

# Introduction

**Project cycle management** (PCM) is the term given to the process of planning and managing projects, programmes and organisations. It is used widely in the business sector and is increasingly being used by development organisations. Development projects sometimes fail because they are badly planned and do not take account of some important factors, particularly the needs and views of stakeholders. PCM is based around a project cycle, which ensures that all aspects of projects are considered. A central value of the PCM method is that aspects of the project are reconsidered throughout the project cycle to ensure that any changes which have occurred are included in the project design. As a result, projects are more likely to be successful and sustainable.

PCM involves a set of planning tools which feed into the logical framework (commonly known as a log frame). The log frame is a table which gives a summary of the project plans. Some donors now expect log frames to be submitted alongside project proposals. Log frames can seem quite complex to many people. This means that some organisations find they are unable to access donor funding. This book explains the process of completing log frames in a simple way in order to increase the ability of organisations to access such funding. However, organisations may want to start to use the log frame for all their projects, whether they are applying for donor funding or not. This is because the process of completing the log frame is in many ways more useful than the end product. The process is important for project success, sustainability and organisational learning.

Throughout the book we talk about using project cycle management for projects because this is probably the main way in which PCM will be used. However, all of the tools can be used just as effectively for planning programmes and managing and developing organisations.

## Planning

### Catching the vision

The book of Nehemiah tells how Nehemiah led the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, which had been burnt down by the Babylonians.

- Chapter 1 tells us about Nehemiah's calling by God to the task. What does this chapter tell us about:
  - Nehemiah's sensitivity to God's will?
  - Nehemiah's motivation behind the task?
  - Nehemiah's attitude as a leader?
  - Nehemiah's compassion?
  - Nehemiah's attitude to prayer?
- All of the above factors gave Nehemiah vision for the task ahead.
  - How does this challenge us in our attitude towards the work we do?
- Proverbs 16:3 tells us 'Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed.'
  - What does this verse tell us about the link between prayer and planning? Is prayer alone is enough? Is planning alone enough?
  - Do we plan prayerfully in our work?

Why is good planning important?

'The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.' Proverbs 21:5

There is a phrase 'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.' Think of examples of when things have gone wrong because planning was not carried out adequately. Why did things go wrong? What was not taken account of?

There are many reasons why planning is a good idea. Planning helps to:

- think ahead and prepare for the future
- ensure the right direction
- identify issues that will need to be addressed
- consider whether a project is possible
- make the best use of resources
- motivate staff
- ensure smooth running of projects
- clarify goals and develop vision
- establish the reason for doing something
- choose between options
- obtain funds and other resources
- allocate resources and responsibilities
- guide implementation of projects
- achieve the best results.

There are many barriers to planning. These include:

- lack of time, or not making time to plan
- not knowing how to plan
- difficulty in getting the right people together
- finding it difficult to plan because the future is so uncertain
- wanting to do things immediately because the need is urgent, rather than think about them.

The following examples show lack of planning:

- Someone from another country imports forks because he sees people eating with their fingers. However, in that country people usually eat with their fingers. This project does not address a real need.
- A sanitation project is started because people are dying of diarrhoea. People believe that diarrhoea is caused by evil spirits, so they have difficulty in understanding the relevance of the project.
- An agricultural project wants to help very poor people. An agriculturalist starts a programme of vegetable growing. While the project is technically very successful, very poor people do not benefit because they have no land.
- A fisheries project digs ponds, but they do not hold enough water because the soil does not contain enough clay. Not enough technical information was obtained.
- A handicraft project helps people to make shoulder bags. A year later there are large stocks of unsold bags because not enough research had been done into the marketing aspects of the project.
- A project builds latrines, but the women do not use them because the area is badly lit and they fear attack by men. Social and cultural factors have not been taken into account.

**Who should plan?** A key question in the process of planning is 'who should be involved?' There are both advantages and disadvantages of planning alone and with different types of people.

Advantages and disadvantages

Think through the following situations in terms of time, decision-making, conflict, responsibility, knowledge, ownership, resources and motivation:

- Imagine a manager in a relief and development organisation. What are the advantages of the manager planning a project alone? What are the disadvantages?
- Imagine a few members of staff of a relief and development organisation planning a project together. What are the advantages? What are the disadvantages?
- Imagine members of staff of a relief and development organisation planning a project with community members. What are the advantages? What are the disadvantages?

Which of these situations is best? Why? How can some of the disadvantages of that situation be overcome?

## The project cycle

The process of planning and managing projects can be drawn as a cycle. Each phase of the project leads to the next.

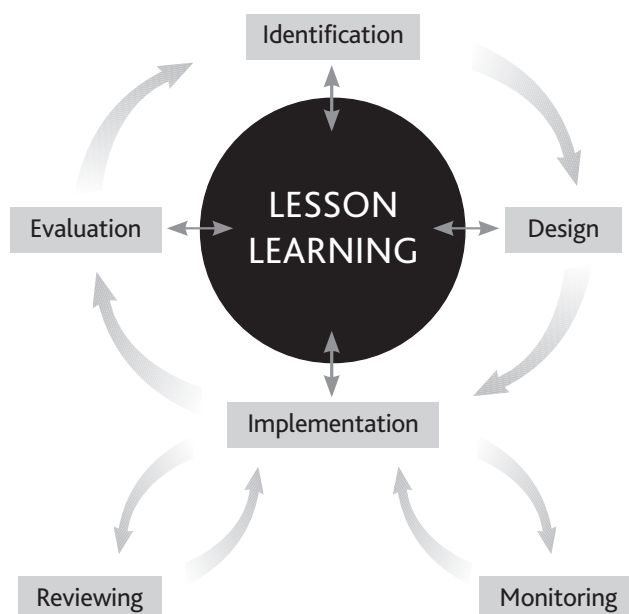
**IDENTIFICATION** To identify what a project will focus on, we need to find out who should benefit and what their needs are. A 'needs assessment' will give an overview of community problems. A 'capacity assessment' will help identify which problem the project should address.

**DESIGN** Once it is decided to go ahead with the project, we can start to think about the detail. This involves carrying out further research into the people affected by a problem and how they are affected by it. We also need to consider the risks to the project and how we will measure the project's performance.

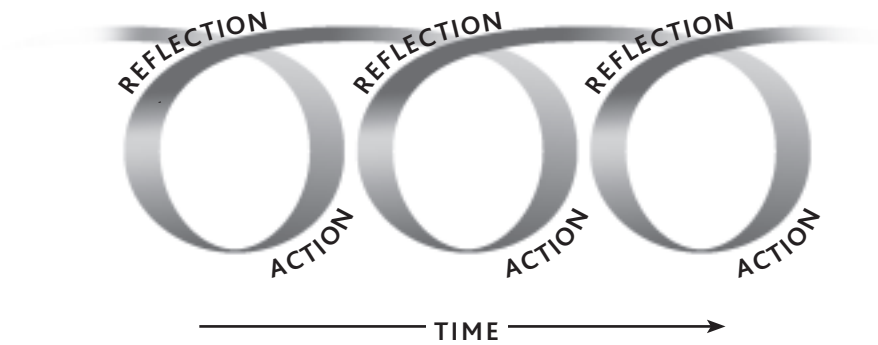
**IMPLEMENTATION** During the implementation of the project it is important to monitor and review the progress of the project and any outside changes that affect it. The project plans should be adjusted where necessary.

**EVALUATION** Evaluation should be carried out at or after project completion. Evaluation could be carried out a few months or years after the project has finished in order to assess its long-term impact and sustainability.

**LESSON LEARNING** While the project cycle is a useful way of outlining the stages of a project, it has one drawback: it makes it look as though one tool follows another. In fact, many of the planning tools can be used at any stage of the project. They should be repeated throughout the project's life to ensure that any changes that might affect project success are accounted for. Findings should also be used for organisational learning and to improve other projects.



Project planning should be seen as an ongoing process, which involves learning by reflecting and acting.



It is important to take time to stand back, think, rethink, learn from others and from God.

