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BENEFIT SUSTAINABILITY MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

Benefit Sustainability

The international development community's interest in "benefit sustainability" relates directly to the increasing evidence available in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the expected benefits of many project investments have failed to materialize following the completion of a project. While the reasons for this poor showing are varied, most researchers agree that one factor is the focus on "life-of-project effectiveness" that flows from assistance being provided in the form of projects. Many development agencies and countries approach development by structuring activities into fixed-term (usually 3 to 5 years) projects.

Despite the evidence of non-continuation of benefits, projects nevertheless still account for much of the focus and structure of development activities. Research shows that identifying, planning, and implementing a project for benefit sustainability requires an additional development mindset reinforced with some practical management knowledge-- from the inception of a project idea to the completion of the intended returns on investment.

The Manual

This manual is intended for international development project personnel with management responsibility for results and long term impact. These persons might be located in:

- bilateral or multilateral assistance agencies
- developing country institutions (such as ministries or local government project units);
- in non-governmental organizations (either in headquarters offices or in field units); or,
- in private enterprises (including firms with design and implementation contracts and commercial firms engaged in development activities such as agribusiness or management training on a for-profit basis).

Reflecting the research on sustainability, this manual is most applicable to bilateral development assistance projects between field missions and host country counterparts. To increase its usefulness, the manual's structure mirrors the stages in a project's life-cycle of:

1. Identification,
2. Design,
3. Implementation, and
4. Evaluation.

The respective chapters provide a reference for project managers facing the varied challenges in each phase of the project. The manual attempts to be a concise and critical guide to considering and incorporating sustainability. It informs project managers of the issues to address at each stage and suggests some means for including sustainability into the standard activities of that stage. Rather than be a comprehensive guide, the manual aims to deliver critical information.

Similarly, the manual assumes that its audience of project managers is familiar with the basic tools of good project management, and therefore it focuses only on the additive elements necessary for benefit sustainability. It refers to established project management technologies and suggests references for further information.

Summary of Actions

For each phase of the project cycle, the authors tried to distill the important activities for addressing benefits sustainability down to a handful of key actions. These are presented in the box below.

Key Actions for Incorporating Benefit Sustainability

Identification

- Identify long-term benefits to flow from project.
- Identify stakeholders for long-term benefits and determine level of support.
- Identify and emphasize benefits that the private sector can provide.
- Assess the institutional context and select the design alternative with the greatest likelihood of sustainability.

Design

- Specify which benefits should be sustained after life-of-project and for which this is inappropriate or infeasible.
- Choose an appropriate implementing organization given the type of benefit, capacity of alternative organizations, and institutional environment.
- Fashion project to ensure factors critical for sustainability: market-responsive benefits, strategic management capacity, adequate resources for benefit continuation, and a supportive institutional environment.
- Organize project to be implemented, monitored and evaluated for sustainability and allocate resources for these purposes.

Implementation

- Build and maintain ownership of implementation team and key stakeholders for sustainability plan (i.e. build a sustainability constituency).
- Create incentives and disincentives that compel key people to take actions necessary for sustainability.
- Develop the capacity to implement the sustainability plan.
- Revisit, monitor and report on sustainability indicators and benchmarks.

Evaluation

- Ensure sustainability is substantial part of the formative evaluation.
 - Ensure that key sustainability stakeholders participate in the sustainability evaluation.
 - Use evaluation findings to plan for donor phase-out and benefits sustainability thereafter.
 - Highlight opportunities for replication of project successes.
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PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Introduction

Of all the stages in the development investment cycle, it is during project identification, when the basic outline is set, that the most substantial impact on sustainability can be made. Making changes later often proves difficult. Development managers should understand the factors that promote sustainability so they can make good judgements at the start about what loans and grants to make.

Incorporating a concern for benefits sustainability into the project identification stage involves a number of aspects. Key elements of this orientation are a strategic perspective, and the recognition that the focus on benefits sustainability is additive to effectiveness concerns.

The Strategic Approach

A strategic perspective includes both strategic planning and strategic management -- terms which seem to be more commonly *used* than clearly *understood*. These two terms simply represent different phases of the same process: the *strategic approach* is consistent regardless.

The strategic approach incorporates four main elements:¹

1. ***Future Orientation***: assuming things will change, and planning to maximize benefits which can be derived during and from that change.
2. ***External Emphasis***: recognizing the diversity of the project environment and the many dimensions that impact on project outcomes, including technology, politics, society, and economics.
3. ***Environmental Fit***: planning for a continuing fit between the project (both benefits and delivery institution) and its environment, including mission, objectives, strategies, structures, and resources.
4. ***Process Orientation***: planning and management priorities evolve in an iterative cycle of conscious and deliberate learning from experience, as the reality changes.

What do these elements mean to the project planner? They mean that there must be a longer term view, beyond the traditional Life of Project; and, they mean a much greater emphasis on context: the project environment. Strategic planners need broader and deeper information about the environment in order to take into consideration trends in many different areas when identifying project opportunities and potential benefit delivery mechanisms.

Effectiveness and Benefits Sustainability

Conventional project identification issues include development policy and strategy considerations, specification of needs and effective responses, and resource sufficiency. The conventional implementation perspective vis-à-vis these parameters can be readily transformed into a sustainability perspective, as illustrated in the following comparison.

COMPARISON OF EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES DURING PROJECT IDENTIFICATION²

<u>Effectiveness</u>	<u>Sustainability</u>
1. Does the project idea conform to developmental policies and strategy?	1. Does the project support a long-term integrated development strategy?
2. Does the project identify problems and needs that can be met through the project mechanism?	2. Is a project the appropriate mechanism for finding a lasting solution to the identified problem?
3. Does the project idea identify actions which are required for the project to succeed in accomplishing its objectives?	3. Will the actions in the project, if successfully undertaken, create conditions conducive to long-term improvements or solutions?
4. Is stakeholder commitment sufficient to design a feasible project?	4. Will stakeholder support be sufficiently developed to maintain benefits after the life of project?

Sustainability encompasses attention to the familiar issues that arise during the identification phase, but filters those issues through a long-term perspective. This longer term viewpoint opens the door to less familiar considerations for project identification and selection.

Historically, project effectiveness has been measured in terms of benefits at the end of the project funding cycle, with observable benchmarks along the way to achieving these benefits. Research has shown that this definition of an "endpoint" is too short sighted. Projects frequently stop delivering the desired benefits as soon as the money runs out because benchmarks were defined only in terms of life-of-project performance, which tends to underemphasize institutional aspects concerning the capacity to sustain the delivery of benefits after donor funding ends. Addressing

this fundamental problem begins at the project identification stage when the planner starts the process of winnowing through alternatives.

Incorporating benefits sustainability concerns into the project identification process involves reweighting traditional project analyses to increase the focus on benchmarks and conditions expected after the project's outputs have been produced. Given the current emphasis on durable results from development investments, this broader analytic perspective will strengthen the rationale for the project as a whole. The following suggests four key action steps to better address sustainability during project identification.

How to Incorporate Sustainability into Project Identification: Key Action-Steps

1. Identify long-term benefits to flow from project.

These are the key benefits that should continue after project funding ends and are necessary to reach the project's overall objectives.

2. Identify stakeholders for long-term benefits and determine level of support.

Long-term stakeholders include beneficiaries, relevant host-country government officials, and private sector and NGO benefit providers. The interests and concerns of key stakeholders should influence the project conception.

3. Identify and emphasize benefits that the private sector can provide.

Because the private sector operates on market incentives, private sector benefits have a greater likelihood of being sustained. Now is the time to think creatively about an appropriate role for the private sector.

4. Assess the institutional context and select the design alternative with the greatest likelihood of sustainability.

Institutional context includes the policy environment, social mores, economic structure and political system. The chosen design alternative should be most compatible with the institutional context.

Sustainability Strategies

The sustainability strategies that follow correspond to and also cut across the key sustainability steps proposed above. They are illustrative rather than exhaustive in nature, although the main bases are covered. In considering these activities, 1) a strategic approach needs to be maintained, and 2) it should be understood that some of these activities are performed in addition to the effectiveness analysis.

- ▶ ***Broad Reconnaissance*** is a normal part of project identification. The difference for sustainability lies in the breadth of the sectors covered, the variety of research methodologies employed and the extended time frame of the sustainability assessment.
- ▶ ***Stakeholder Analysis*** is a key part of sustainability assessment, but it is sometimes overshadowed by project effectiveness analysis at the identification stage.
- ▶ ***Structured Participation*** is woven throughout sustainability assessment to ensure breadth of analytic focus and incorporation of stakeholder views. Two key tools for incorporating participation are action planning and the logical framework approach.

Broad Reconnaissance

Project planners usually arrive in-country with an initial determination of the most attractive project areas from the donor policy perspective. The activities presented here apply to the next steps in the identification process, when the planning team arrives on site to flesh out the preliminary design. The goal is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the project context - socially, politically, and economically, remembering the priority of an outward focus with close links to the human side of the context. In practice this means a blend of research methods that capture both facts and feelings. Broad reconnaissance guided by the strategic approach employs a number of survey methods.³

1. **Examination of Written Records:** This is the most easily understood activity. Its key to success is to establish research parameters early so that effort can be focused on the most fruitful areas for sustainability assessment. A Country Review is very useful for the effectiveness analysis; but one should be imaginative in selecting sources for the deeper context and longer term perspective on the environment-- look to non-traditional sources such as The Economist, the World Bank, or some other bilateral donor and private sector investors for a fresh perspective. The private sector literature often examines the context through a "market" lens, which is sometimes lacking in public sector analyses.

This step is the source of facts and figures that describe the institutional context. These seemingly impartial facts will likely form a significant part of the appendices of the identification document. However, it is important not to be blinded by the "official" reports as they all too often obscure factors that are key to longer-term benefits sustainability, which usually lies in the people and policy side of the environment.

Do not neglect host country policy documents, published speeches, or other public reports of official opinion. Newspaper archives are laborious to research, but can yield very revealing background if the target is clearly and carefully defined in advance. This is particularly important for identifying the stakeholder population to assess which groups are most important for the project at hand. Examination of written records is the basis for streamlining information, which will be continued through the informal delphi, interview, and workshop methods.

2. **Informal Delphi:** This group discussion approach is a quick, inexpensive way to begin to understand the local perspective on all of the sustainability issues. The key to success is to be consistent in the questioning, and very broad in selecting the group members. Remember the longer time-frame of the sustainability assessment, and include potential beneficiaries, as well as the policy makers who are important in the short run.

Including representatives from a variety of groups will balance opinion, but the planner needs to structure the meetings so the different parties feel empowered to speak freely. The goal is to secure the participation of project environment representatives and to provide for their interaction with the planner. By pursuing a gradually narrowing series of "what if" questions planners can play out a variety of project implementation scenarios prior to making any institutional decisions. This is a good way to gain understanding of specific private sector options which are generally identified through the examination of written records.

3. **Confidential Interviews:** Confidential interviews provide a good source of detailed information and individual perspectives but are time consuming, and risky in terms of distorting bias. Their use should be limited except in the context of stakeholder analysis, where personal opinions are very important.
4. **Key Informants:** The use of informants is helpful for clarifying specific questions but they entail the same weaknesses and uses as confidential interviews. Key government officials are important sources of policy insights, and senior bureaucrats can address the bureaucratic or regulatory environments of any project idea. The key is to have clearly defined areas of research interest so the informants stay focused.
5. **Direct Observation:** This method is low in cost and offers rich opportunities for the planner to gather first-hand impressions and context. However, one should be aware that the findings are often biased in some (often unknown) way and should be compared to and balanced by information from other sources.

6. **Workshops:** Structured participation (described in greater detail below) is important for bringing project planners, stakeholders, and experts together to collaboratively define the project-- resolving to the extent possible the sustainability issues-- in a structured, goal-directed context. Such workshops represent the culmination of the reconnaissance. The purposes of this process are to:

- 1) transfer ownership of the idea from the external planner to local stakeholders,
- 2) build new personal linkages and decision making capacity,
- 3) solicit the best ideas from a broad group and simultaneously communicate these different perspectives, and
- 4) produce formal commitments based on a group effort.

Select participants from the key decision-making groups. Invite experts with credibility among the participants as resource people. Choose a facilitator, someone to manage the workshop process, who is committed to the principles of action-planning using the logical framework approach.

Workshops may be costly in terms of participant time and facilitator skills, but the benefit is the identification of a project based on realistic assumptions, to be established in a sustainable institutional setting, with the most opportune private sector role, providing specific long term benefits which are in demand.

Stakeholder Analysis⁴

At the project identification stage, stakeholders are usually decision-makers at the policy-making level, although beneficiaries who are more organized and have lobby groups, can also be included. The term, *Stakeholder Analysis*, represents a variety of different methodologies for analyzing stakeholder interests, most of which are described as part of Broad Reconnaissance. The purpose here is to highlight the areas of interest for stakeholder analysis.

Stakeholder analysis at this stage consists of identifying whose interests are important to the sustainability of the project in terms of providing tangible (for example, money, vehicles, personnel) and intangible (e.g., bureaucratic approval or political backing) resources and support. Stakeholders can be groups or individuals. At the fact-finding stage, the planner needs to be more comprehensive because project ideas are still general; but by the end of the identification process, stakeholders need to be identified specifically enough to be included in the structured participation process.

Choose those who have real and mobilizable resources to bring to bear for or against the project; they are the ones who can directly influence sustainability. The table below illustrates a format for articulating, in a transparent way, *who* has *what* to influence project sustainability, *how* they can influence and *where* they stand.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS TABLE

GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL	GROUP'S INTEREST IN THE ISSUE	RESOURCES	RESOURCE MOBILIZATION CAPACITY	POSITION ON ISSUE

The resources stakeholders provide include policy (related to issues and interests), as well as financial and other tangible support. Policy support or hostility comes from a variety of sources, including national and local government, non governmental agencies, the for-profit sector, funding agencies, and the beneficiary community-- all of whom have interests at stake.

Examine the incentives and disincentives stakeholders may have for supporting (or not) a particular project by looking at the institutional context, planned benefits, and the identified beneficiaries. Different combinations of project elements will entail different stakeholder populations to be analyzed. Elements include the organizational choices for benefits delivery, uses of the private sector, and choices concerning the benefits to be sustained over the longer term. After examining written resources, group and individual interviews are useful for refining the analysis.

Structured Participation

This term refers to the process whereby project identification is intimately linked with the environment where the project is planned and intended to be sustained. It is accepted wisdom that to be sustainable over the long term, projects must deliver benefits through a viable organization, and those benefits must be in sufficient demand to generate the resources needed to sustain that organization. Identifying such a combination five or more years before the desired outcome is a daunting challenge. The planner is usually an outsider with a big stake in getting the project identification accepted, and perhaps even designed, by the various actors. The planner is rarely responsible for implementation.

Structured participation brings a diverse population of stakeholders into the identification process to add their substantial knowledge and insights. In this way, the planner comes away with a

sustainable project concept, based on reality as all the players know it. This process is frequently guided by an outside professional entity with expertise in process consulting. A general overview of the participation process is provided here.

For sustainability analysis, structured participation assumes that stakeholders have been identified, although their level of support may not be known in sufficient detail. However, workshops are ideal for defining long term benefits, the private sector role, and most importantly, for assessing the institutional context and developing a design alternative for the project. The method, participants, and logical approach of structured participation are discussed in greater detail below.

Action-Planning⁵

Action-Planning during project identification (and design) involves stakeholders in a participatory process of planning and decision-making that strengthens the project concept while also contributing to improving capacity. This process, in the form of planning workshops, mobilizes local commitment and provides the basis for building a team that can provide the continuity inherently lacking due to staffing rotations, both on the USAID and host country sides. Local ownership of the development activity is ensured, and the goal of developing effective implementing organizations is explicitly recognized.

Action planning workshops differ from traditional planning mechanisms in several ways:

1. Stakeholder positions and needs are key elements in the proceedings
2. The focus is on teams rather than individuals
3. They are participatory, practical, and emphasize learning-by-doing, which builds team management capacity while simultaneously producing immediate, concrete value (e.g., answers to the four key sustainability questions, operationally useful project designs, or implementation plans).
4. They involve minimal formal lectures and maximum participation in the form of small group discussions, problem-solving, and decision-making.
5. The best are designed to create a climate where people of different disciplines and interests listen to each other and attempt to integrate relevant expertise and experience-- technical, social, political, financial, and economic.

The Participants: Teams

Groups and teams can be selected randomly, hierarchically (vertically), or horizontally, according to area of interest, level in the hierarchy, or perspective. Sustainability issues may require discussion by teams of different types at different stages, and the facilitator carefully plans which type of group to use at which point in the process. The goal is a dynamic situation where the groups reach conclusions internally, and then report and interact as a whole to synthesize the findings. There is a structured process of moving from the more general consensus-building to the specific task-related steps. In this case, the participants are identifying benefits and selecting those to sustain, assessing the environmental constraints and opportunities (stakeholders and role of the private sector), and then coming up with a specific design alternative. The Logical Framework is the intellectual structure which underpins this analytical process (see below).

The Facilitator

The facilitator views the participants as the source of expertise and experience needed to achieve the desired outcome or product. Participants come expecting a teacher-student relationship but the facilitator's first responsibility is to create an active learning climate in which knowledge is discovered through discussion and *mutual* exploration. The facilitator works with the group(s) to bring out the needed information, and simultaneously guides them in processing this experience so they recognize problem-solving or decision-making procedures for use in the future. In the process, the group or team discovers more effective norms. For example, team efforts work better if everyone participates and a few dominant people might need to have this demonstrated.

Logical Framework Approach⁶

USAID, the World Bank and other funding agencies have endorsed the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as an effective planning tool for designing, implementing, and evaluating more effective projects. It is an equally useful tool for incorporating sustainability issues into the project concept. However, to ensure sustainability of benefits after project inputs cease, the benchmark elements leading to this desired outcome, or post EOPS (End of Project Status) state, must be built into the project from the earliest stage-- at identification. In this way, accountability for working towards sustainability throughout the process can be documented, and appraisal of the extent to which the design and implementation process is promoting sustainability can occur.

There are numerous documents which describe the Logical Framework Approach as a structure and it is assumed the reader is familiar with its basics; the discussion provided here is restricted to the sustainability focus. Benchmarks and verifiable indicators are the link between the stated project purpose, the outputs and inputs for the project, and the real world, concrete, quantified indicators. At each level, from the more general purpose to the most specific project activities, incorporate at least one benchmark related to achieving benefits sustainability by the end of the project. Define verifiable indicators for each of these benchmarks.

The following example highlights sustainability from the resource availability perspective and deals with a services privatization project.

BENCHMARK STATEMENTS

Purpose (intermediate objective): Private sector is efficiently and effectively providing, on a sustainable basis, utilities, services and infrastructure development.

Outputs (accomplishments): Regulations governing pricing, contracting, and billing; and cost-recovery mechanisms are in place.

Inputs (activities): Conduct policy assessments; hold policy reform conference; implement 2 pilot projects for waste, water, and power with cost recovery mechanisms; conduct analysis at yr 1 and yr 2 for effectiveness of pilot mechanisms; conduct training for selected private sector participants for implementation of cost recovery mechanisms.

INDICATOR STATEMENTS

By 1998, the private sector is profitably delivering power, water and waste disposal services through fee-for-service and other non-government financed mechanisms.

Three completed policy analyses form the basis for regulatory reform by 1993; new public law based on pilot project experience being used for contracting, pricing, and billing, by 1994; government financial support gradually eliminated for targeted services by 1998.

The indicator at the activity level is simply whether the activity has taken place.

Other perspectives that also build towards benefits sustainability are a strategic (long-term) orientation exhibited by the project implementors and demand responsiveness of the project services and providers. The logical framework for the same project could be restated to highlight purposes, outputs, and inputs related to these other two sustainability requirements.

PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

The project design or development phase presents a critical opportunity to ensure that key decisions reflect a concern for the sustainability of benefits beyond the investment period. During this phase of the project cycle, the design team determines what benefits the project will produce, by whom, and through what means. If these key design decisions do not develop a project that targets sustainable benefits, the scope for achieving sustainability by project termination will be severely limited.

The broad theme for the design phase is the cultivation of conditions that are conducive to benefit sustainability. All facets of a project-- including project objectives, goods and services provided, beneficiaries, means of distribution, and implementing organizations-- affect whether benefits should and can be continued once donor funding ends. While project design has traditionally focused on choosing project elements that produce the intended outputs, project design for sustainability needs to adopt a longer-term, strategic perspective that selects project elements that lead to desired outcomes over an extended time frame. Design decisions should support the critical factors for benefit sustainability.

Critical Factors for Benefit Sustainability

For most projects the following factors determine whether or not benefits will continue to be realized after the termination of donor funding.

Market-responsive benefits

To develop an enduring constituency for benefit continuation, the specific project benefits must address a recognized need of the target population. Therefore, deciding on which benefits to deliver is predicated upon identifying the target audience and eliciting from that audience what benefits they desire. Needs are not stagnant, however; benefit delivery processes should be designed with sufficient flexibility to respond and adapt to changes in demand.

Strategic management capacity

Implementing organizations and the people who staff them are crucial influences on whether or not benefits continue. Individuals, supported by organizational culture and standard operating procedures, need to recognize and work toward long-term objectives, acknowledge and account for opportunities and threats in the external environment, and adapt the organization and its products to continually meet evolving needs.

Supportive institutional environment

Although many external factors are beyond the direct control of project managers, they greatly influence whether benefits will be sustained. Such factors include the policy and legal framework, bureaucratic culture and procedures, social norms, and economic and political conditions. In some cases, project managers may be able to influence the institutional environment to make it more hospitable, for example, lobbying for regulatory or legislative reforms. In instances where the environment is less amenable to change, project design should acknowledge and accommodate potential constraints.

Adequate resources

Benefits will not be produced without adequate resources to sustain them-- financial, human, natural, and technical. Since development projects typically provide financial, and often human and technical resources, benefits cannot continue post-project unless resources have been transferred to or can be acquired by the appropriate host-country organizations. Natural resources are finite and must be used responsibly to ensure their continued availability for the development of future generations.

Assuring that these factors are in place implies priorities and concerns for project design that transcend the issues that are important for mere effectiveness. This additive consideration is illustrated by juxtaposing effectiveness and sustainability questions below.

COMPARISON OF EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN PROJECT DESIGN

<u>Effectiveness</u>	<u>Sustainability</u>
1. Who should be on the design team?	1. What additional resources and experience does a design team for sustainability need?
2. How should the design team define project analysis requirements?	2. How should project analysis requirements be expanded to address the long-term needs?
3. Is the project design appropriate to assure the accomplishment of its stated objectives?	3. Do the stated objectives incorporate a long-term perspective and will the project design be able to achieve these?
4. Is stakeholder commitment sufficient for effective implementation of the project?	4. Is commitment from a broad range of stakeholders sufficient to effect lasting improvements?

The benefit sustainability questions encompasses the more conventional effectiveness issues while adding a longer-term perspective of benefit continuation. This perspective invites other, less traditional considerations for project design. The general steps for incorporating sustainability into project design are presented in the box below.

How to Incorporate Sustainability into Project Design: Key Action-Steps

- 1. Specify which benefits should be sustained after life-of-project, and for which benefits sustainability is inappropriate or unfeasible.**

For all the benefits to flow from a project, designers should determine which do not need to continue, which are critical and will have the necessary support to continue, and which are important but may not be sustainable by the end of the project.

- 2. Choose an appropriate implementing organization, given the type of benefit, capacity of alternative organizations, and institutional environment.**

In general, private sector organizations should be emphasized. Existing organizations, especially strong ones already supported by the institutional environment, are preferable to new organizations.

- 3. Fashion the project to ensure critical factors for sustainability: market-responsive benefits, strategic management capacity, adequate resources for benefit continuation, and a supportive institutional environment.**

Market responsiveness should be determined through a participatory process. If organizations lack demonstrated strategic management performance, capacity building must be an integral part of the project. To assure adequate resources, mechanisms such as fees-for-services need to be devised and incorporated into project design. Finally, determine how the institutional context can and should be influenced to improve the environment for continuing benefits.

- 4. Organize the project to be implemented, monitored, and evaluated for sustainability and allocate resources for these purposes.**

Planning for sustainability should be explicit, and project managers and implementors must be held accountable.

Sustainability Strategies

The following are specific activities to help accomplish the above actions. The activities are not the only appropriate or available approaches, they represent select methods that have proven successful under a variety of conditions. These activities support the design theme of developing a project with conditions that encourage sustainable benefits.

- ▶ Developing a *Scope of Work* is a routine step for building a design team to ensure that sustainability is addressed.
- ▶ Holding a *Team Planning Meeting* is a common tool for launching a project development effort. However, it can also be used to stimulate a sustainability perspective.
- ▶ Although *Stakeholder Analysis* is initiated during the identification phase, its application in the design phase allows for broader and more in-depth analysis.
- ▶ Conducting *Sustainability Assessments* is the key means for identifying sustainability opportunities and constraints, and incorporating them into project design.
- ▶ The *Logical Framework* is a fundamental product of project design. Therefore, it should explicitly reflect a concern for sustainability.

Scope of Work

When procuring technical assistance, how do we ensure that benefit sustainability issues are addressed? As emphasized earlier, sustainability issues extend beyond the conventional life of a project and are longer-term in nature. When procuring technical assistance, a scope of work (SOW) is needed. To incorporate sustainability, the SOW needs to explicitly highlight the longer term elements to be taken into consideration in the project design. In addition, contractors with special skills or background that equip them for the longer-term analysis need to be specified.

The substance of the SOW is drawn from the logical framework as completed to date. Currently, USAID procedures call for a project identification document (PID), to be followed by a project paper (PP), and, historically, technical assistance (TA) has usually been geared to producing either of these documents. The project goal and purpose should be defined during identification, prior to the TA. Since outputs, inputs, and indicators represent the substance of the project, they should reflect the objective of long-term sustainable benefit flows. The nature of these components will dictate the specifics of the design team desired.

A concern for sustainability can be included in the design team in one of two ways. First, one person, often the team leader, is assigned the task of conducting a sustainability assessment and ensuring that all relevant aspects of the project design and related documents address the sustainability issues highlighted during the assessment. Alternatively, each member of the design

team would be responsible for identifying and addressing the sustainability issues related to their particular area. It is then imperative that the members of the design team coordinate their activities and proposals either directly or through the mediation of the team leader to assure that the project design includes a comprehensive and consistent plan for sustainability.

Specific suggestions for adding sustainability to the scope of work are to:

- Ensure that the objective of the consultancy or project design activities is to develop a project with *sustainable* benefit flows.
- Specify that the design team will investigate the institutional environment for the project, assess sustainability targets, identify institutional incentives and disincentives, and highlight opportunities for success and potential problems.
- Mandate that discussion of benefit sustainability issues is explicit in the project design document. The document should include a separate section on sustainability that addresses issues relevant to the overall context of the project and to the specific project components.

Team Planning Meeting⁷

Team planning meetings, which typically take place at the initiation of a new activity, help ensure that individuals and teams are prepared for their assignments, and that they understand expectations and the nature of relations with client organizations, and the need to integrate technical knowledge with organizational and process skills. Since TPMs provide an opportunity to get early agreements on goals, strategies, expected products and internal work arrangements, they are an ideal opportunity to introduce and build support for sustainability objectives.

The team planning meeting is designed to assist the technical assistance team's preparation for its assignment. It provides an opportunity to:

1. *Understand the larger context in which the design work must be carried out, thereby increasing its effectiveness in the field.*

As appropriate to the assignment, discussion during the TPM will review donor agency development objectives including sustainability concerns, any special policy considerations relevant to the assignment, and the relationship of this effort to longer term development goals in the region. Background information on related socio-economic, cultural, and political settings, and the involved governmental structures will also be discussed. This will set the stage for identifying key sustainability issues in the institutional environment.

2. *Explore the team's scope of work and develop initial action plans to address it.*

During the planning meeting the team will clarify and explore the expectations of its key clients, identify expected final products and outcomes of the assignment, and develop standards and success criteria for its work. Team members will develop a current understanding of the assignment including sustainability concerns, and identify remaining information needs and how needed information will be acquired. Additionally, the team will define a sequence of activities that will support its work toward producing the expected team product in the available time frame. This will help ensure that the sustainability assessment is an integral part of the project analyses.

3. *Understand the roles and expected contributions of each team member in carrying out the assignment.*

Role differentiation and its understanding by each member of the team is critical to the team's working relationships in the field and to the successful fulfillment of the scope of work. During the TPM, a common understanding will be reached about each team member's responsibilities and expected contributions to the technical and non-technical aspects of the work. This will clarify who is responsible for addressing the various aspects of sustainability.

4. *Understand the team approach to the assignment and form an effective work group.*

The team actually begins its assignment during the TPM. It will identify team functions, and establish an initial schedule for team activities. Members develop a team approach to work in the field, and make tentative decisions about how they will work together and support each other professionally and personally. Tentative guidelines for team functioning are expected to emerge during this process including norms for interaction, frequency of meetings, progress reviews, identification of and solving problems, resolving conflicts, etc. A well-functioning team contributes to compatible analyses and recommendations of complex issues such as sustainability.

Stakeholder Analysis

As the project design takes shape, a variety of specific stakeholders with an interest in the chosen benefits and implementing organization can be identified. While the project identification phase relies on preliminary stakeholder analysis to help choose among alternatives, stakeholder analysis during the design phase is more directed and in-depth to enable project design to build on the support of stakeholders in favor of the project and minimize the concerns of those who see the project as undesirable and/or threatening.

First, a comprehensive list of stakeholders for the project design should be compiled and their interests in the project mapped on a stakeholder analysis table such as the one presented in the preceding section on identification. For the most influential stakeholders, project designers

should develop strategies for capturing the support of favorable stakeholders and heading off the hostility of detractors. Such strategies could include marketing project services and successes or involving a broad range of beneficiaries and stakeholders in decision making.

*Sustainability Assessments*⁸

Description

Designing a project that holds the potential for sustaining benefit flows to intended client groups following project termination requires a different type of analysis from that for a project with a time-bounded cluster of activities and production targets. The difference is in the attention to post-project requirements. Sustainability assessment consists of a set of analyses that concentrate upon the links among project performance, capacity for future performance, and the project environment with a particular focus on benefit continuation.

Uses

Focusing on sustainability encourages donors to address the long-term interests and needs of the developing countries rather than their own short-term priorities, and it encourages the developing countries to make better use of both national and external resources to avoid increasing debt and dependency. The longer timeframe and closer integration of external assistance objectives with national goals and resources greatly increases the complexities and risks in project design and implementation. Sustainability assessment can be used to analyze these complexities and reduce the risks. Sustainability assessment does not replace the sectoral and technical analyses that contribute to the project or program design process; rather it should be added to them to focus directly on sustainability issues associated with the proposed investment.

Guidelines for Sustainability Assessments

Sustainability assessment is composed of two types of analysis. The first is a specification of the project's expected long-term benefits. The second is a reconnaissance of the project's external environment along two dimensions: direct influences on the project's long-term benefit flows, and indirect influences. The combined results of these analyses will help project staff both to develop a design with a high probability of generating sustained benefits and to manage implementation so that performance and capacity-building targets are achieved.

The sustainability aspect of the assessment enters in the examination of the linkages among the analyses. The benefit specification analysis provides the reference point for the other. The project's planned long-term benefits bound: a) the interactions with the environment by focusing the analysis on a particular set of external factors and stakeholders as distinct from all possible factors or interest groups, and b) the performance-capacity dimension of project implementation by specifying the type(s) of performance and capacity required to generate the continued benefits. Each of the analyses is described in more detail below.

Benefit Continuation Specification

This analysis is the starting point for sustainability assessment and is the prerequisite for the other. It consists of a preliminary elaboration of the project's intended benefit continuation. To highlight sustainability issues, the long-term benefits should be expressed in terms of behavioral and other substantive changes the project is aimed at initiating. The analysis should include a view of the future -- what will occur after the project succeeds in accomplishing its intended purpose. This is essentially a preliminary project identification with an emphasis on expected long-term impacts.

Environmental Reconnaissance

This analysis looks outside the project boundary to assess the nature and degree of probable influence of key factors in the environment on the sustainability potential of the planned project. The aim is to arrive at a determination of the overall level of environmental support or hostility likely to confront the project. High levels of hostility reduce the chances of sustainability. There is a feedback loop between the environmental reconnaissance and the benefit continuation specification. Based on what is learned, the initial project elaboration can be modified to include actions to intervene and change certain environmental factors. It is important to recognize that the environment is composed of some elements that project managers can influence in their favor as well as fixed constraints.

Environmental sustainability reconnaissance can be treated as a sequence of discovering answers to three key overarching questions:

1. What does the project need from its environment to sustain its intended benefits?
2. Who controls what the project needs?
3. How can the project obtain what it needs for sustaining long-term benefit flows?

Answering these questions means advancing through the eight steps reviewed below.⁹

Step 1: Classify the key factors in the project's environment. These can be divided into those the project has the potential to influence and those it cannot. This first group includes organizations, public sector, private sector, local, regional, national or international; informal social groupings, rural-urban, peasant-bourgeoisie, etc.; associations, political parties, etc. They are the project's stakeholders. Non-influenceable factors include commodity prices, terms of trade, inflation rates, regime stability, ethnic divisions, resource endowments, etc.

Step 2: Specify the necessary "project-environment transactions." Projects carry out exchanges with elements of their environments; they obtain inputs and produce outputs. These exchange relations can be termed transactions. Typical types of transactions are: financing, physical input supply, political support, bureaucratic approval, service delivery, technical assistance, public relations, etc.

Step 3: Inventory the project's major sustainability stakeholders. Categories of stakeholders include clients and beneficiaries, suppliers, collaborators, supporters, competitors, opponents, and the general public.

Step 4: Identify the resources that sustainability stakeholders control and their interests. It is important for sustainability concerns to distinguish between tangible, quantifiable resources and intangibles. Examples of the former are funds, goods and services, legal authority, physical force, etc. Intangible resources are information and knowledge, prestige, legitimacy, moral/religious authority, etc.

Step 5: Prioritize sustainability stakeholders in terms of their importance for benefit continuation following project completion. In the process of identifying what resources various stakeholders control and what their potential interest in the continuation of benefit flows might be, the most important stakeholders relative to sustainability can be enumerated. This step and the previous one take place in tandem.

Step 6: Prepare a sustainability stakeholder-transactions matrix. Based on the information developed in Steps 1 through 5, list priority stakeholders on the vertical axis and key transactions categories across the horizontal axis. The resulting matrix illustrates the exchanges the project needs with its stakeholders to become sustainable. An illustrative matrix is shown below.

Step 7: Formulate strategy options for effective transactions with each group of key stakeholders. For each filled-in box in the matrix, the project needs to develop a strategic response to increase the probability of sustainability. This step is the main link back to the benefit continuation analysis for the preliminary project design.

Step 8: Consider the structural implication of the required transactions. The configuration of the transactions with key stakeholders will have implications for the way the project is organized and implemented. Several kinds of transactions are standard to almost any project, and mechanisms for conducting them are structured in similar ways; for example, financial transactions are usually handled by establishing a budget unit in the project organization or by using an existing financial office.

A STAKEHOLDER-TRANSACTIONS MATRIX

	T R A N S A C T I O N S	F i n a n c i n g	P h y s i c a l I n p u t s	P o l i t i c a l S u p p o r t	A p p r o v a l s	T e c h n i c a l A s s i s t a n c e	S e r v i c e D e l i v e r y	P u b l i c i t y
STAKEHOLDERS								
Donor Agency								
Supervising Ministry								
Finance Ministry								
Collaborators								
Competitors								
Beneficiaries								
PVOs/NGOs								
Professional Associations								
Political Parties								
General Public								

Logical Framework

Even in conventional project design the logical framework is a useful tool for structuring the logical relationships between inputs, outputs, purpose, and goal; and among the assumptions upon which they are based. In designing projects for sustainability, the logical framework is at least as useful for illustrating and clarifying these relationships as it is for conventional design. The logical framework for sustainability has a purpose statement that reflects long-term, strategic objectives and continuing benefit flows.

Conventional project design focuses on the end of project status (EOPS), which does not indicate whether conditions are favorable for continued benefit flows. Sustainability concerns suggest that the logical framework be modified to articulate and measure beginning of sustainability status (BOSS). In other words, by project termination are the critical factors in place which are necessary prerequisites to sustainability?

Similarly, the role of assumptions is critical for a logframe that builds sustainable project benefits, as it is for one that strives just for project effectiveness. The long-term dimension of sustainability requires different and additional assumptions-- assumptions about both future and current conditions. The logical framework tool allows closer specification and inspection of the assumptions that link outputs to purpose.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Project implementation presents the greatest challenges to sustainability. During this phase implementors must give life and substance to the activities and objectives laid out by planners, realizing that, when translated to action, plans are often fraught with difficulties. Expatriate technical assistance personnel must make difficult delegation decisions, determining when local staff are prepared to take on managerial responsibility for project activities.

Most problematic, technical assistance teams face somewhat contradictory incentives: the need to take strong control of project activities to ensure that the project is "successful" from a contractual perspective; and the incentives-- fundamental to work in development assistance -- to work oneself out of a job and transfer ownership of activities and successes to local staff. Of course, project "success" is often measured by donors based on outputs during the life of the project and project implementors are evaluated in these terms. Practitioners also know, however, that true success is evidenced far beyond the project period, after they themselves have left the country. With these conflicting objectives, even the best intentioned implementors must make a conscious effort to implement for sustainability because the traditional monitoring and evaluation system does not treat success in these terms.

Implementation that effectively produces sustainable benefit flows requires increased attention to two areas of project management: local capacity building and financial planning. These terms are used with a very broad meaning. In this context, local capacity building is meant to include:

1. institution building
2. identifying and strengthening the project's 'sustainability constituency'
3. using participatory implementation strategies
4. using environmental reconnaissance to remain informed and connected to the more distant institutional and policy environment.

Similarly, financial planning is familiar to project managers but may receive less attention in a project focused on life-of-project effectiveness as opposed to long-term sustainability. In projects where sustainability is an explicit concern, financial planning will include attention to:

1. alternative resource identification and generation
2. the set-up of budgeting and accounting systems appropriate for the local context or for local financial inputs, in addition to donor oriented systems.
3. monitoring recurrent costs and making investments with recurrent cost implications that can be supported in the post-donor phase
4. gradual introduction of cost recovery mechanisms to augment and eventually replace donor funding.

This section of the manual suggests some specific activities to bolster these two management areas for those who wish to consciously build sustainable programming throughout the implementation phase.

Project Effectiveness and Benefit Sustainability¹⁰

To illustrate the distinctions that a focus on sustainable programming requires, the following table juxtaposes issues posed in the conventional project focused on life-of-project effectiveness and the same issues incorporating a focus on long-term sustainability.

COMPARISON OF EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Effectiveness	Sustainability
1. How do we organize the implementation team and work plans to enhance results?	1. How do we provide incentives and opportunities for the implementation team to address sustainability?
2. What is the best way to start-up a project for improving effectiveness?	2. When initiating implementation, what long-term issues should be addressed up front?
3. How should relationships with beneficiaries and stakeholders be strengthened during implementation?	3. How should relationships with stakeholders for long-term benefit flows be developed during implementation?
4. How should the project be monitored and results reported?	4. How should prospects and conditions for sustainability be monitored, and can they be enhanced through reporting on project activities?
5. How should the project be phased out?	5. How will the project phase into the post-project stage?

As suggested in the earlier sections of this manual, a focus on sustainability does not replace a concern for effective performance during the life of project, but is added to it. In other words, a concern for project effectiveness is necessary but not sufficient for project success. Attention to sustainability beyond the period of donor funding must be an explicit part of implementation. Making sustainability an explicit concern will modify many aspects of project planning and management, often in small ways. Project managers and those assessing their performance will recognize, for instance, that there can be trade-offs between short-term performance to meet planned targets, and implementation geared toward capacity development and long-term financial viability. It may be that performance benchmarks and indicators of success will be more modest and slow-paced in a project explicitly focused on sustainability. To strengthen the focus on capacity development and financial planning during the implementation phase, the following actions are recommended.

Key Sustainability Action-Steps for Implementation:

- 0. Build and maintain ownership of implementation team and key stakeholders for the sustainability plan (i.e. build a sustainability constituency).**

Gain agreement on objectives and strategies by redeveloping the sustainability plan with beneficiary, implementation team and other key stakeholders participation. Institute annual review and planning workshops that revisit sustainability assumptions and indicators and assess the external environment.

- 0. Create incentives and disincentives that compel key people to take actions necessary for sustainability.**

Sustainability requires a forward and outward-looking perspective, which is often in conflict with the pressures of day-to-day management. Appropriate incentives may persuade people, including more distant stakeholders such as local government officials, to focus on sustainability.

- 0. Develop the capacity to implement the sustainability plan.**

Responsibility must be transferred from project staff to local managers. Capacity-building should be incorporated into all activities. The implementing organization must respond to a dynamic environment and be accountable for sustained impact.

- 0. Revisit, monitor and report on sustainability indicators and benchmarks.**

Assure that progress is made on the sustainability plan and that local managers take increasing responsibility for implementation. Assess commitment of constituency for benefits.

Strategies for Implementing Key Action-Steps

Three types of activities that can be undertaken by project managers wishing to build an explicit focus on sustainability during the implementation phase are described below. These three strategies offer managers practical methods for incorporating the key sustainability issues listed above. They are:

- ▶ *Project launch and annual review and planning workshops*
- ▶ *Gradual introduction of cost recovery mechanisms, and*
- ▶ *Routine monitoring and reporting for sustainability.*

Project Launch and Annual Review and Planning Workshops

The transition from project design and negotiation to actual implementation can be difficult, as authority changes hands from designers to donor administrative staff and again to the implementation team. A project launch workshop can be a good bridge for the gulf between design and implementation. Launch workshops also present an ideal opportunity to address sustainability:

- management commitment to sustainability articulated at this early stage puts sustainability issues on the radar of all participants;
- the participatory nature of the workshop approach to planning sets the stage for continued emphasis on participation; and
- such workshops provide an important opportunity to sit back and review project objectives, scopes of work, performance measures, etc., to determine if sustainability has in fact been adequately considered.

The primary purpose of such workshops is to provide the project management team an opportunity to prepare an operational action plan for the first phase of implementation. In a participatory manner, often with the assistance of an outside facilitator, implementors plan *together* for how the project's concept and strategy will be translated into concrete actions. Annual or cyclical planning and review workshops are similar to launch workshops. Using the same techniques, annual review workshops provide an effective tool for ensuring that sustainability remains an explicit focus throughout implementation.

The Participants

Though traditionally, project identification and design are often not highly participatory, managers can demonstrate the important commitment to participatory planning from the start of implementation by inviting a wide range of participants involved in or potentially affected by project activities. Consider inviting:

- project planners (including local design team members)
- relevant Mission staff
- all members of the contract implementation team
- local hire staff
- local government officials
- potential customers or clients of project activities
- persons who may have a role after the donor-assisted phase of activities is over (i.e. sustainability stakeholders)

The Agenda

Launch and annual planning and review workshops can be used to confer on objectives and performance targets, examine roles and responsibilities for all parties, and review the sustainability plan. The following agenda items should be included.

- *Review resource projections to make sure funds are reserved for capacity building activities.*

Although ideal, it is often difficult to get participants to focus on post-project sustainability early in implementation, even though resource allocation decisions are usually made early on. Because sustainability (and its predecessors, local financial planning and capacity-building) is not as pressing when allocative decisions are made, implementors find that funds for later activities geared to promoting sustainability are not available because these activities were not foreseen in year one. Accordingly, consider reserving a pool of funds to expend in later years of the project specifically for sustainability strengthening activities.

- *Use annual review and planning meetings as an opportunity to create political support for project activities.*

While it is difficult to plan an agenda appropriate for the varied list of participants suggested above, particular days of the workshop can be devoted to certain groups of participants. Consider reserving the last day of annual planning meetings as a "marketing" event for sustainability stakeholders: those who it is hoped will play a role in project-initiated activities beyond the phase of donor support. Use this time to review project successes in terms relevant to those individuals and allow them to see the benefits the project could accrue to them.

- ***Include an analysis of the project's institutional environment and an assessment of the location of sustainability constraints***

Managing for sustainability requires a periodic look at the project "forest," while focusing on the "trees" is the more likely outcome of managing for effectiveness. It is admittedly hard to avoid the tendency toward crisis management. But a consistent focus on short-run outcomes is incompatible with sustainability. For this reason, the annual planning meeting, held preferably away from the immediate project environment, can be an important part of sustainability management. At this time, look at the current political support compared with that which will be needed as the project is phased out, the current "suppliers" and "customers" of project activities and what conditions are required for their support to continue, and the market conditions for project outputs.

- ***Revisit the stakeholder analysis and review the sustainability plan.***

Stakeholders change over time, as do individuals' incentives to participate. Conducting a quick stakeholder analysis each year can give important information about various actors in project activities and the likelihood that their support will continue beyond the project period. Similarly, the sustainability plan is always a projection and therefore will be subject to revision as events unfold. Periodic adjustments will improve the sustainability plan as well as the long-term viability of activities meant to continue.

Gradual introduction of cost recovery mechanisms¹¹

Important precursors to sustainability include 1) the existence of a market for goods or services produced, and 2) development of the financial management capacity of organizations who will continue to deliver those services.

It is antithetical to donor-supported development projects to depend on local funding from the start; if this were possible the project would be unnecessary. However, even though the project is intended to be a short-term support system, the necessity to build up support from local resources and financial management systems to account for them is too often neglected. During implementation, consider the strategies listed below for reducing dependency on donor funds and project-oriented financial management systems. Begin by setting targets for alternative source revenue-raising and manage to achieve those targets. Also, for optimum use of any financing mechanism, first train key staff in sound financial planning, accountability, management, fundraising techniques, and local marketing practices.

Endowments¹²

Since the mid-1980s a number of USAID Missions and host governments have collaborated in establishing and funding endowments. These endowments are being used to strengthen and sustain the financial base of existing or new institutions. In other instances the endowment supports transfer of development activities from government entities to NGOs or private organizations. Success has been achieved through this method, supporting free-standing organizations with a stable financial base in their ability to attract quality staff and operate in a more responsive, flexible manner. USAID Missions have used local currency from economic support funds, debt-for-development programs, and PL-480 food aid grants as the primary sources of endowment funding. Research all possible sources of endowment income. Consider using life insurance policies taken out on benefactors of the organization, with premiums paid by the organization or preferably a contributor, as a source of endowment income. This is one of the major sources of endowment income in the United States.

Fundraising/Donations

Some other successful financing strategies for NGOs in the US may be transferable to a developing context. Consider conducting annual pledge campaigns, graduating to request multi-year commitments from larger contributors in later years. In a developing country context it may be more fruitful to pursue corporate, foundation, and secondary donor fundraising campaigns rather than seek individual contributors. A good use of any funds collected is the establishment of a reserve loan fund, internal to the organization, to draw on in the early post-donor stage.

Fees for Service

As early as possible, establish fees for goods or services flowing out of the project to cover some percentage of recurrent costs. A subsidized charge or sliding-scale fee structure is preferable to no charge at all. Don't simply dismiss the idea of charges for services out of hand. A useful study, "The political economy of the recurrent cost problem in the West African Sahel,"¹³ attributes sustainability problems substantially to donor policies causing recipients to attach a low value to contributed aid funds and a very high value to their own uncommitted resources. Another interesting study of NGO sustainability undertaken by John Snow, Inc.¹⁴ showed that "a positive attitude toward income generation" is a notable characteristic in projects which they found successfully sustainable.

Cause-related marketing

Another major source of contributed capital for US based NGOs is "cause-related marketing." That is, request businesses to contribute a dollar, a percentage from the sale of goods or services, etc., to support a particular program. (Cooperating firms may raise the price of the commodity by \$1 at the same time). In exchange, the NGO promotes the corporate product.

Unrelated business income

Investigate the possibility of selling some product or service unrelated or peripherally related to the primary service provision using current staff or assets, for example equipment rental, provision of an answering service, rental of office equipment, and the like.

Keep recurrent costs low

The organization left to continue delivering project initiated services will be more able to function in the local economy if recurrent costs of service delivery are kept low. Operating costs may be reduced through "in kind" contributions such as volunteer time, office equipment, and other useful assets.

Routine monitoring and reporting for sustainability.

Project monitoring is a standard and integral part of effective implementation. To promote sustainability, however, an added dimension is required in routine project monitoring activities.

To promote sustainability:

Make sustainability an explicitly stated objective.

Monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted in relation to stated goals and objectives. If the project declares merely life-of-project outputs or an end-of-project status in explicit goals and objectives, monitoring and evaluation systems will be designed to assess progress toward those objectives. Alternatively, if sustainability is a stated project objective, monitoring and reporting on progress toward sustainability is more likely to occur.

A conventionally stated objective of a traditional birth attendant training project may be: *Train 100 midwives*. To include sustainability, objectives should include a view of the future -- what will occur after the project succeeds in accomplishing its intended purpose. In the case of the birth attendant training project, the statement could be: *Set up a system for midwifery training such that the market for midwives is continually supplied to its absorptive capacity.*

Emphasize environmental reconnaissance in monitoring activities.¹⁵

Sustainability assessment requires a set of analyses that concentrate upon the links between project performance, capacity for future performance, and the project environment, with a particular focus on benefit continuation. Such assessments can be conducted at various levels of comprehensiveness, depth, and formality. Though a thorough sustainability assessment should be done during design and evaluations, periodic reassessments during implementation can identify changes in the project environment or in its internal organization that could require modification or adaptation of project content and activities. A recommended procedure for conducting periodic environmental reconnaissance includes discovering answers to three questions. This procedure is overviewed below:

STEPS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RECONNAISSANCE

What does the project need from its environment to sustain its intended benefits?

- Classify the key factors in the project's environment.
 - a. Specify the necessary project-environment transactions.

Who controls what the project needs?

- a. Inventory the project's major sustainability stakeholders.
- a. Identify the resources that sustainability stakeholders control and their interests.
- Prioritize stakeholders by their importance for post-project benefit continuation.
 - a. Prepare a sustainability stakeholder-transactions matrix. (See Design chapter)

How can the project obtain what it needs for sustaining long-term benefit flows?

- a. Formulate strategy options for effective transactions with key stakeholders.
 - Consider the structural implications for the required transactions.
-

Market project successes

In dealing with the myriad pressures arising during project implementation, managers can easily allow marketing to fall by the wayside. However, marketing project successes can be an important activity from the perspective of benefit sustainability. It is often the case that sustainability stakeholders are less involved during the project period than they will be after expatriates and donor funding are withdrawn. For this reason, they may not be naturally informed about project activities and successes. Therefore, during implementation, a special effort should be made to keep identified sustainability stakeholders informed of progress and successes.

Consider a formal public relations function and make someone explicitly responsible for this activity. Periodic local news articles or special reports following annual planning meetings, annual monitoring activities, or evaluations written especially for sustainability stakeholders can help achieve this result. The point of such activities is to maintain support of individuals critical for long-term viability, to stimulate their interest and involvement throughout the phase of donor-assistance, and to point out all the benefits project activities could bring now and in the future.

Summary

A summary of key sustainability actions during the implementation phase recommended in this manual is given below:

Key Sustainability Actions During the Implementation Phase

- 1. Hold project Launch and Annual Review and Planning Workshops:**
 - Review resource projections to ensure that funds are reserved for later capacity building activities
 - Use workshops as an opportunity to create political support for project activities.
 - Include an analysis of the project's institutional environment and an assessment of where the constraints to sustainability lie.
 - Revisit the stakeholder analysis and review the sustainability plan.

- 2. Gradually introduce cost recovery mechanisms:**
 - Endowments
 - Fundraising and donations
 - Fees for services
 - Cause-related marketing
 - Unrelated business income
 - Recurrent cost controls

- 3. Routine monitoring and reporting for sustainability:**
 - Make sustainability an explicitly stated objective
 - Emphasize environmental reconnaissance in monitoring activities
 - Market project successes.

EVALUATION FOR BENEFITS SUSTAINABILITY

INTRODUCTION

In the project environment, there are usually two formal external evaluations: a formative one, held half way through the life of the project funding; and a summative evaluation, done some months after the funding has ended, to assess effectiveness and impact. The formative evaluation of the project is an opportunity to learn from the project's implementation experience to date. Managers can make the inevitable adjustments, which should be conceived to enhance the sustainability of the benefits flow after the current donor funding ends, as well as to address effectiveness issues. This section assumes that a mid-term evaluation has been built into the project design from the outset, and sufficient resources are available to hire a team of outside specialists. If this is not the case, the implementation managers face a challenge adapting the tools presented here to the human and financial resources which are available. It is also assumed that the project already has the systems in place to monitor, measure and report progress against the original plan.

The strategic approach is still a central theme guiding the sustainability evaluation: future orientation, external emphasis, environmental fit, and process orientation. An effectiveness mid-term evaluation shares some of these perspectives to a certain extent, but as we have said, funding LOP is the end point. Again, incorporating sustainability concerns during evaluation represents an additive element. In fact, it would not be difficult to develop a set of objectives and a scope of work to make the sustainability evaluation a substantial stand-alone effort. If the policy environment is conducive to this allocation of resources, the chances for long-term benefits sustainability are that much greater. However, realistically, the project manager will most likely add sustainability considerations to the mid-term evaluation.

Participation remains a key strategy to increase the sustainability impact at each project phase. At the evaluation phase, the evaluation team is added to the participation of stakeholders, beneficiaries, and the project management team. It is the role of the project managers to assure that all players have an opportunity to assist in the evaluation of the project, as appropriate. Beneficiary and sustainability stakeholder participation is particularly important because the evaluators need to understand how the project is perceived by the marketplace as well as from the institutional context. Finally, the evaluation phase marks the beginning of the project's transition from what was originally designed to what needs to be sustainable into the future.

Factors Critical for Sustainability

The sustainability evaluation revisits the four factors discussed in the Design phase because they are critical for sustainability. That is, the evaluation represents an opportunity to reassess and redesign:

- ▶ ***Market-responsive benefits:*** Evaluate what progress has been made, and why, in producing benefits that respond to market forces, and assess if the type and level of resources needed to produce these benefits, their sources, and so on, will change in the post-investment period. If not, what adjustments will be needed to enhance institutional capacity to assess the market and be responsive in tailoring benefits?
- ▶ ***Strategic managerial capacity:*** Is there sufficient institutional and human resource development to allow the benefits to continue in the long run? Too often managers focus only on developing technical expertise specific to delivering a limited set of benefits, at the expense of developing strategic management skills and techniques. The implementing organization may have to evolve to better fit available resources, and to deliver changing benefits which will continue to respond to the market.
- ▶ ***A supportive institutional environment:*** assess what implementing organization will best be able to deliver desired benefits over the long term and then plan how to put that organization in place over the next few years. Another institutional aspect relates to the larger policy context and the need to create and maintain stakeholder incentives to support the project.
- ▶ ***Adequate resources for benefit continuation:*** Resources can come directly from beneficiaries (e.g. as fees), or from stakeholders who have the incentive to make resources available, such as politicians, board members or other donors. Marketing of project benefits and successes to create these incentives is a key element which may be a new priority in a re-engineered project.

The attention of the evaluators should be focused on these project components because they have the greatest impact on sustaining the flow of benefits after LOP. Sustainability evaluation activities should be tailored to yield implementable modifications or additions to project elements that will strengthen any or all of these factors. The objective of the evaluation is to set the project on a more direct course for long term success, whatever that is determined to mean. This focus is not often possible at the design or early implementation phases because everyone's attention is usually on the near term challenges of getting the project up and running. The mid term evaluation provides the opportunity to pay more focused attention to the future, taking advantage of experiences gained, no matter whether the time frame is the LOP or the longer run.

As mentioned, evaluations are usually done by an outside team of specialists. The evaluation team should include people who have experience and understanding in the area of benefits sustainability. Environmental sustainability is a clearly defined area of specialty, and benefits

sustainability is not synonymous. Including analysts with design experience, in addition to an evaluation background assures that the team is looking forward as much as backward at the project's effectiveness and impact.

The following questions contrast how the project manager might address sustainability and effectiveness issues when evaluating a project. It also highlights that evaluation is a stand-alone, self contained process with a beginning, middle, and end. In that regard, it is similar to the design process. In many ways it is fruitful to think of the sustainability evaluation as the opportunity to redesign the project based on updated information.

COMPARISON OF EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN PROJECT EVALUATION¹⁶

<u>Effectiveness</u>	<u>Sustainability</u>
1. What is the purpose, scope and use of the project evaluation?	1. Are post-project considerations explicit in the purpose, scope and use of the evaluation?
2. What is the evaluation plan and budget?	2. Do the evaluation plan and budget allow adequate time and resources to address the additional sustainability issues?
3. How do you procure an evaluation team?	3. How does one ensure that the evaluation team has the necessary skills and experience to conduct a sustainability assessment?
4. What steps are involved in conducting an evaluation?	4. How will the evaluation address the additional resources and institutional issues?
5. How do you redesign a project based on evaluation results?	5. Will the proposed redesign improve the likelihood of continued benefits after life of project?

Traditionally, evaluations involve outside evaluation experts who work with the USAID project officer and the contract management team. The evaluation team researches and writes an analysis of the progress made toward reaching the *verifiable* indicators decided in the original design document and summarized in the logical framework, culminating with the End of Project Status (EOPS). The *sustainability* evaluation involves the same parties, and more. It focuses on the *sustainability* indicators built into the sustainability logical framework,

which are the basis for the Beginning of Sustainability Status (BOSS) indicators. The preceding section describes what project managers need to do to assure that the project evaluation includes a sustainability evaluation. This section deals with the practicality of how to do it, beginning with the following action-steps.

HOW TO INCORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY INTO PROJECT EVALUATION: KEY ACTION-STEPS

1. ENSURE THAT SUSTAINABILITY IS A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THE FORMATIVE EVALUATION.

The evaluation team's research and report should devote equal time to evaluating effectiveness and sustainability indicators, and to making concrete redesign recommendations to address shortcomings and exploit and replicate successes. If the original project design did not incorporate sustainability indicators, part of the task will be to develop some for the future.

2. ENSURE THAT KEY SUSTAINABILITY STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATE IN THE SUSTAINABILITY EVALUATION.

The stakeholder population evolves as the project moves through its phases. Sustainability stakeholders are those people or organizations with the greatest influence on the institutional capacity to sustain the delivery of the selected benefits after current donor funding obligations end. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, host country government officials, non-governmental organizations, community representatives and beneficiaries, the private sector and/or other donors.

3. USE EVALUATION FINDINGS TO PLAN FOR DONOR PHASE-OUT AND BENEFITS SUSTAINABILITY THEREAFTER.

The formal donor phase-out focuses on disposing of assets and officially closing down involvement with the project within the remaining time. Sustainability findings and recommendations represent the redesign of the project with a longer-term set of objectives. The sustainability evaluation is a method for planning the hand-over that must take place after phase-out.

4. HIGHLIGHT OPPORTUNITIES FOR REPLICATION OF PROJECT SUCCESSSES.

Implementation of the project gives managers experience with what works best. The evaluation provides an opportunity to articulate project successes, assess what factors were instrumental in making those successes, and suggest how they might be replicated.

Sustainability Strategies

The following strategies-- or tools-- cut across the four activities described above and are based on the sustainability fundamentals discussed in earlier sections. They are not necessarily sequential.

- ▶ *A Sustainability Scope of Work (SOW)* is critical to procuring a team and guiding its work so that benefits sustainability issues are prioritized in the research and in the final report. It represents an additive element in the effectiveness evaluation SOW.
- ▶ *A Sustainability Team* is a carefully selected group which plans and, to a certain extent, implements actions needed to transform the project from its current institutional state (derived from the original design) to what will be a sustainable model over the long run for others to emulate. The team will likely include managers, stakeholders, and beneficiaries.
- ▶ *The Sustainability Workshop* is a way to close out the formal evaluation, assist in building the strategic planning capacity of the sustainability team, and simultaneously begin the action-planning process for the future. The Structured Participation model is revisited here.

Sustainability Scope of Work

The sustainability scope of work is the primary method for the project manager to assure his priorities are addressed: the right people for the specific evaluation, who will conduct their research in the key areas, use the appropriate sources, and write a relevant, useful, future-oriented document which has consensus support. In the ideal world, this perfection may be possible; in reality, it is a big challenge. Getting good people is perhaps the easiest part of the job because there are so many experienced evaluators. Problems arise because there are many interpretations about the 'rightness' of other elements of the scope of work, the findings, and the recommendations.

Sustainability issues are highlighted in each section, as the following outline indicates:

Objective:

- To evaluate project progress toward the capacity to sustainably deliver chosen benefits after the USAID Life of Project period ends
- To provide concrete, implementable recommendations for redesigning those project components most amenable to providing the appropriate institutional vehicle for delivering those benefits.

Background:

(provide project background, outline the approach to achieving long term sustainability and describe sustainability activities to date)

Tasks to be undertaken:

There are several key ways that sustainability is built into the original design, and progress (including strengths and weaknesses) should be measured accordingly:

- assess commitment to the project that has been developed: stakeholders, beneficiaries, local politicians, and others; and assess the incentives in place (or which need to be initiated) to encourage commitment over the long-term.
- examine project links to the local community and the role of the private sector, seeking ways to increase cost effectiveness of the benefits-delivery mechanism and the market responsiveness of that delivery mechanism.
- evaluate progress made toward financial sustainability of the implementing organization, which is the benefit-delivery mechanism. Explore ways in which the organization should evolve to move toward financial sustainability.
- evaluate progress made in developing strategic management capacity of the organization's human resources. The objective is to create a self-sustaining, self-directed organization able to deliver a set of benefits for which the market values enough to pay. Effective strategic managers will be able to assess their environment and evolve to fit within it.
- provide specific recommendations concerning what changes are needed to make the policy context more conducive to the benefit delivery institution.

Special Skills:

The additive element here is the financial sustainability and strategic management focus. Experienced development project evaluators know the effectiveness assessment techniques but may be less experienced in looking at long-term management effectiveness and financial sustainability, which are more conventional private sector techniques.

Reporting Requirements and Deliverables:

The final report should include sections that deal specifically with the sustainability elements described above and elsewhere in this manual. The report should include findings and specific recommendations for project managers to carry out that will enhance benefits sustainability. Hold review meetings every two weeks or so and call for a preliminary draft as early as possible. It is the responsibility of the USAID evaluation manager to assure that the team solicits sufficient participation by sustainability stakeholders and beneficiaries and has access to these sometimes elusive people.

Level of Effort:

This depends on the resources made available for the evaluation. The key is to carve out as much as possible for the sustainability component.

Sustainability Team

The purpose of the sustainability team is to manage the transition from a USAID/contractor driven and managed project to a local project. Transition implications reach into all parts of project implementation: staffing and human resource development, financial planning and management, administration, monitoring and reporting, and marketing and delivery of the desired benefits. The project managers and USAID need to recognize from the start that a sustainable project is most likely a locally "owned" project, literally or figuratively. The Sustainability Team is the mechanism which will guide and inspire change in this direction. Not all members will contribute in the same way, but they need to be selected carefully to include the main stakeholder groups that will remain in place after the contractor team leaves the scene.

The Sustainability Team may be as formal as the context requires and the project managers and USAID want it to be. Key are local participants, who should be stakeholders with a commitment to the success of the endeavor, in whatever institutional form it eventually takes. The team should be formed after the "teething" problems of the project start-up are well behind the managers, but well before the contractor begins to think of the next assignment. It ought to be institutionalized by means of regular meetings, reporting mechanisms, and delegated responsibilities. It may be useful for USAID to use the formal evaluation as a mechanism to persuade additional stakeholders who may not immediately understand the importance of their personal role in the process. Creative thinking may be needed to identify incentives which would serve to convince these people that a modest investment of their time could yield substantial personal rewards in terms of additional votes, prestige, or customers.

The team should consist of key local managers, and a "board" of more senior advisors or (more formally) directors. In this way, government policy makers, other non governmental organizations, academics, and the private sector may participate in the decision-making and strategic planning process. This format demands less time commitment while conferring higher status to these busy and sometimes elite individuals. In human resource poor developing countries, this offers a way for the project to benefit from a larger pool of available talent, training, and expertise. The formal evaluation could recommend the formation of such a board, specifying that USAID and the contractor contribute members who will drop away after LOP ends.

Marketing to create and then strengthen commitment of local senior stakeholders to the project could include a newsletter or other periodic reporting which highlight project successes. This is another method to work toward replicating the project's capacity to sustainably deliver benefits that fill a demand. Senior level local stakeholders who perceive the personal benefits to be derived from satisfied "customers" (the end beneficiaries) who are their constituents can, for

example, promote conducive policies and direct funding toward the project, and ultimately, toward pilot efforts elsewhere that are based on the successful project with which they have been involved.

The local managers who will be part of the team may or may not be those who began the project with the contractor. Part of the sustainability evaluation is to assess how the project needs to evolve for a sustainable future, and this can include a look at current staff and future needs. The evaluation period provides the chance to add local management capacity or to decide which technical people have the best potential. If there are weaknesses, decide how to strengthen them, maybe through training or through personnel changes. If the weaknesses are fundamental, perhaps an institutional change is needed: simplify the delivery mechanism, add locally available or more appropriate technology, or find a stronger institutional home for the technical side of the project.

The ideal is to establish the sustainability team selecting from the existing management and stakeholder base, augmented as needed. Establish the team, then build strategic planning capacity using a planned, structured approach. During the evaluation period, begin to build the team spirit and project ownership which will carry the project activities sustainably into the future. The evaluation report can make recommendations concerning the establishment and strengthening of the sustainability team.

The Sustainability Workshop

The Sustainability Workshop represents a way to link the formal evaluation and the beginning of the transition period. It may be included as part of the Scope of Work for the formal evaluation but the technical skills required for a facilitator are very different from those of the evaluation team, and so it may be better to keep them separate but related. The workshop dynamic and processes are very similar to those discussed in earlier sections on Structured Participation and Action-Planning. The Logical Framework continues to provide the structure, while the action planning approach is used to foster participation in strategic planning.

The workshop closes out the formal evaluation in that the evaluation team reports to the participants on their findings and recommendations to date concerning achieving longer-term sustainability. The participants provide the link to the future in that the sustainability team is central to the workshop proceedings. The workshop may, in fact, provide the first opportunity for the team to interact, assessing and responding to the evaluation findings. Their input can be factored into the final report by the evaluation team. At the same time, the workshop environment gives the project manager a first opportunity to see the team interact.

Many of the team members and other participants may not know much about the project objectives and its outputs. The workshop offers a structured opportunity for project implementors to report on their activities and successes. This establishes a foil for the outside evaluators to make their comments on the strengths, and more importantly the weaknesses, of the project and

its long term potential for sustainability. This contrast in perspectives sets the stage for a dynamic process of assessing and planning for the future. Equally important, it sets the stage for the definition of the Sustainability Team as the "we," in contrast to the outside evaluation team as the "they," which is another element of the team building process.

The facilitator is responsible for assuring that the sustainability team members are the focal point of deliberate team-building activities. In some cases, team members may have participated in an earlier action-planning workshop during the project launch phase. If this is the case, the facilitator may give these individuals the opportunity to play a larger facilitator role. In this way, institutional capacity is developed, which in turn strengthens the team's strategic management skills. The workshop will include a combination of activities for group analysis of options and scenarios for the future, decision-making, and consensus building.

In addition to the full-time participants and the facilitator, other resource people may be invited for specific sessions. Such resource people might include specialist/experts who can add insights or factual background to a decision-making process. For example, someone from a similar project might report on their experience when faced with the same challenges, or a technical expert could give a background report on the state of the art for a particular area, such as social marketing techniques for family planning. These new ideas can inspire the participants to come up with innovative ways to address sustainability problems.

The workshop approach as an implementation planning tool addresses many of project management problem areas that are directly related to sustainability. If a launch workshop was not a feature at the beginning of the implementation process, the sustainability workshop provides a good opportunity to influence and address implementation problems mid-term. The workshop addresses the key success factors for managing sustainable projects:¹⁷

- getting agreement and support for clearly stated goals and objectives among key individuals and organizations involved in the effort.
- ensuring that local control and ownership for the project are nurtured, and the project is linked to the larger development picture.
- getting common understanding of the problems and opportunities to be addressed, and identifying the needed and most appropriate technologies and skills to be changed, added, or strengthened.
- creating and agreeing on plans, budgets, and organizational and individual roles and responsibilities required for achieving the project objectives

Note that these factors emphasize the stakeholder side of the project, recognizing that they must be explicitly integrated into the management process. The workshop builds the foundation for that process to happen over the long run. In addition, these success factors emphasize the importance of the people side of project sustainability.

Project replication can be the clearest sign of a successful project; during the evaluation stage project managers can begin to look for ways to redesign the project in order to facilitate replication. The workshop provides an opportunity for local stakeholders and managers to identify and explore project strengths and weaknesses. From this base, they can develop a clearer image of what a replicable project looks like and can plan how to work toward this ideal.

The external formative evaluation provides a structured opportunity for everyone involved with the project to systematically examine project strengths and weakness, and to learn successes and failures with the assistance of outside experts. The evaluation process is the occasion for a pause to reflect and assess progress to date, which is based on the plans and design established at the outset. It can also mark the beginning of the transition to a sustainability focus. With deliberate planning in the scope of work, the evaluation team can provide a valuable service in pulling together the experience and expertise of project managers and stakeholders. In the research and during the workshop, everyone can revisit the design process and make modifications with longer-term sustainability in mind. The Sustainability Team can be formally constituted and the mandate given to plan and manage with the goal of assuring that the desired benefits are sustainable.

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3. John Hannah. "Sustaining Rural Development: A Guide for Project Planners, Managers, Evaluators, and Trainers." Washington, DC: Development Alternatives Inc., May 1984.
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6. Carol Adoum and Marcus Ingle. "The Logical Framework and Benefit Sustainability." College Park, MD: University of Maryland, International Development Management Center, August 1991.
7. This section draws on International Development Management Center. "An Introduction to Team Planning Meetings (TPM)," College Park, MD: University of Maryland College Park, May 1984, which in turn is adapted from Merlyn Kettering. "OICD Team Planning Meetings (TPM) Background Packet." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Development Project Management Center, July 1983.
8. Adapted from Derick W. Brinkerhoff and Janet C. Tuthill, La gestion efficace des projets de developpement: Un guide a l'execution et l'evaluation. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1987, 2nd ed., 1991.
9. Adapted from Marc Lindenburg and Benjamin Crosby. Managing Development: The Political Dimension. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1981, p. 26.
10. Adapted from International Development Management Center. "Sustainability: Lessons for ANE." College Park, MD: University of Maryland.
11. Many of the financial management and cost recovery mechanism offered here were suggested in a series of papers and a seminar sponsored by the International Development Management Center given by Dr. Beverly Hoffman, Senior Fellow, Center for New Leadership and consultant in NGO management and fundraising.
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13. Clive Gray and Andre Martens. "The Political Economy of the 'Recurrent Cost Problem' in the West African Sahel." World Development. Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 101-117, 1983.

14. John Snow, Inc. "Promoting NGO Sustainability: The Lessons of Enterprise." Arlington, VA: Author, April 1991.

15. Summarized from Derick W. Brinkerhoff and Janet C. Tuthill. "Sustainability Assessment for Project Design." College Park, MD: University of Maryland, International Development Management Center, October 1988.

16. Adapted from International Development Management Center. "Sustainability: Lessons for ANE." College Park, MD: University of Maryland.

17. Andrea L. Jones. "Using a Team Planning Approach to Strengthen the Implementation and Sustainability of Development Efforts." College Park, MD: University of Maryland, International Development Management Center, February 1988.