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PGD IN PROJECT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

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Question 1. Explain the factors that affect implementation of a project

A number of factors affect the implementation of a development programme ranging from technical to economic and others. Development managers needs to be aware of the nature and magnitude of the effect of each of these factors to be able to implement and manage the programme efficiently and effectively. Similarly knowledge is also necessary for development policy makers and planners of NGOs to formulate realistic policies and plans for development.

**Technical Factor**

A project format can accommodate diverse activities or endeavours. An enormous variety of development activities may usefully be cast in project form. From technical point of view, projects of NGOs may be as diverse as irrigation, livestock, development, health, education etc. Every project is aimed at producing some output which may be an asset, or a commodity, or a function by which inputs are transformed into outputs. Production function involved is technical in nature. It is necessary for functionaries of NGOs to know the nature and form of the production process and the factors affecting it so as to be able to manipulate it to produce the desired results. Skilled and experienced technical staff with enthusiasm are essential for specifying the crucial technical factors involved in the implementation of a project.

**Economic and Financial Factors**

The economic factors affecting a project are relevant from the point of view of the society as a whole where as financial analysis takes the viewpoint of the individual participants. Financial analysis reveals the need for investment, credit, stipend to trainees, honoraria etc. and other incentives for the successful implementation of the project. On the other hand, economic analysis allows us to decide whether labour and other inputs to be used in the project should be remunerated at market prices or at shadow prices.

**Commercial Factors**

The commercial factors affecting the implementation of a project include the arrangements for marketing the output produced by the project and arrangements for the supply of inputs and credit needed to build and operate the project. On the output side a careful analysis of the proposed market for the project's production is essential to ensure that there will be an effective demand at remunerative prices. On the input side, appropriate arrangements must be made for the project participants to secure the supplies of raw material and infrastructure. Facilities of credit to farmers, artisans and trainees to purchase various tools, raw materials etc. should be made to ensure successful implementation of a project.

**Socio-cultural Factors**

The socio-cultural factors affecting the implementation of a project include the stratification of the project participants based on caste and religion, social customs and traditions, mores and taboos, distribution of project benefits among the clientele of the project, impact on environment and quality of life in general. Many projects have failed because they didn't meet the social objectives of their clientele. V.K.R.V. Rao has rightly attributed the failure of planning due to "its lack of cohesion with social factors and the impediments imposed by the social and cultural forces."

**Political Factors**

NGOs have faced many challenges in implementing their projects due to political outfits. Many NGOs, left the area, few fought with politicians and few compromised and accepted subordination. With the decentralization, people’s elected representatives have been given due place in planning and implementation viz. selection of beneficiaries. Sometimes these NGOs act to satisfy their vested interests. So, NGOs have to keep political considerations in mind and act on people's participation.

**Managerial Factor**

Managerial skills are a necessary input for NGOs for the optimal use of resources, resource mobilization, information management, monitoring system, assessment of the needs of project participants. It is unfortunate with the NGOs, that most of NGOs have no professional development manager, for the very reason that support to NGOs is project based and expectations of these professional managers are greater.

**People’s Participation**

The implementation of area specific development project is very difficult without the active and widespread participation of its clientele. Sometime community is project partner to NGOs and NGOs have become ‘corporate partner’ to funding agencies. Many factors may motivate people to participate in a project or refrain from participating. It is necessary to find out factors and design specific strategy to enlist their participation. In few areas, NGOs have been successful in enlisting the support and participation of local community in the implementation of development projects. But that is more because of the charismatic personality of the project leader and less because of any institutional innovations that can be replicated in a large scale elsewhere. Rauanan Weitz has distilled some simple thumb rules for enlisting people's participation. These are:

(i) Create a human relationship.

(ii) Know the traditions and social customs of the project participants.

(iii) Introduce programme gradually and adapt them to the ability of the target population to enable it to absorb the change involved.

(iv) Get yourself a partner from amongst the local leaders.

(v) Encourage and promote development leadership among both the project employees and the local people.

**Integration and Coordination**

Many government and non-government agencies are undertaking development programmes at the grass-root, same time for the same area and same beneficiaries. It is essential that different development programmes under way in an area be integrated and coordinated for optimum results, otherwise it creates over lapping, duplication and wastage of scarce resources.

Question 2.Explain any two methods for effective implementation of projects

**Bar charts:**

First developed by Henry L. Gantt, it is sometimes referred to as Gantt chart. Bar chart is a pictorial representation showing various activities involved in a project. The chart has two coordinate axes; one axis represents the activities and the other axis represents the time required for completion of the individual activities.

The axis represents activities, involved in a project, are drawn in the form of bars, and the length of the bar represents the time taken for the completion of each activity. In the projects, there are some activities required to be taken up simultaneously, while some are required to be taken up only after completion of other activities and there may also some activities, which are independent. Mostly the bar charts considered the construction of the building in the training center or elsewhere. The following are some of the activities involved in the construction of any construction.

For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Activities | Time required |
| Digging of foundation | 3 Weeks |
| Pouring foundation concrete | 2 Week |
| Construction of walls | 8 Weeks |
| Construction of roof slab | 2 Weeks |
| Land leveling | 3 Weeks |
| Fixing of doors and windows | 1 Week |
| Digging of well | 3 Weeks |
| Plastering and finishing of walls | 3 Weeks |
| Electrification | 4 days |
| Total | 25 weeks and 4 days |

The above activities can be shown in a bar chart after identifying their logical sequence. If water required for the construction work is not available at the project site, the activity ‘digging of well’ takes priority. Let us assume that water required for the construction work is not available at the project site and it is also not easy to procure water from outside. Under these circumstances consider the following two Activities. Though digging of well seems to be the first activity that should be started since requirement of water is essential for the construction work, digging of foundation activity need not wait till the digging of well is completed. Water is required only for brick and concrete work and hence both the activities viz. digging of well and foundation can be done at the sometime. As we see from the bar chart, the total times required for the completion of the project is 25 weeks and 4 days to finish the work.

**Critical Path Method (CPM):**

A network represents logical sequence of activities having many paths starting from the initial event and leading to the last. If duration of all the activities that lie on a particular path are added, it gives the duration of that path. The path with longest duration is called critical path and the activities that lie on the critical path are called critical activities. It is the critical path that sets the overall duration of the project. For example, in the construction of training center, the longest duration is 27 weeks and is a critical path. The main function of PERT and CPM is to determine and control the time required to complete a project, the main benefit is time saved through the scheduling of tasks, both initially and as the project progresses. Since time and cost are closely related, saving time usually leads to savings in costs. In addition, both PERT and CPM have been adapted and applied explicitly to costs. They can, for example, be used to develop an optimum cost-efficiency schedule that can help managers to determine the savings and costs involved in achieving a shorter production schedule. Using extra labor to reduce the duration of an activity, for instance, may cost more than the bonus for early completion. Other extensions of PERT and CPM, such as pinpointing problem areas, improving communication, and comparing alternative actions, also enhance their usefulness. Proper analysis of cost incurred on a project in terms of environment degrading and social dilemmas have led agitations against those projects. There have been responsive causalities over these agitations and there have been deadlocks on such projects.

CPM and PERT Methods

Between 1956 and 1958, two scheduling control systems came into popular use. These are called Critical Path Method (CPM) and Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT). Both of these systems originally were designed to track time in projects involving concurrent activity and to monitor and control expenditures of time. Since their introduction, CPM and PERT have been expanded for use in many project applications, including budgeting, resource management, process

deﬁnition, and quality control. When the two systems are combined and used together, the process is referred to as a PERT/CPM network.

In the most technical of uses, both CPM and PERT are used to analyze time use on a mathematical model. CPM provides modeling for phase start and end dates with the intention of identifying the ﬂoat, or that amount of time that can be absorbed in later phases to offset time overruns in earlier ones. PERT is employed to show weighted averaging of phase time estimates and is not used as commonly as CPM.

While mathematical modeling provides some value to the highly technical project and a certain level of control to the project manager (particularly in engineering and similar environments), CPM and PERT can be used effectively purely for visual aid modeling. Leaving the mathematical analysis and weighted averaging of time studies behind, virtually any project manager can employ the techniques of these tools for visual control of any project. In fact, too much emphasis on purely mathematical modeling can take away time for hands-on management and supervision, and tends to move the project manager out of touch with the team.

A practical application for CPM involves using the visual representation of a project and its phases to calculate the maximum time in which projects can be completed, given overall deadlines. CPM can help you to identify points at which time segments can be moved around and time overruns can be absorbed without missing a ﬁnal deadline. In CPM, concurrent activities are also called ‘‘parallel’’ tasks, and those activities that cannot begin until a previous activity has been completed are called ‘‘dependent’’ activities.

By mapping out the parallel and dependent activities in a model of the project, you can identify a pattern for how the job could progress. You can discover avenues for parallel activities that could save signiﬁcant time throughout the project by identifying workﬂow with the use of CPM. The process of developing CPM often begins by organizing phases and developing a schedule using the Gantt chart. *Thomsett M. C. (2002).The Little Black Book of Project Management.*

Question 3.Identify an assumption that a project manager should bear in mind when executing project documentation

Assumption refers to events, conditions or decisions outside the control of the project that are necessary for the success of the project.

External factors largely outside the control of project management, but important to the success of the project, should be stated in the form of assumptions, e.g. qualified volunteers available in sufficient numbers. In most instances, it would still be necessary to add the reasons which lead the planner to believe that the assumption will materialize. Why state assumptions? Why call attention to uncertainties inherent in the project? Primarily because project may stand or fall on the basis of such external factors. The planner can reduce the uncertainty in which the project will operate (and establish the bounds of managerial responsibility) by specifying the situations which must be ‘taken as given’ if the project is to achieve its objectives, but over which the participants (donor, government) have little or no control. Furthermore, stating such assumptions doesn’t imply that the project’s design is effective, only that the designer is being realistic. A single project is only one of many forces at play, and usually a relatively small one at that uncertainties about at every level of the project: the project components are by themselves unlikely to bring about progress from each design level to the next. These factors are necessary but only with the addition of the assumptions are the conditions established which are both necessary and sufficient for progress to the next level, for instance, the project may be intended to complement a programme of the government, of another UN agency, or of a bilateral donor or other donor. The very fact of stating such expectations concerning ‘third parties’ will start the project off on a sound and more realistic foundation. The assumptions identified in the project document should be:

**Well founded**: After stating each assumption, the planner may wish to add why the assumption has a good chance of materializing, e.g. legislation to reduce import duty on raw material for handloom industry by 25% will pass by 1 January. The Minister of Commerce, Minister of Labour have announced their support, the trade union has made an official representation, and a parliamentary drafting committee has been established. This suggests that some checking is often required before an assumption can be stated. For example, high chronic underemployment in an area where a rural labour intensive road project is planned does not necessarily mean that sufficient manpower will always be available; it could turn out that key project phases requiring peak manpower levels coincide with the harvesting or marriage season.

**Precise**: The assumptions should be stated in operational terms rather than nebulous hopes. Thus: not “Researchers will have access to all necessary data” but “The project’s data cell will provide the necessary statistical data by 1 January.” Stating assumptions in this manner may also serve to alert the project’s management to opportunities that may arise to make recommendations or exert influence, when appropriate, in order to increase the probability of an assumption materializing.

**Highly probable**: This point is critical. A project based on a set of assumptions which are unlikely to materialize is in trouble before it starts. Obviously some assumptions may be more important than others, ranging from the highly desirable to the absolutely indispensable. It is quite unlikely that a project which is based on several essential assumptions, each of which has only a limited chance of being realized, will be successful.

Note: under assumptions do not list

(i) prior obligations and pre requisites or

(ii) inputs to be provided by one of the partners to the project; these are not things over which the partners to the project have no control. It should never be assumed that the target group wants the project. Reasonable efforts should always be made to confirm this beforehand. This is not to suggest that the target group is bound to accept the eventual recommendations or findings of the project, but merely that the target group or their spokesmen or people’s elected representatives agree that the project should take place.

If such an assumption were made and turned out to be untrue, the potential contribution of the project would likely be nil.

(i). Assumptions (Immediate objective to development objective) What events, conditions or decisions outside the control of the project are necessary so that the achievement of the immediate objective will contribute to the attainment of the development objective?

(ii). Assumptions (outputs to immediate objective) List the assumptions necessary so that the immediate objective will be achieved once the outputs have been produced.

(iii). Assumptions (activities to outputs) List the assumptions, in addition to the activities listed which are necessary for the production of the outputs.

(iv). Assumptions (inputs to activities) List the assumptions necessary in order for the activities to be undertaken once the inputs are available.

Once the assumptions have been listed, verify that:

(i) Planned performance, at each level, together with the assumptions, create the necessary and sufficient conditions for progress to the next level;

(ii) Each assumption has a strong probability of materializing;

(iii) Whenever possible, assumptions are stated in operational terms so that project management can recommend or inspire action by others to increase the probability of an assumption materializing.

Question 4.When designing a project proposal, why is it important to formulate a project rationale?

The project rationale is often synonymous with the ‘[project justification](https://proposalsforngos.com/proposals/proposal-terminology/what-is-the-project-justification/),’ ‘problem statement,’ or ‘project background’. It is an argument in favor of implementing the proposed project which gives a detailed explanation of why the project is required. It is is an argument that lays out the reasons for implementing the proposed project. In other words, it describes the issues and problems the community faces and how the organization and the proposed project will address these issues with the donor’s help. This section of the proposal is crucial because it is the place where you will convince the funder that it is absolutely necessary to get the grant for implementing your project.

Below are the importance of formulating a project rationale;

**It states the problem as clearly and precisely as possible.**

**It** [**reflects the donor goals and guidelines.**](https://proposalsforngos.com/proposals/is-it-important-to-know-and-understand-the-donor-before-writing-a-proposal/)

**It summarizes relevant background information about the region, community and resources available.**

**It includes specific information regarding the focus area and beneficiaries, including input from the community.**

**It refers to research data, live examples, past projects, quotes and media articles to build a case for support.**

**It explains the organizational strength and capacity in addressing this problem and achieving long-term impact**.

Question 5.Explain any five good practices in project design

There are six good practices in any design process of a development intervention. They are critical during formulation, start-up and when any revision of the project is undertaken, such as during annual and mid-term reviews and these include the following;

**Involve all relevant stakeholders in participatory processes of project design.**

**Undertake a thorough situation analysis**, together with primary stakeholders, to learn as much as possible about the project context as a basis for designing a project strategy and implementation processes that are relevant.

**Develop a logical and feasible project strategy** that clearly expresses what will be achieved (goal and purposes) and how it will be achieved (outputs and activities).

**Agree and focus on cross-cutting issues** of poverty, gender and participation.

**Plan for long-term capacity development and sustainability** to ensure that the project contributes to the empowerment and self-reliance of local people and institutions.

**Build in opportunities and activities** that support learning and enable adaptation of the project strategy during implementation.

Question 6. Is it important to involve stakeholders in project implementation, explain your answer?

Whether internal or external, all of the projects that you manage have stakeholders. One of the main reasons projects fail is because the deliverables were not what the customer wanted or they did not meet the customer’s needs. To ensure project success, it helps that you know all of the key stakeholders on your project, how they prefer to communicate, what their needs are, and what the acceptable end results are.

Engaging stakeholders during—and especially at the beginning of—your project will help reduce and uncover risks and increase their “buy-in.” When stakeholders are adequately engaged, their influence spreads far and wide. Some of the ways stakeholders are important to a project are as follows.

**Providing Expertise**

Stakeholders are a wealth of knowledge about current processes, historical information, and industry insight. Many times these team members will have been at the company or on the project longer than the project manager or project team. It’s important to involve all key stakeholders when gathering and documenting requirements to avoid missing major deliverables of the project. Project managers, or others who are in charge of deliverables, may not be experts on every project. Key stakeholders can provide requirements or constraints based on information from their industry that will be important to have when understanding project constraints and risks.

**Reducing and Uncovering Risk**

The more you engage and involve stakeholders, the more you will reduce and uncover risks on your project. When discussing initial requirements, project needs, and constraints, stakeholders may bring up issues or concerns about meeting those things. Uncovering risks and then discussing a plan to mitigate them before issues arise will dramatically increase the success of your project. Involving knowledgeable stakeholders during this process will help.

**Increasing Project Success**

By gathering and reviewing project requirements with stakeholders, you will get their “buy-in,” which will in turn help increase project success. If you can’t meet stakeholders’ needs, due to conflicting needs or priorities, set expectations early in the project life cycle. This will help you manage the relationship throughout the project instead of there being surprises at the end. Stakeholders should always be aware of the project scope, key milestones, and when they will be expected to review any deliverables prior to final acceptance.

**Granting Project Acceptance**

The more regularly you engage and involve stakeholders from the start, the more likely you will have a positive project conclusion. By the end of the project, the team members should have already been aware of delivery expectations, risks, and how to mitigate the risks. They also should have reviewed draft deliverables along the way. This process should help avoid any surprises at the end of your project. The final acceptance is just their final stamp of approval during the project closure phase.

Make sure that you consider all key stakeholders as a part of your project team. They all will bring value and expertise to help ensure your project is a success! *Schoenhard, L. (2016). 4 Ways Stakeholders are Important to a Project.*

Question 7.The local community where a project is to take place or taking place is a very important ingredient when it comes to decision making on project implementation. Do you agree with this statement? Backed up by relevant examples, explain your answer.

Yes, I agree with the statement.

**Your opinion is important**

Decision makers genuinely want to hear your ideas and feedback. Community engagement is a vital part of many projects and the benefits of it are well documented, such as better outcomes for all stakeholders, community ownership and lower project costs. Effective community engagement is about recognising that involving the public in a project is no longer about information dissemination and telling the people what is being done, but is a two-way information sharing tool. Regardless of your qualifications, everyone knows what they like and dislike, has an opinion about what needs to be done and where priorities should lay.

**More perspectives**

Community engagement is often heavily one-sided, and engagement projects can be inundated with input only from those community members who have a strong opinion (and more often it is a negative opinion about a project). Without other perspectives being aired, decision makers might not make the best decision for the community as a whole simply because of a minority of loud voices (squeaky wheel gets the grease). If your opinion differs to the more popular opinions, decision makers want to hear from you so they get a balanced understanding of the community's views. Additional perspectives expand options and enhance the value of the ultimate decision. The more views gathered in the process of making a decision, the more likely the final product will meet the most needs and address the most concerns possible. If you fear repercussions of going against a vocal group, engagement can often be done anonymously.

**New information**

Decision makers recognise that the community that uses the spaces that it's planning for have an intimate and unique relationship with the area that they themselves often do not have. Because of this knowledge, community members can provide new information on a project that has yet to be considered. Public involvement brings more information to the decision, including scientific or technical knowledge, knowledge about the context where decisions are implemented, history and personalities. More information can make the difference between a good and poor decision.

**Community benefit / ownership**

When the community is involved in a project, they have ownership of it and the decision making process, which is key to a successful project outcome, even if not all individuals necessarily agree with the outcome.

**It feels good**

When a project is finalized and you can see the fruits of your labour, it feels good knowing that you were involved in something that benefits the community.

**A numbers game**

For public agencies with political leaders, the total number of people engaged is important. Engaging higher numbers gives the elected representatives confidence in their decision. *Connell, C.(2015). Six reasons why participation is important [benefits of community engagement]*

**Reference**

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