing the foreseen objectives once the results are reached. It is an expectation, generally checked with experts' statements and experience, but subject to assumptions, therefore strongly hazardous. The service provider must inform the donor if it identifies a risk not to achieve the foreseen objectives; by doing this, it lessens its liability.

Using logical frameworks for preparing project ToR asks for matrices describing indicators of success supported by sources of verification, and assumptions

Indicators of success relative to the objectives to be reached are stipulated by the donor who selected an expert to write the project ToR drawing up the list of results necessary to mechanically obtaining the objectives. Usually, no subsequent control by other experts is organized. The donor is generally not able to dispute the cogency of the mechanical passage between results and objectives. The service provider does not have any influence on the indicators of success of the upper matrix of the logical framework.

The service provider is only liable for achieving the passage from an activity to the next one and for reaching the foreseen results but not for reaching any objective. It can only commit itself on the activities which it undertakes and to the related results. It cannot be liable of the absence of mechanical effect of the results if they are achieved. Contesting the mechanical effect may lead to differences with the donor.

1.2. Assumptions

Assumptions are external conditions that are not – in principle – within the reach of the service provider implementing the project ToR. Assumptions should hold true, be explicit, and demonstrate a low degree of uncertainty. If this were not the case, the project may become difficult to perform.

The expert in charge of drafting the project ToR must be sure of their feasibility. Accordingly, a list of the incurred risks and the means to reduce them should be put down. It means that not only the

resources foreseen for performing the activities are relevant but also that both indicators of success and assumptions are realistic.

Another aim of the assumptions is indicating to the recipient the coercions it incurs if it does not meet its commitments described by the said assumptions.

1.2.1. Morphology of assumptions

The typical morphology of an assumption is of the type "*If assumption X is satisfactorily fulfilled by the recipient, then it is possible to consider that the service provider begins carrying out activity Y*". It follows the well known "*if X is true, then do Y*" pattern. An assumption lays out for the future. It implicitly defines activities of the donor. It does not refer to activities performed by the service provider. In other words, they should be considered as a new input.

Service provider and recipient are not on an equal footing since the donor cannot demand that the recipient fulfills its commitments. It can only prompt the recipient to meet the assumption.

Indicators of success are internal to the project while assumptions are external to the project

A distinction should be made between two types of assumptions, *i.e.* between:

- Assumptions relative to tasks that may be performed by the service provider (**assumption within the reach of the service provider – AWR**) if the recipient does not fulfill its commitments, and
- Assumptions implying tasks that are beyond its reach (**assumptions out of the reach of the service provider – AOR**) because they should be performed by the recipient or a third entity.

  For example, the recipient is the patent office of a certain country that receives a technical assistance for drafting a law while the draft law should be passed by the Parliament (AOR). It is out of the reach of the service provider to prompt the recipient to prompt the government to prompt the Parliament to pass the law.

Some experts[4] understand that activities and results are under full control of the service provider while assumptions are beyond its control. The reality is different: indicators of success should show that specific and overall objectives are reached while assumptions may be present in any row of the logical framework except the upper one. It is necessary to give a minimum flexibility[5] to the logical framework through accepting that assumptions out of the reach of the service provider may become within its reach in some circumstances. This should avoid stopping the technical assistance project.

Unlike with indicators of success, "if…, then… - statements" are not developed for assumptions.

1.2.2. Where to find assumptions?

Assumptions are to be found in two places of the logical framework*, ie* in the upper matrix and in the lower matrix.

---

[4] See Keerti Bhusan Pradham, *The logical framework approach*, undated. http://www.pitt.edu/~super7/16011-17001/16211.ppt.

[5] For a critic of the logical framework, see J. MacArthur, *The logical framework - A tool for the management of project planning and evaluation*, in *The realities of managing development project*, Farhad Analoui (Ed.), Aldershot, Hants, UK, pp 87-113, 1994. Cedric D. Saldanha & John F. Whittle, *Using the Logical Framework for Sector Analysis and Project Design: A User's Guide*, Asian development bank (ISBN 971-561-174-5), 1998.

In a **lower matrix**, the first assumption (bottom of the fourth column) is the initial assumption which is to be met before the beginning of the technical assistance.

A series of assumptions (fourth column) is to authorize beginning a new activity following an activity that has been carried out independently from any other condition set by an indicator of success. However, indicators of success of the previous activity should be met.

The last assumption of lower matrices (above, fourth column) is relative to the results reached by the performance of the activities.

Indicators of success and assumptions do not belong to the same category, because if the indicator of success reveals that an activity was performed by the service provider (or sub-contracted by the service provider that remains fully liable), the assumption does not depend on its efforts but on those of the recipient. Accordingly, because assumptions and indicators of success cannot cumulate and act simultaneously, it is not suitable to join together indicators of success and assumption under the same logical condition imposed to the service provider.

> For example, the two conditions and the consequence are:
> *Condition (1)*: if ten judges selected by the service provider attended a five hours basic training organized by the service provider, **and**
> *Condition (2)*: if twenty customs officers were selected by their administration to attend five hours of basic training organized by the service provider,
> *Consequence (3):* **then** it is possible that both judges and customs officers undertake a study tour in the European Union.
>
> Condition (1) is within the reach of the service provider; it is an AWR according to the definition above. Condition (2) is out of the reach of the service provider that cannot be liable for its absence of fulfillment by a third party. Condition (2) is an assumption about the positive and speedy answer of the third party to a request of the service provider; it is an AOR according to the definition above.

Usually, if such confusion of assumptions and indicators of success is identified in the project ToR (it should be at the latest when delivering the inception report), the service provider should propose to cut out the flow of activities in order to reveal two flows of activities that should be independently undertaken. Each flow is leading to a result / an intermediate result. Another solution is introducing the assumption as an initial assumption to be met before beginning the project activities; hence it is not necessary to repeat it in the flow of activities.

Then, in the **upper matrix**, assumptions relate to the passages from the results to the specific objectives, then from specific objectives to overall objectives. It is worth noticing that no activity is considered by the project ToR to ensure or only to facilitate this passage. It is about a mechanistic effect which can prove to be contingent. Assumptions in the upper matrix are AOR according to the definition above.

AOR - assumptions describe how one *deus ex machina* transforms results having implied activities into actual specific objectives. Intensity and quality of the efforts are not identified. If activities may be carried out during a certain time whose duration is set in advance, jumping from results to objectives is not the same issue because the transition is contingent. The intervention of the service provider being limited in time, it seems difficult to impose to him an indicator of success in the upper matrix. In other words, indicators of success and assumptions proposed in the upper matrix are directed only to the recipient. Their statement means that the recipient may receive a technical assis-

tance but that this technical assistance might be ineffective without the will of the recipient to fully benefit from the latter technical assistance. Usually, a reference is made to the *political will* of the recipient in the list of risks.

1.2.3. Usefulness of assumptions

Assumptions are objective elements because either they are or are not fulfilled. However their definition is not useful if the condition is not measurable, at least with a Boolean option (yes/no).

> For example, significance of an AOR - assumption of the type: "*the government supports the implementation of the project*" is strongly contestable, because it does not state which actions of support are reasonably foreseen to carry out the transition from results to achievement of the objectives. It means that the service provider is to identify the sources of verification that the writer of the project ToR was unable to identify.
>
> A second example: Training the staff of a Patent office in sorting out patents according to the Classification of Strasbourg will not be possible as long as this staff is not recruited and that time necessary for this training is allocated. The expression "*as long as*" is not suitable with an administrative body of a Sovereign state. The formulation will rather be of the kind "*The necessary time is allocated to the personnel recruited for attending to training*". This formulation must be deconstructed to find the conditional form.

2. Technical rules

Independently of logical rules, technical rules are to be identified. It is necessary to establish if an activity was actually carried out to obtain a certain result. It is generally an all or nothing game. Questions are of the kind: Have relevant activities been undertaken? Has the foreseen result been reached? This measurement cannot be qualitative, because one does not know how to qualify the performance of an activity. It was (possibly with difficulty) or was not carried out but, what matters, is precisely that it was carried out.

Indicators of success when writing the project ToR, and assumptions when performing the project ToR, ask for identifying sources of verification. It is suggested to identify indicators of success and sources of verification together.

Accordingly, a basic indicator stipulates the kind and the nature of change. Its phrasing is close to the description of the activity used in the first column of the logical framework. Then the basic indicator may be upgraded through progressively adding conditions. The first set of conditions is usually relative to the extent of the change. The second set of conditions is giving hints about the quality of the change, while the last set of conditions is relative to the timing of the change. Place and cost may be added if necessary.

Sources of verification give a description of where to find the data to verify the indicators of success. The following questions are to be asked:

- What data?
- Where is the data?
- Is the data readily available?
- Is special data gathering required?

- Is the data acquisition affordable to the project?

Indicators of success for which no suitable sources of verification could be identified should be replaced by relevant indicators.

The complexity of the sources of verification is an important variable because it means a cost increase. Some sources of verification may be the mere reference to an already performed task. The cost of gathering such evidence is very law. Conversely, monitoring and final reports involve specialized external staff that has to be paid by the donor.

> For example, a follow-up report relates facts that may be a proof of the performance of a certain activity while a monitoring report is a secondary source of description of the facts.

Figure 3 shows how indicators of success and sources of verification may be identified. The added sets of conditions are underlined. The matrix should be read from bottom to top and from left to right like the logical framework. Sometimes, this matrix is called "QQT- Matrix" where Q stands for quantity, for quality, and T for time.

The same kind of matrix may be used for assumptions and their sources of verification.

Activity	QQT-Methodology	Example of indicator of success	Example of sources of verification
Increasing the qualification of professional representatives	Adding time (timing of the change)	A third of the professional representatives attended a training and half of the trainees have passed a qualifying exam equivalent to the EPO qualification exam during the first year of the technical assistance programme	Project reporting (*eg* quarterly reports)
	Adding quality	A third of the professional representatives attended a training and half of the trainees have passed a qualifying exam equivalent to the EPO qualification exam	Exam protocol
	Adding quantity (extend of the change, *ie* how much? how many?)	A third of the professional representatives attended a training and half of the trainees have passed a qualifying exam	Exam protocol
	Basic indicator stipulating the kind and the nature of change	A third of the professional representatives attended a training	Registration list Presence list

Figure 3: Identifying indicators of success and sources of verification

Indicators of success are sometimes presented as an overabundant statement of the inputs enabling the service provider to perform the activities. This view may be rebuttable because spending the investment foreseen for performing an activity does not mean that the activity will be fully performed or that the said activity could have been performed at lesser cost. Hence, there is a possibility to compare the allocated resources with the actually tapped resources. This builds a MIS - management information system. Delivering technical assistance asks for using the whole allocated resources in order to avoid complains against the service provider and to avoid its liability. If any changes in the inputs they should be submitted and approved in the inception report.

Accordingly, it is suggested to use a 6 x 4 matrix as shown figure 4 that eases the follow up of a technical assistance project. Figure 4 comes from figure 3 through adding the inputs foreseen by the project ToR, and the actual inputs tapped by the service provider.

Activity	Foreseen inputs	Actual inputs	QQT - methodology	Indicator of success	Sources of verification
Description of the activity			Adding time		
			Adding quality		
			Adding quantity		
			Basic indicator		

Figure 4: A MIS - matrix

2.1. Assessing indicators of success

An indicator of success should show an identical behavior in a similar project. Its capacity to establish in various environments whether the same results have been obtained where starting from the activities undertaken is essential. If one expert knows that an indicator of success is not satisfactory, it will not recommend it in order to avoid burdening on the project credibility. Any dispute on the quality of the project ToR by the service provider must be avoided after the inception report so that, in turn, the recipient cannot dispute the donor choices.

In the lower matrix of a logical framework, an indicator of success precedes the sources of its verification when reading from left to right. The extreme right-hand column should recall assumptions. Very often, no assumption is provided, because it is implicitly accepted that

- Success in undertaking an activity is an obvious condition to the passage to the following activity, and that
- Assumptions are initial assumptions to be met before beginning the project implementation.

The extreme right-hand column in the upper matrix relates to assumptions.

Neither the logical rules, nor the technical rules take into account the cost of using an indicator of success. Estimating the cost, high or weak, acceptable or exorbitant, is eminently subjective. Donors expect that experts choose the indicators of success according to their lower price. This generally implicit directive is foreseen by the ToR to be met by the expert in charge of drafting the project ToR.

Indicators of success may be assessed from various points of view. They should be objective. For example, their quality may be assessed taking into account their relation to the sources of verification they refer to, or through their capability to prove that certain activities were actually successfully performed.

2.1.1. Indicators of success should be objective

An indicator of success should not be questionable unless it is irrelevant *per se* or the sources of verification are irrelevant. It cannot be limited to what is important[6] but should stipulate the necessary condition(s) for jumping from an activity to the next one.

Any expert must be able to use indicators of success to objectively document a monitoring. No personal or emotional element should modify actual facts that are documented in the source of verification, *ie* indicators of success must be usable by any expert and should lead to the same findings. The condition contained in the indicator of success does not have only to be verifiable but is to be checked. Neither the implementing expert nor the monitoring expert may modify an indicator of success to assert that the result is reached. The procedure must be simple.

> For example, as regards laws and implementing regulations upgrade, an indicator of success is often submitting a draft law to the parliament. Three comments shall be made:
> - Submitting a bill to the Parliament is not an indicator of success but an assumption of the type AOR because the service provider is not in a position to submit the draft to the parliament but the Government.
> - The draft law prepared by the service provider and the recipient might have been modified by the government.
> - The draft law quality cannot be taken into account. A quality criterion can only be used if ascertained beforehand. In the absence of a statement describing quality standards and their *modus operandi*, the quality assessment is likely to be subjective and the indicator of success may be disputed.
>
> In practice, indicators of success are all the more effective that they are simple and take numerical data into account.

2.1.2. Sources of verification should not be deceptive

Checking the adequacy between results and indicators of success is exceptional, because it is not explicitly foreseen by the donors' reference guidelines. The issue is assessing whether fulfilling a certain indicator of success relative to an activity is enough to undertake the next activity. However, the service provider has more than just a commitment to use its best endeavours, because it must inform the donor project manager about any obstacle preventing from obtaining the expected result in order to undertake palliative measures.

> An example of deceptive indicator of success may be presented. Teaching prior art research techniques may be necessary for increasing the capabilities of the staff of a patent office. If the indicator of success states that a certain number of persons are to be trained and that the source of verification is the participants' list, it may happen that the participants register the first day and disappear immediately after registration, when their supervisor is gone away. Obviously such an indicator of success bound to a source of verification is not relevant.

Characteristics of the sources of verification affect the quality of the indicators of success.

In principle, a source of verification must be objective and perennial. Without these two characteristics, it is not possible to propose a reasonable indicator of success since it would become subjective

[6] Conversely, http://www.fidafrique.net/IMG/pdf/Handout_Logframe01.pdf asserts « *Indicators measure what is important*".

and fugacious in contradiction with the objectivity of its statement. Written and published sources are generally accepted as sources of verification. These sources may be criticized by any interested party. Acceptable sources may not be effective because of the absence of publication or introduction of an intern defect like a change of series in statistics.

The robustness of an indicator of success is essential because it will be used after the project completion when assessing its evaluation. As time goes by certain characteristic of a project fade away while others are reinforced.

2.1.3. Counterexamples should not be known

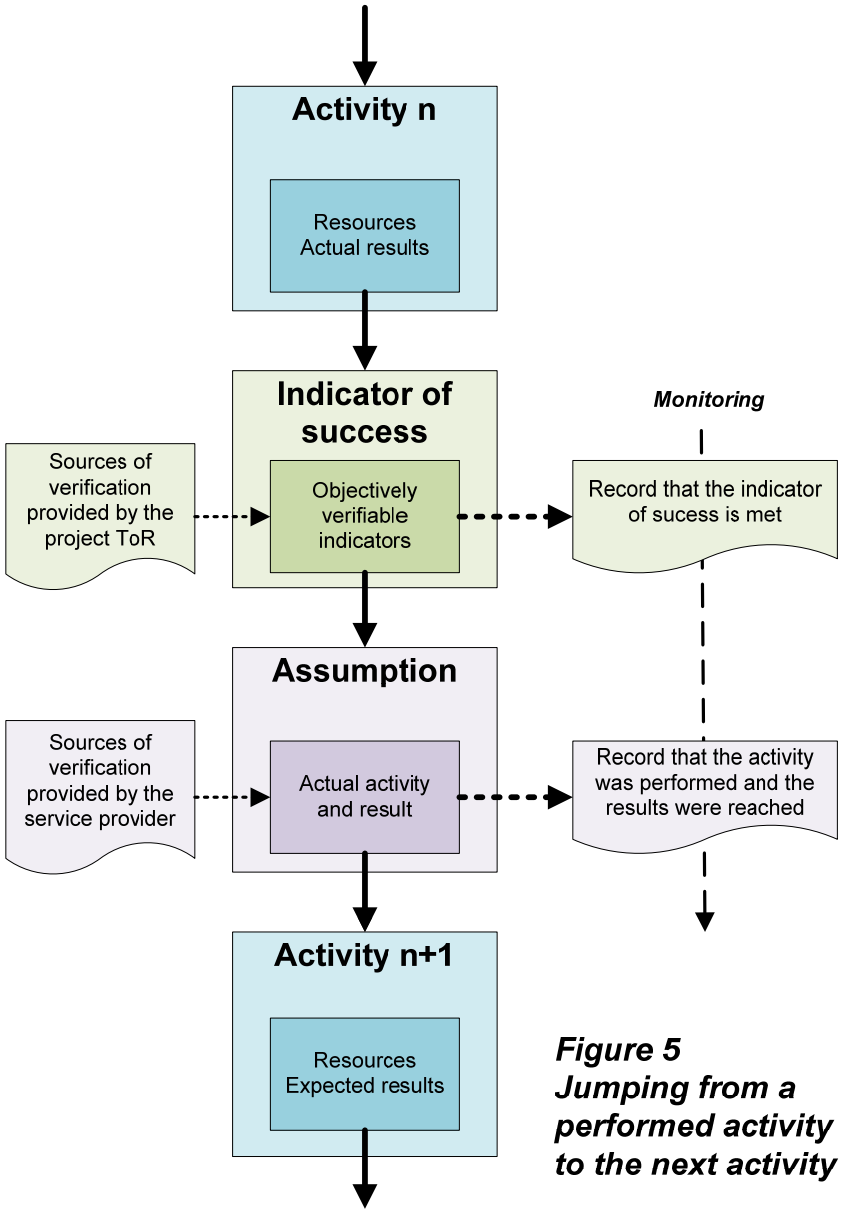

Figure 5
Jumping from a performed activity to the next activity

The search for counterexamples is possible but rare because requiring important efforts and time. Pressures exerted by donors on service providers hinder that the latter refuses a reference to an indicator of success in the absence of duly indexed counterexample. The time between the drafting

of the ToR with its logical framework and the use of indicators of success is determining: short, the counterexample can remain undisclosed; longer, the counterexample may appear.

2.2. Assessing the performance of the project (Monitoring)

Assessing the performance of a project is a specific task that is usually sub-contracted by the donor to a service provider independent from the service provider in charge of the project TOR implementation. In most cases, the selected service provider in not a technical assistance expert, but an expert specializing in project monitoring. Specific methodologies have been developed. They ask for interviews and paper evidences.

2.1.2. Authorizing the passage to the next activity

Successfully performing a certain series of activity transforms expected intermediate results into achieved intermediate results. The proof of this transformation is with the use of indicators of success supported by sources of verification. When the service provider understands that the expected intermediate results are achieved, it may turn to performing the next activity described in the logic of intervention. A result is achieved when all of the activities foreseen by the logic of intervention have been performed.

As shown in figure 5 above, the passage from activity n to activity n+1 asks for two main steps:

- Indicator(s) of success (internal to the project)
  - Identifying the sources of verification of the indicator(s) of success provided by the project ToR,
  - Checking the characteristics of the achieved results with the indicator(s) of success using the sources identified by the project ToR without any risk of conflict of interest because the service provider did not put down the project ToR,
  - Recording (paper evidence) that the indicator(s) of success is/are met
- Assumption(s) (external to the project)
  - Identifying the results that should be achieved by the performance of the assumption(s)
  - Identifying sources of verification of the performance of the assumptions with no risk of conflict of interest because the service provider did not performed the activities necessary to fulfill the assumption(s),
  - Qualifying the assumption(s) (AWR or AOR)
  - Checking whether the assumption(s) has/have been fulfilled
  - Recording (paper evidence) that the assumption(s) has/have been fulfilled

Both indicators of success and assumptions are needed to ensure that activity n+1 (next level activity) is not begun before activity n is fully performed.

The risk that an assumption may not be fulfilled during the performance of a technical assistance project is important because the pace of an administration can-

Monitoring and evaluation will be given high priority at all level. The indicators for monitoring and evaluation are most relevant when measuring the effective and timely implementation of all activities and impact of the project intervention (EuropeAid/129242/C/SER/CN)

not compare with that of a project. In order to avoid suspending a technical assistance project, the number of assumptions should be kept minimal as long as the activities of the service provider have not been fully provided.

2.2.2. Evidencing the actual performance of activities

A first and obvious rule is that a report is to be prepared for each indicator of success and/or assumption. Both are provisions of the project ToR. Putting down indicators of success into the project ToR means that the results to which they correspond are fully identified since the ultimate issue (including during the monitoring) is establishing whether these results have been actually achieved. But defining a result means also that the resources necessary for achieving that result are relevant and fully described. This identification is done by experts delegated by a first service provider that is expected to prepare the project ToR that will be performed by a second service provider. This second service provider has a commitment to achieve a result that is verifiable through using at least one indicator of success. It means that at the time of the posterior (final) evaluation of the provided services, only a fulfillment of the indicator is controlled by a third service provider. It is worth noticing that all of the service providers involved in a project should be independent from each other in order to avoid conflicts of interest.

Indicators become managing tools of the project since the service provider must fulfill them. The recipient of the technical assistance endorses these indicators of success: It will not be able to dispute them and claim that the technical assistance was not relevant.

Real time monitoring is to assess the use of resources by the service provider. Final assessment shows to the donor and the recipient that the project overall objective has been met

The donor obtains a proof of correct use of the invested funds in a project since the indicators were fulfilled. If the objectives stated in the ToR were not reached, the cause is not to be sought in the implementation and/or the performance of the project but is in a defect of design of the project by the expert who wrote the ToR, that is to say in obstacles unforeseen or depending of the donor.

To be accepted within a logical framework, an indicator of success must meet several criteria. In addition to its objectivity, it must be able to avoid falsification.

FACIT

Figure 6 shows how ToR organize self-assessment by the service provider and monitoring by the donor. Monitoring depends on indicators of success. Two kinds of monitoring appear:

- Real time monitoring to assess the use of the resources by the service provider,
- Final assessment of the project by the donor and the recipient. It assesses whether the overall objective has been met.

It is worth reminding that usually four ToR are involved in performing a technical assistance project (column 1). Each of these ToR implies selecting a specialized service provider. These service providers are independent of all other service provider in order to avoid any conflict of interest. A self-

assessment of the project ToR implementation is foreseen by the Project ToR through asking for an inception report that is intended to allow upgrading and updating or the project ToR at the beginning of the project implementation. Then, indicators of success and assumptions are structuring the passage from an activity to its follower according the logic of intervention (1st column of the lower matrices). They also confirm that results were achieved.

Project ToR implementing service providers are not left alone in assessing the performed work. The donor selects a service provider that should monitor the project implementation and another service provider for a final assessment of the project when finished. Specific ToR are referred to.

Indicators of success used in a project relative to technical assistance are a fundamental element of the ToR. The attention given to them should be increased. Often, their consequences for the service provider, the donor, and the recipient are not enough taken into account. If their *raison-d'être* is to facilitate the monitoring of the activities performed by service providers, their definition, and later their use and results can become a sensitive issue. An imperfect drafting leads to unbalance the relation between the donor and the service providers. Differences may occur when the donor tries to impose indicators of success to the service providers, which are assumptions on the behavior of the recipient.

Four ToR	**Four service providers**	**Service provider self-assessment**	**Donor monitoring**
ToR for selecting the writer of the technical assistance project	Project ToR writer		
ToR for selecting the project monitor	Monitoring service provider		
Project ToR (Selecting the service provider)	Implementing project ToR service provider	Inception report Indicators of success Assumptions General reporting	Real time monitoring
ToR for selecting the project final assessment	Project final assessment writer		Final assessment

Figure 6: ToR, assessments, and monitoring

A temporal difference can be highlighted: an assumption is directed to the future and remains to be fulfilled during the technical assistance project, while indicators of success document past events aiming at changing particular or general objectives.

Indicators of success are based on sources of verification which must be objective and perennial as of a certain moment of a certain time span. Indicators of success should not present a known counter-example and are to be univocal.