

## What instructions should be given to the teams in charge of case studies?

### Example of a PHARE ex post evaluation

#### Example

This example is taken from the Phare ex post evaluation which has been conducted concurrently in ten countries in 2003, by PLS Rambol and Euréval-C3E, at the request of the European Commission, Enlargement Directorate General.

#### Situation

This document describes the types of guidelines and instructions given to the people in charge of case studies which are implemented in the context of a multi-site case study evaluation.

For this evaluation, the available database was an in-depth impact study of 57 projects (which represented 53 case studies). Various local operators carried out these case studies.

The team leader provided the teams responsible for the implementation of case studies with recommendations, so as to obtain standardised information, including:

- How to build the logic model,
- How to conduct the interview's three waves,
- The monograph's content and the way to design it.

# Building a logic model

## ***Purpose***

This task applies to each individual case study that have been selected for detailed analysis, not to all projects.

The purpose is to provide an overview of the logic of the project, and to focus the analysis on the main intended impact, in order to enable the scoring of that impact.

## ***Method***

Collect and analyse all available documents pertaining to the case:

- programming documents like project fiche and log frame
- monitoring documents like minutes of joint monitoring committees, OMAS reports, interim assessment reports
- management documents like contracts, progress reports

From documentary analysis,

- Identify from one to eight outputs. Select the most important if necessary. Draw boxes on the left of the diagram with all selected outputs.
- Identify a series of expected impacts whatever their nature (legislative-administrative or socio-economic), their scope (narrow or far reaching) and their time horizon (short term or ultimate). Draw boxes on the right of the diagram with all selected impacts.
- Connect boxes with arrows. An arrow is a logical cause-and-effect link. If an arrow connects box A to box B, this means that when A is achieved, we assume that B will follow logically. An arrow represents a logical link, not a chronological one. Assumptions must be logical but they do not need to be validated empirically on the ground. This is the job of the evaluator to check whether the logical assumptions are validated and if not, why.
- Re-organise the boxes and arrows in order to ensure readability. If necessary, reduce the complexity by withdrawing less important boxes and / or arrows. The diagram should not contain more than 25 boxes. Arrows may cross each other, but not too much.

After face-to-face and/or telephone interviews with co-ordinating authorities and implementing agencies, decide on which chain of output - immediate result – legislative-administrative impact - socio-economic impact is the major one and will be retained for scoring. Display that chain on the diagram with thick arrows.

# Three waves of interviews

## Wave 1

The first wave aims to gather facts and opinions from ground level managers and operators, i.e. those who have been ultimately responsible for delivering the Phare support.

It will consist in a few rapid interviews, by phone if necessary, with individuals who have been personally involved in the design and/or implementation of the programme / project.

Interviews will be added until the evaluation team has reached a full understanding of the following points:

- What were the critical problems, difficulties, and influential factors in the context at the launch of the intervention?
- What were the initial expectations and fears?
- How is the intervention connected with other policies at country and international level?
- Would another project have occurred (or the same project in a different way, at a different date) if the Phare support had not been allocated?
- Was it possible to use different instruments, and if yes, why some of them were preferred to others?
- Which groups, organisations or institutions have been actually reached (absorption side)?
- Which critical factors did influence the achievement of impacts and their sustainability?

The interviews will be carried out in a semi-structured way in order to flexibly cover all questions above if relevant for the interviewee. In addition, each interview will provide contacts and documents for the second wave of data collection.

The draft minutes (in English) will be established for use by the country evaluation team only.

## Wave 2

The second wave aims to gather facts and opinions from the absorption side of the Phare support. It is one of the most critical of the whole evaluation exercise.

It will consist in interviews, preferably face-to-face, with individual stakeholders who were targeted by the programme / project, who were assumed to change their behaviour or practice, who have won or lost from the intervention in a direct or indirect way.

Interviewees may be public administrators targeted by the intervention, entrepreneurs, representatives of NGOs or interest groups, experts.

At this stage, a majority of interviewees should be free of any responsibility in the design or management of the programme / project.

Interviews will be added until the evaluation team has reached a full understanding of the following points:

- Who were the actual beneficiaries (end users)? Did the intervention actually benefit the intended group(s)? if no, why?

- What did change for the beneficiaries (end users) as a result of the intervention? How do beneficiaries and other actors assess these changes? Were these changes intended or not?
- What were the needs of the targeted groups?
- From the standpoint of beneficiaries, did the intervention create synergies or contradict other policies?
- Which critical factors did influence beneficiaries' behaviour and interfere with the achievement of impacts?

The interviews will be carried out in a semi-structured way in order to flexibly cover all questions above if relevant for the interviewee. In addition, interviews will provide additional documents like: minutes of meetings progress reports, extracts of newspapers, etc. Additional interviews will be suggested for the third wave of data collection.

The draft minutes (in English) will be established for use by the country evaluation team only.

### **Wave 3**

The third wave aims to gather facts and opinions in order to strengthen those findings which need additional study before validation and to fully substantiate the scoring (see session 8).

This third wave of interviews will typically include informants who hold an external position as regards the Phare support like: academic experts, lead private managers, public officers managing other programmes, NGOs, interest groups, etc. It may include some of the interviewees of the previous waves.

If needed, additional documents will be identified, gathered and analysed.

The choice of informants and the conduct of interviews will be totally driven by the need to strengthen critical findings and conclusions

## **Conducting interviews**

### ***Preparation of the list of questions***

- Refer to the check-list of questions.
- Note what is already known from documentation and other interviews.
- Note what is unknown or requires cross-checking.
- Identify which of the common questions might be addressed in the framework of the case study and include these questions in the list
- Select three to six priority issues for the interview, plus secondary issues.

### ***Conduct of interview***

- Introduce one to another
- Briefly recall the framework of the evaluation and the purpose of the interview
- Agree upon the duration of the interview (30 to 90 minutes)

- Explain the rules of the game in terms of confidentiality
- Start with a question that is close to the interests of the interviewee
- Continue with other questions
- Conclude with next steps

It is not essential to ask the questions in any precise order. The initial list of questions is just meant to enable the interviewer to check that key issues have been covered. The interviewer may modulate her/his intervention in relation to the interviewee, and formulate new questions.

An interviewer must have a "respectful" attitude vis-à-vis the interviewee and the information gathered, but also be able to convey a good understanding of the subject matter and context. The initial contact is very important, for it is the basis of communication. The interviewer must be careful not to influence the interviewee by approving or orienting her/his answers.

The interview may be recorded, to ensure that the interviewee's assertions are not distorted and that the most important remarks are not omitted from the report. However, in some cases interviewees may feel less able to give full and frank answers on tape, and the costs of transcribing interviews should be taken in to account.

### ***Follow up***

The interviewer writes the minutes of the interview. The form of the minutes may range from full-length transcription of record to three pages summary and to one page outline. In any case, the interviewer should include sufficient material in the minutes as to enable another person to analyse the interview.

Whatever the form of the minutes, a significant proportion of the text should be interviewee's statements in brackets, fully respecting the vocabulary used.

Minutes may be sent to the interviewee, which is very fruitful in terms of correcting mistakes, adding information and creating confidence. In the framework of a case study, an alternative is to send the draft monograph to all interviewees.

In all cases it may be useful to thank interviewees by letter for their contributions (their co-operation may be needed in future studies and it is therefore worthwhile ensuring their goodwill).

## **Outline of a case monograph**

Feel free to adapt

### ***Genesis of the project in a chronological perspective***

first idea, preparatory works, designers

decision, budgetary allocation, decision-makers

initially stated objectives short term and mid term, stated project strategy

[If the project involved a mix of investment and capacity building activities - did that help designing a more relevant project strategy? Cross-country issue D3]

connection to the national strategy

## ***Would the project have been launched in the absence of Phare?***

other factors that were influential in the decision to launch the project  
other projects in the same field at the same time  
key external events at the date of decision making  
evaluator's answer to the question

## ***Implementation, preferably in a chronological perspective***

main organisational arrangements  
recruitment of experts, contractors  
main activities, instruments and outputs  
main management and monitoring decisions  
main external events during the implementation  
main conclusions of monitoring and interim assessment about outputs  
termination

## ***Results and impacts***

From here and downwards, decide whether you follow one major chain of causes and effects or several ones. In case you follow several chains, then you may have a section for each chain and the sections below will become subsections. Refer to the logic model in annex

## ***Targeted stakeholders***

which stakeholders have been mainly affected?  
what did / will change for them? short / long term, positively / negatively, from the standpoint of managers / from their own standpoint.  
main other influential factors / events from their standpoint.  
evaluator's opinion about whether observed changes are attributable to the project and if yes, will they survive in the next years?

## ***Legislative-administrative impacts***

which stakeholders have been (will be) mainly affected?  
what did / will change for them? short / long term, positively / negatively, from the standpoint of managers / from their own standpoint.  
main other influential factors / events from their standpoint., major factors that may favour or prevent the fact that impacts will survive in the next years?  
evaluator's opinion about whether observed changes are attributable to the project and if yes, will they survive in the next years?  
[If relevant - did the project help making sufficient progress in the capacity of the country to implement the E.U. Regional Development policy at central and local government levels? -(Cross-country issue 1)]  
[If relevant - did the project help making sufficient progress in the capacity of the country to implement the E.U. Regional Development policy at central and local government levels? -(Cross-country issue A)]

[If relevant - did the project help introduce practices of decentralisation and externalisation and a culture of supervision rather than hierarchic public management?–(Cross-country issue B1)]

[If relevant - did the project help making significant progress in terms of transparency of public management?–(Cross-country issue B2)]

### ***Socio-economic impacts***

which stakeholders have been (will be) mainly affected?

what did / will change for them? short / long term, positively / negatively, from the standpoint of managers / from their own standpoint.

main other influential factors / events from their standpoint.

evaluator's opinion about whether observed changes are attributable to the project and if yes, will they survive in the next years?

[If relevant - which were the main unexpected consequences? Do stakeholders judge these consequences positively or negatively? Cross-country issue C)]

### ***Impacts and instruments***

Was there an interesting alternative option for obtaining the same impact? If yes, which one? Would that alternative have led to similar impact at lower cost or to better impact at same cost?

[If relevant - did the project achieve to produce an optimum mix of public / private resources? Cross-country issue D1)]

[If the project was implemented through grant schemes or twinnings - did it led to substantially better impacts, and if yes, how ? Cross-country issue D2)]

## **Focusing case studies**

### ***Need for focusing***

It may happen that a case study encompasses a wide range of activities. For instance a project selected for in-depth analysis may include several components, a given component may have reached several communities at local level and a given community may include different types of end users. In that examples, the whole thing becomes very complex and does not lent itself to a proper analysis of far reaching impacts.

When a case is complex, two approaches are available: (1) wide and superficial or (2) narrow and in-depth.

An example of the first approach would be to include a questionnaire survey within the case study, with a sample of, let say, 100 end users and the production of some indicator about what did change for end users. In practice, this approach is feasible only if names and addresses of end users are readily available to the evaluation team, which is typical of a good monitoring. In theoretical terms, this approach is acceptable. However, it is not totally consistent since it introduces a quantitative reasoning within the case study, which is of a qualitative nature.

In the second approach, the evaluator opens smaller and smaller windows within the case study so as to track impacts as far as possible. This step-by-step process may be seen as selecting a case study within the case study . It is described below under the name of "Russian dolls case studies".

## ***“Russian dolls” case study***

The evaluation team proceeds in successive steps of screening and scoping:

Step 1: Screening the case globally, scoping on one particular component. This implies to

- Carefully describe the case as a whole as already done in the preliminary monograph
- Select one component for further analysis, and explain why (higher probability that socio-economic impacts can be reached, better chance to substantiate key conclusions)
- Explain the extent to which lessons drawn from analysing that component might apply (or not) to other components

Step 2: Screening the selected component globally, scoping on one particular territory. This implies to

## **Drafting a case monograph**

### ***Purpose of the monograph***

To feed the interim report with evidence about impact, their nature, their sustainability and how they have been obtained

To feed the consolidated report with a special contribution to answering cross-country questions or at least some of them.

### ***Sources***

Programming, managing and monitoring documents

Minutes of interviews and additional documents collected through interviews

Feed back on the draft monograph

### ***Substance***

The substance of the monograph should relate to:

Logic model - The monograph should focus on the main chain(s) of causes and effects. It should follow the successive steps of the chain(s)

Fields of the database for detailed assessment – The monograph should substantiate the answers to the fields

Cross-country issues – The monograph should provide substantial information for at least some of these issues

Adopt either a historical / chronological perspective or a logical perspective (from inputs to impacts).

Address initial objectives and strategy in a very light way. On the contrary explain who designed this strategy, when and how. Instead of presenting the detail of objectives, speak of what has been achieved and of what is likely to occur within the next years.

### ***Format***

Five to seven pages, plus annexes

Please use the British spelling

Use numbered paragraph for facilitating discussion on the draft and come back to normal style in the final version.

Mention the version number and precise who has validated the version.

Include an annex with the names and dates of interviews, plus the reference of documents.

Include an annex with the logic model as established before the study.

## **Style**

Fully understandable by a reader who does not know the project nor the country

No need to draft perfect sentences (the monograph will have a status of annex to the country report). May include a lot of bullets

Should include a number of significant extracts of interviews in quotes (a dozen is a minimum).

Explain where quotations come from. Confidentiality to be secured but the reader should know which type of interviewee is speaking (i.e. 'implementation', 'directly targeted stakeholder', 'indirectly targeted stakeholder', 'not targeted stakeholder', 'expert').

Try to avoid general statements, focus on facts and quotations

## **Value judgements**

The monograph may include value judgements extracted from documents or interviews but such extracts should be presented in quotes imperatively.

The monograph should include the evaluator's answer to a limited number of questions (see detailed assessment database). These answers will take the form of a value judgement but they should be strongly substantiated (e.g. one or two paragraphs substantiating an answer in one sentence). If you cannot properly substantiate your answer, then please do not answer the question immediately and wait for another version of the monograph.

Except the two instances above, the monograph should be absolutely free of any value judgement.

## **Process**

Draft version 1 by one member of the country evaluation team

Draft version 2 by (or after discussion with) another member of the country evaluation team

Mail the preliminary monograph to all interviewees who can manage with the English language. Ask them to provide a feedback if they wish to.

Have the preliminary monograph reviewed by the regional evaluation leader.

Take feed-back into account – draft version 3

Attach as an annex to the interim country report

Draft version 4 after the third wave of interviews

Have the final monograph reviewed by the regional evaluation leader.

Take feed-back into account – version 5 (final)

Attach as an annex to the final country report