

## **PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

Project management is not only to implement the activities identified by any NGO. It includes managing all the components of a project which are its resources, risks and changes. This is done to ensure that the project will achieve its objectives within the expected quality, schedule and budget. It also ensures the satisfaction of the expectations of all stakeholders (donors, government, NGOs, community etc.).

Currently, there is not any specific standard for managing development projects. Therefore, each organization or project manager defines their own approach to manage a project. Many development organizations claim to have good principles of project management, but only a few apply formal project management methodologies in a repeatable, consistent and predictable way. A large number of organizations run projects relying on the technical skills of their project managers who unfortunately have little or no formal training in project management.

### **Project**

There are many definitions of project. Some of these definitions describe the nature of a project and how it differs from other type of work:

- A project is a temporary process, which has a clearly defined start and end time, a set of tasks, and a budget, that is developed to accomplish a well-defined goal or objective

- A project is a group of inter-related activities, controlled by time, cost, and scope, designed to deliver a specific purpose
- A clear set of activities with related inputs and outputs aimed to achieve objectives and goals linked to desired effects and impacts in a target population (sometimes called ‘beneficiaries’)

From all these definitions, one can see that there are some specific characteristics that define a project and separate it from most ordinary work:

- A project has a beginning and an end.
- A project has limited resources
- A project follows a planned, organized method to meet its objectives with specific goals of quality and performance.
- Every project is unique
- A project has a manager responsible for its outcomes.

Management is a process of setting and achieving goals through the implementation of the four basic functions of management: planning, organizing, directing, and controlling by utilizing human, financial, and material resources.

### **Definition of Project Management**

“Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to a broad range of activities in order to meet the requirements of a particular project”.

## **Project Management Constraints**

Every project has to manage four basic limitations which include scope, schedule, budget and quality. The success of a project depends on the skills and knowledge of a project manager and he has to consider these limitations and has to develop the plans and processes to keep everything in balance.

- **Scope** is what the project is trying to achieve. It is the boundary of a project and it is what the beneficiaries and the donors expect from the project, nothing more, and nothing less.
- **Budget** means the costs approved for the project including all required expenses needed in order to complete that project. In development projects, managers keep balance between not running out of money and not under spending because many projects receive funds or grants with conditions ‘use it or lose it’.
- **Schedule** is defined as the time required to complete the project. The time framework for all development projects is necessary to be set at initial phases.
- **Quality** is delivering the project outcomes according to the needs and expectations of the project beneficiaries and donor agency in order to meet stakeholder satisfaction. It also means maintaining the quality standards that are set by the donor, government, or by other stakeholders.

Managing these limitations is the main responsibility of the project manager. A project is successful when it achieves all four limitations. Failure in any of them could affect the project.

### **The Challenges of a Development Project**

Development projects work in challenging environments where many risks and complex social, economic, and political factors could affect the services. In addition, the lack of proper infrastructure, limited resources, and a changing environment become challenge for project managers. The following challenges are faced by development projects:

- Poor project planning due to rush to obtain grants and funding from donor agencies that limit the time a deeper analysis of the project risks
- Inadequate project management skills in project staff
- No clear identification of who is responsible and accountable for the project outcomes to the donors and to the beneficiaries.
- Lack of stakeholder involvement, as key project stakeholders are not systematically involved in the planning and monitoring of a project, this leads to a lack of ownership when the project is implemented.
- Unrealistic plans, projects are planned on a linear process, this reasoning leaves little or no opportunities to modify plans and adjust as the project makes progress.

- No measure to evaluate success and failure to know if the project was a success.
- Poor, inconsistent project management discipline. There is no consistent use of a proven methodology to help monitor the project implementation.
- Duplication of efforts. Projects within a development organization develop their own approach to solve a problem, and each approach has its own management process. Ultimately, these separated efforts result in duplication and in increased costs to the organization.

Once a project is completed, most organizations do not have processes in place to capture the lessons learned; therefore, this knowledge is not included in the design of future projects.

### **The Need for a Project Management Methodology**

In this type of environment, organizations need a methodology that allows a great degree of flexibility to accommodate the constantly changing environment of the project; a methodology that promotes best possible standards of performance, and reinforces the organizational capacity to carry its services in a transparent and effective manner.

A methodology is a method to capture the best practices around project management and disseminate them in the organization. It is a system of principles, practices, and procedures. Defining and implementing a good methodology is essential for development organizations who want a project management approach

for performing project activities in a logical, consistent, accountable, and repeatable manner.

## **Benefits of Project Management**

The use of a systematic project management methodology gives development organizations a strategic tool. Main benefits of project management are:

- A common language and a consistent discipline for how projects are planned and implemented in the organization
- A standard project terminology, understood by all stakeholders
- Provides project stakeholders confidence on how projects are done in the organization
- Permits accurate predictions of project resource requirements and potential risks
- Mentions clear procedures for developing project plans that allow better control of the project throughout its life cycle.
- Assists the project manager to integrate, coordinate and track project activities, by describing the basic practices, procedures and techniques.

Many development projects fail to produce the desired outcomes or fail to serve in the communities. The most common causes of failure are:

- Objectives not properly defined or agreed
- Discrepancy in understanding of the project's objectives by stakeholders
- Objectives not properly defined in measurable terms

- Insufficient planning and coordination of resources Introduction to Project Management
- Poor estimation of duration and cost
- Incomplete, unrealistic and outdated project plans
- Lack of communication with stakeholders and management
- Weak project leadership, vague lines of responsibility and authority
- Inadequate definition of roles
- Poor commitment to the project by the team, the organization, and the beneficiaries
- Weak control processes and feedback mechanisms to detect problems early
- Lack of analysis of major risk factors and inadequate risk response strategies
- Lack of quality control

All of these causes could be reduced or removed by the use of project management tools and techniques in a proper way. Development Organizations cannot be totally successful unless they implement a project management methodology that is applicable to their projects.