III. Key elements in project formulation: Poverty, gender, sustainability and logical framework matrix

This section focuses on the key elements in project formulation. It elaborates the essential conceptual elements that need to be considered during the project identification and preparation phases. These elements are: poverty alleviation, gender-equality, project sustainability and building a logical framework matrix.

Poverty alleviation and gender-equality strategies should be part of the situational analysis which forms the base of project formulation, including formulation of a logical framework matrix. Situation analysis and its procedure are detailed in annex II.

A. Poverty alleviation and UNEP projects

Research shows that the links between human well-being and ecosystems are complex and of disproportionate significance to the poor so poverty should not be considered outside of environment project goals and objectives. Since 2001, UNEP has taken measures to ensure that the links between poverty and the environment are captured in the organization's work. UNEP developed a conceptual framework which was endorsed by the Governing Council in decision 22/10 in the year 2003, which further requested UNEP to operationalize the conceptual framework. Furthermore, mainstreaming the poverty–environment nexus into UNEP projects is a key goal of the organization: in April 2004 the UNEP senior management group decided that "all UNEP activities must have a bearing on poverty eradication". This decision will further the organization's contribution to the realization of the millennium development goals.

The following will assist project managers to incorporate a poverty alleviation perspective in their project identification and preparation phases.

1. During the project identification phase

(a) Assessing the needs of the poor

In order to assess the needs of the poor, it is necessary to review existing initiatives or activities related to the poverty–environment nexus, and identify actions already taken and information available. If poverty assessments, especially through participatory poverty assessment, have already been conducted by the proponent's own office, Governments or civil society, this information can be used to inform the project identification phase. Participatory poverty assessment is the most popular technique for assessing the needs of the poor and seeks to incorporate the perspectives of a range of stakeholders in order to understand poverty in its local, social, institutional and political contexts. Such assessment information helps to identify the needs of the poor as well as entry points for incorporating poverty reduction aspects into a project.

Another important source of poverty information is an integrated assessment, which includes ecosystems mapping and geographic information system (GIS) data. Mapping findings of this assessment against the participatory poverty assessment identifies poverty "hotspots".

(b) Defining general project objectives

On the basis of the exercises outlined above, the following questions should be asked to incorporate a poverty alleviation perspective in defining project objectives:
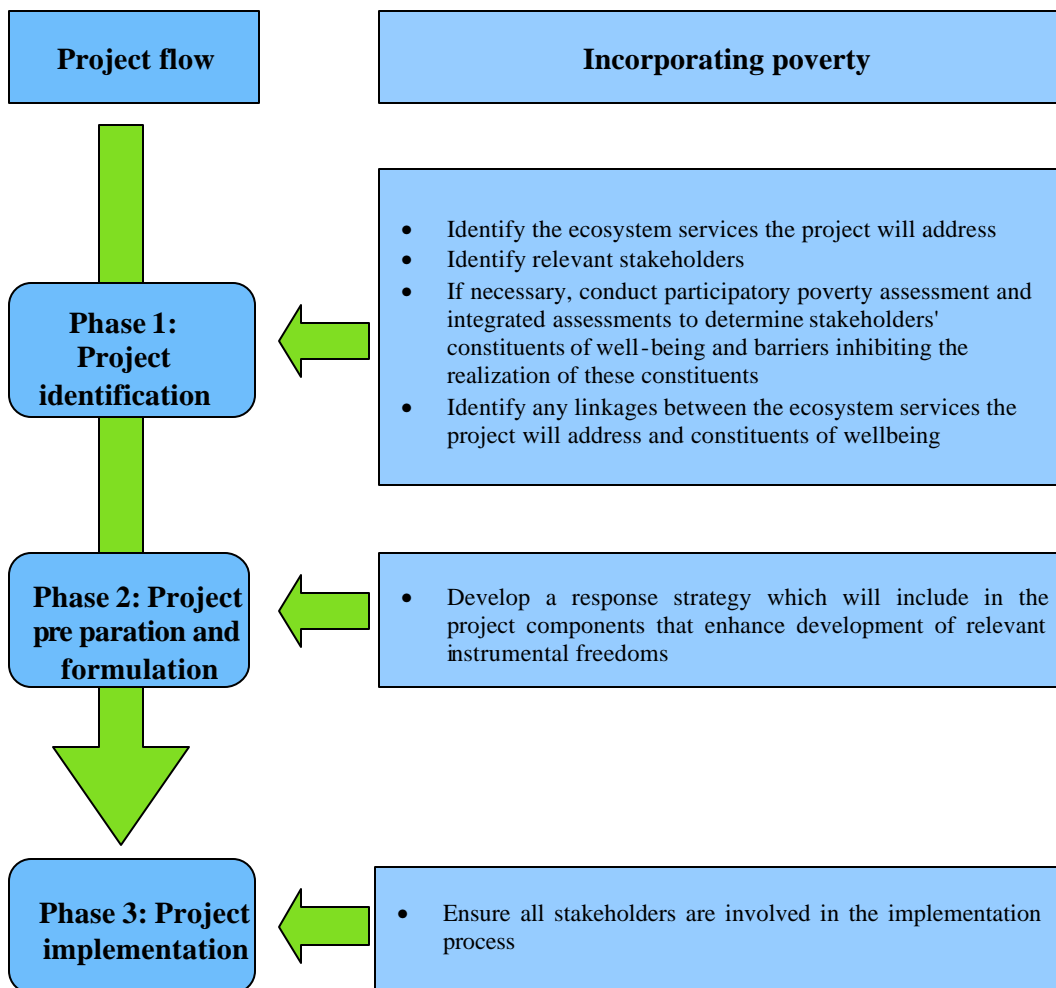
- What ecosystem services will the project target?
- How do these ecosystem services relate to the constituents and determinants of the well-being of stakeholders?
- Do project objectives explicitly incorporate the links between poverty and the environment?
- What are the trade-offs or synergies among the ecosystem services and the various constituents of well-being?
- How will the possible negative impacts of the project on the poor be managed?

2.   **During the project formulation phase:**

- How will project components target the identified links between constituents of well-being and ecosystem services?

- Does a selection of the project components identify the existence of or the potential need for instrumental freedoms[7]?

- Are these instrumental freedoms relevant to the needs of the poor already identified in the project identification phase?

- How will the project components contribute to the sustainable use of ecosystems?

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[7] See annex III for further understanding on "instrumental freedoms".

Key elements in project formulation

Figure 7: Incorporation of poverty alleviation aspects in the project planning process

Project flow	Incorporating poverty

Phase 1: Project identification

- Identify the ecosystem services the project will address
- Identify relevant stakeholders
- If necessary, conduct participatory poverty assessment and integrated assessments to determine stakeholders' constituents of well-being and barriers inhibiting the realization of these constituents
- Identify any linkages between the ecosystem services the project will address and constituents of wellbeing

Phase 2: Project pre paration and formulation

- Develop a response strategy which will include in the project components that enhance development of relevant instrumental freedoms

Phase 3: Project implementation

- Ensure all stakeholders are involved in the implementation process

B.   Gender equality and UNEP projects

There has been a growing consensus that sustainabl e development requires an understanding of both women and men's roles and responsibilities within the community or country as well as their relationships to each other. Improving the status of women is no longer seen as just a women's issue, but as a goal that requires the active participation of both men and women. Also, providing access to resources and opportunities to women is seen as crucial for achieving environmental conservation and sustainable development as women play decisive roles in managing biodiversity, water, land and other natural resources.

A UNEP project should take a gender-inclusive approach at each phase of the project cycle – identification, formulation and preparation, implementation and evaluation. Project managers should be vigilant throughout the project cycle about gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive project implementation. However, gender0inclusive approach requires particular attention at the project identification and preparation stage as the structure and key elements of the project are defined during this stage. Gender equality aspects of the project can be built into the project documents in the form of project strategy, activities, outputs, results or indicators. Alternatively, it can be explained in the project checklist (see item 8 in annex VII).

The following questions will assist project managers in incorporating gender equality in the project identification and preparation phases.[8]
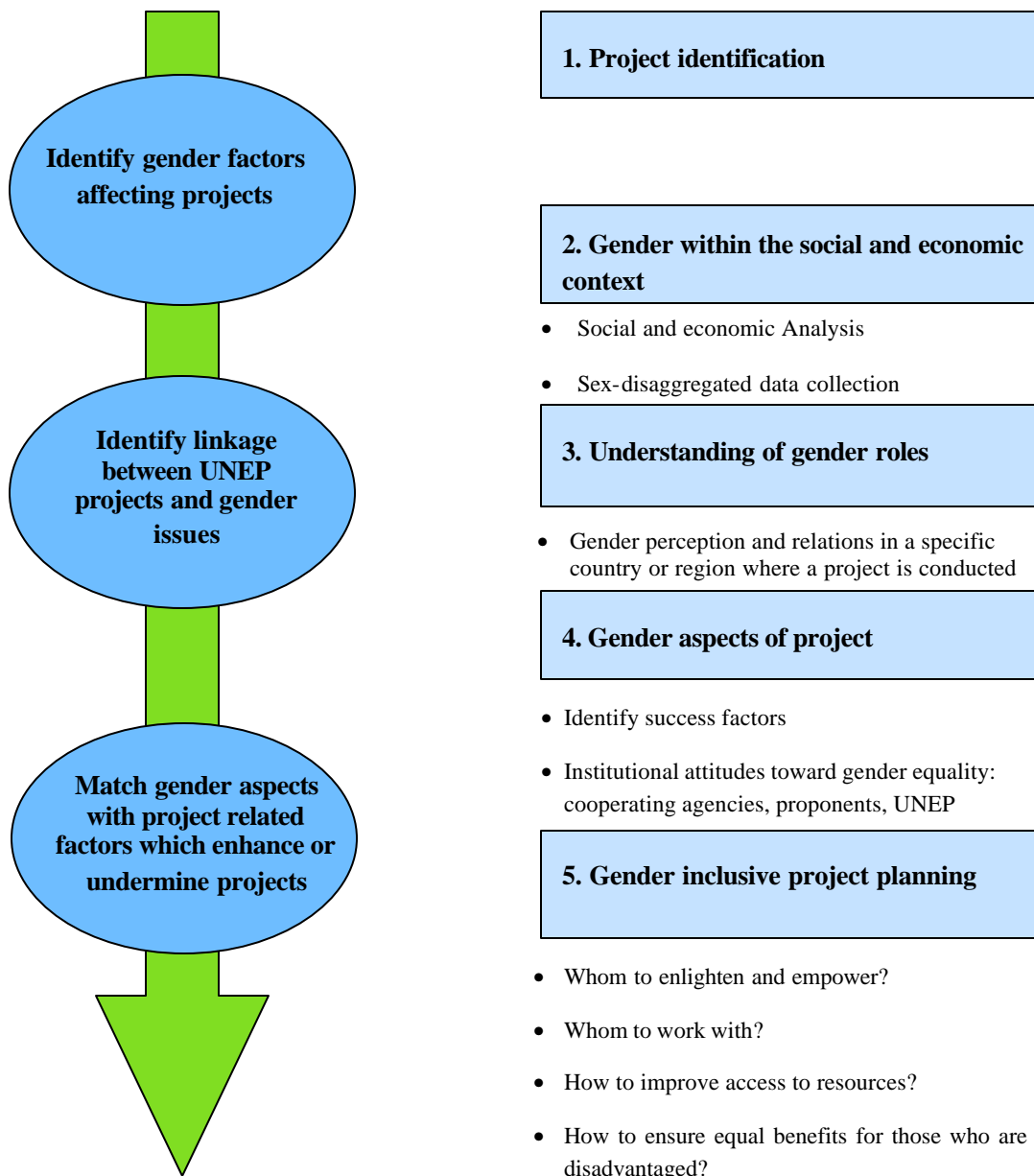
1.   **During the project identification phase:**

(a)   Assessing women's needs

- What needs and opportunities exist for increasing women's productivity and/or production; access to and control of resources and access to and control of benefits?

- How do these needs and opportunities relate to the country's other general and sustainable development needs and opportunities?

- Have women been directly consulted in identifying such needs and opportunities?

(b)   Identifying possible negative effects

- Might the project reduce women's access to or control of resources and benefits?

- Might it adversely affect women's social and economic situation in some other way?

- What will be the effects on women in the short and longer term?

2.   **During the project preparation and formulation phase:**

(a)   Project's impact on women's activities

- Which areas of women's social and political empowerment does the project affect?

- If it is planned to change women's performance of that activity (locus of activity, remunerative mode, technology or mode of activity), is this feasible and what positive or negative effects would there be on women?

- How can the project design be adjusted to increase the above-mentioned positive effects and reduce or eliminate the negative effects?

(b)   Project's impact on women's access and control

- How will each project component affect women's access to and control of resources and the benefits stemming from the production of targeted goods and services, and social and political functions?

- What forces could be set into motion to induce further exploration of constraints and possible improvements?

- How could the project design be adjusted to increase women's access to and control of resources and benefits?

(c)   Defining general project objectives and results

- Do project objectives and results explicitly incorporate women's needs?

- Have women participated in setting the objectives and results?

- What are the lessons learnt from the earlier efforts relating to gender equality?

- How has the present proposal built on earlier achievements?

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[8] Overholt, Anderson, Cloud and Austin (1984). *Gender roles in development projects: A case book*, Kumarian Press: Connecticut, United States.

Key elements in project formulation

Figure 8: **Gender-inclusive project planning process**

1. Project identification

Identify gender factors affecting projects

2. Gender within the social and economic context

- Social and economic Analysis

- Sex-disaggregated data collection

3. Understanding of gender roles

Identify linkage between UNEP projects and gender issues

- Gender perception and relations in a specific country or region where a project is conducted

4. Gender aspects of project

- Identify success factors

- Institutional attitudes toward gender equality: cooperating agencies, proponents, UNEP

Match gender aspects with project related factors which enhance or undermine projects

5. Gender inclusive project planning

- Whom to enlighten and empower?

- Whom to work with?

- How to improve access to resources?

- How to ensure equal benefits for those who are disadvantaged?

Key elements in project formulation

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C.   Sustainability of the effectiveness and impact of the project

Most project interventions are temporary in nature, decreasing as the capacity of the designated institution or country is built up. The phased withdrawal of such support through capacity-building measures should be embedded as an integral part of project strategies and activities.

The long-term sustainability of the achievements of the project for the target beneficiaries needs to be clearly thought out. Effectiveness or impacts of the project will be sustainable depending on the following factors:[9]

(a)   *Ownership by beneficiaries* : The extent to which target groups and beneficiaries of the project participated in its design and are involved in implementation so that it has their support and is sustainable after the end of project financing;

(b)   *Policy support:* The quality of the relevant sector policy and the extent to which the partner Government has demonstrated support for the continuation of project services beyond the period of donor support;

(c)   *Appropriate technology:* Whether the technologies to be used by the project will continue to be operated in the long term (for example, availability of spare parts, sufficiency of safety regulations, local capabilities of women and men to operate and maintain equipment);

(d)   *Social and cultural issues* : Whether the project takes into account local social and cultural norms and attitudes, and what measures could be taken to ensure that all beneficiary groups have appropriate access to project services and benefits during and after implementation;

(e)   *Gender equality*: Whether the project takes into account the specific needs and interests of women and men, whether it will lead to sustained and equitable access by women and men to the services and infrastructures, and whether it will contribute to the goal of reducing gender inequalities;

(f)   *Environmental protection*: Whether and to what extent the project will preserve or damage the environment and, therefore, support or undermine the achievement of longer-term benefits;

(g)   *Institutional and management capacity*: What is the extent of the ability and commitment of the implementing agencies to implement the project and continue to provide services beyond the period of donor support;

(h)   *Economic and financial viability*: Whether the incremental benefits of the project will outweigh its costs and the project will represent a viable long-term investment.

Sustainability can be embedded in the project through activities or strategies to provide necessary skills, training and tools to local people so they can keep the project going and maintain the relevant technology or equipment.

D.   UNEP logical framework matrix

Different cooperating agencies, supporting organizations and donors, such as the European Commission, the Global Environment Facility and some United Nations funds and programmes, use different versions of the logical framework matrix. UNEP has adopted a simplified logical framework matrix format, which is composed of objectives, results, outputs, and activities as the vertical logic, and objectively verifiable indicators, means of verification and assumption as horizontal logic for results (see figure 10). The logical framework matrix is required for all UNEP projects. An example of a well-constructed logical framework matrix is shown in figure 20 in annex IV.

The following are the main elements of the logical framework matrix:

(a)   Vertical logic: intervention logic (objectives, results, outputs, activities)

Objectives

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[9] European Commission (March, 2001). *Project cycle management manual*, EuropeAid Co-operation Office/General Affairs/Evaluation.

The objectives of the project or programme are the overall desired achievements involving a process of change, to meet certain needs of identified end-users. Objectives should identify long-term benefits to final beneficiaries, the future desired situation or the conditions that must be satisfied. Objectives are high-level aims which the project's results will not necessarily fully satisfy, but will, nonetheless, contribute substantially towards. The objectives of the project should be aligned with the objectives of the UNEP programme (see figures 1 and 2).

Some suggestions for developing well-constructed objectives are:

- Set the right level of articulation so that the objectives are both realistic and attainable;
- Do not set objectives that are equivalent to strategies, activities, processes or outputs;
- State a meaningful and detectable level of change over a given period of time;
- One or two objectives are adequate for a programme or project;
- Make a clear distinction in the formulation of objectives and results;
- Do not formulate objectives with active verbs, such as: to study, to advise and to cooperate.

Results

Results are desired outcomes involving tangible benefits to end-users, expressed as a quantitative or qualitative standard, value, or rate. Results are the direct consequences or effects of the generation of outputs and lead to the fulfillment of the stated objectives.

Results should identify the specific beneficiaries or target groups of the project. They should state how, by whom and when the outputs will be used to satisfy the aims of the project. So the project should be sensitive to the beneficiaries' specific needs.

Suggestions for formulating well-constructed results:

- Express results as qualitative, quantitative or value-added rates;
- Give the results a concrete nature in relation to the objectives;
- Make sure the results have a clear cause-and-effect relationship with the objectives;
- Results should identify the end-users or beneficiaries;
- State a meaningful and detectable change;
- Avoid long-term goals;
- Never formulate results in an open-ended or on-going manner.

The clearer and more specific the results, the easier it is to formulate corresponding indicators.

Outputs

Outputs are the lowest level results in the logical intervention chain and the final and concrete products of the activities undertaken, the combination of which achieves the results of the projects – when the target groups start to enjoy the sustainable benefits of the project. In other words, an output is a specific product delivered by the activities that are needed to accomplish the project's objectives and results. Its delivery must be within the control of UNEP and the implementing partners; it is an element for which UNEP and the implementing partners can be held fully accountable. Note that the UNEP logical framework clearly distinguishes outputs from activities: the latter are merely the processes that transform inputs into outputs.

The following points are to be considered when developing outputs:

- The outputs should constitute the optimal combination necessary for achieving the results;

- They should be deliverable, given the project timeframe and resources;

- They should be described as concretely and precisely as possible, and in quantifiable terms;

- At a lower level in the hierarchy, outputs are often confused with activities. This can be avoided if outputs are thought of as the outcomes of activities. For example, the implementation of community-based plans for conservation of water resources is an output, while development of transboundary water management plans, feasibility studies of hydraulic development scheme, schemes initiated within the scope of the water management plans, and good practices identified, promoted and implemented, are associated activities.[10]

Activities

Activities describe the specific work or tasks to be performed within the project to transform resources into outputs. Activities illustrate the links between inputs and outputs. Activities included in the project design should be targeted to produce outputs. If an activity does not produce an output, it should not be included. Activities included must be pertinent not only to the project outputs but also to the wider context of the project's aims (activities are appropriate for the partner organizations and local institutions, culture, available resources, technology).

Activities should be selected based on a clear understanding of the problems and an analysis of the opportunities and risks of the situation, and available or expected resources and capabilities. Project managers should pay special attention to the specific interests of under-represented groups, such as women and people living in poverty.

(b)   **Horizontal logic: Objectively verifiable indicators or means of verification**

Objectively verifiable indicators

A result is not always directly observable. It may reflect a broad idea that needs to be further defined before it can be measured. Objectively verifiable indicators provide an opportunity to restate results in specific and directly observable terms and are used to measure the extent to which the results have been achieved. They correspond directly or indirectly to the results and are used to measure performance. A distinction must be made between an indicator and its value, which is obtained by measurement. The value of the indicator is important in measuring performance.

Assessing whether the objectively verifiable indicators are 'SMART' is the best way to see if they are formulated appropriately. SMART stands for:

Specific:	Specific enough that a subsequent assessment can objectively determine whether the programme or project has been successful or not, and to what extent;
Measurable:	Objectively verifiable indicators should set a quantitative or qualitative value or rate, formulated to allow meaningful comparisons with actual accomplishments. Including a numerical target makes the result more specific and the measurement of performance easier. Numerical targets can be expressed, for example, in numbers, ratios and percentages;
Attainable:	Objectively verifiable indicators should be set at levels that can be achieved and that are the intended concrete accomplishments for a given result;

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[10] Common understanding is that outputs comprise reports, publications, training courses, advisory missions and servicing of meetings and so on. However, they are not ends in themselves, but are often means for further activities, such as public awareness campaigns, advocacy to the policy makers, or consultation for the acceptance of key findings or recommendations. Outputs in the UNEP logical framework matrix, however, define the "lowest level results". Some of the examples of the outputs are "training participants understood different approaches of participatory management of natural resources," "support structure organized and revitalized", and so on.

Key elements in project formulation

Realistic:	Levels should be set in a realistic way, given the respective project time and resource frame;
Time-based:	Objectively verifiable indicators should express the benefits or changes that a programme or project aims to bring about by the end of the implementation period.

When formulating objectively verifiable indicators the following questions should be asked:

- What characteristics, conditions or features would indicate that the results have been achieved?

- Would the collected data help one understand what is going on in the programme or project and would they make sense in relation to the results?

Means of verification

Means of verification is the identification of data sources and methodologies to be used to measure the objectively verifiable indicators. This information should be kept at a practical level – review or content analysis of government documents; internal records, including memos and e-mail; audit reports; reports by non-governmental organizations and other international agencies; surveys; interviews; and rapid assessments. While selecting existing and available data sources is recommended whenever possible, caution is called for regarding validity and reliability of the data selected.

Assumptions

Projects are always subject to the influence of factors outside the direct control of project managers. This is particularly so for projects which require the cooperation of a number of different stakeholder groups, for projects implemented in poorly resourced and unstable environments, and for projects that require behavioural changes on the part of participants.

Assumptions are external factors which could affect the progress and success of the programme or project, or its long-term sustainability, but over which the project manager has no direct control. Underlying the framework are several conditions which have to be met for the project to succeed, but which are outside of the project's control. It is meaningful, therefore, to have a clear view of the external factors and risks in project implementation and to articulate them in the planning phase. During the project implementation phase, project managers should monitor the influences of key external factors in order to assess the progress towards and barriers against the stated results and objectives.

Key elements in project formulation