

Assumptions

What is it?

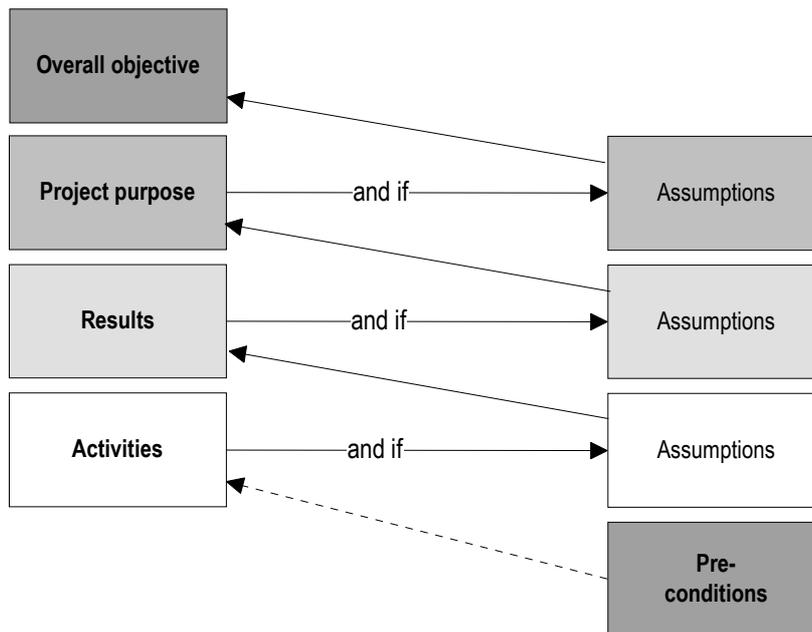
Assumptions are external factors for which the intervention is not responsible, but that are very important for the realisation of the results, the project purpose and the overall objective. They are outside direct intervention control, but vital for achieving a successful implementation. In the Logical Framework, assumptions feature in the fourth column of this matrix.

For example in the demonstration case, 'enough labour to harvest the rice production' is an external factor, which decisively determines whether results will sustainably contribute to the project purpose. The assumption is that enough labour capacity is available to harvest the rice production. If - without additional measures - it is unlikely that men and women make sufficient effort to harvest the higher yields, the assumption is considered a 'killer' assumption.

Killer assumptions make a successful implementation of an intervention impossible. In the case of a killer assumption the concerned part of the project design must be reviewed. For instance, the government may be required to launch an 'awareness programme for division of labour'.

The actual launching of such a programme may be put as a precondition. Preconditions are external factors that have to be met before the start of the project. They are placed in the lowest cell of the 4th column.

In the logical framework, relationships between the external factors and the intervention logic are presented as follows:



This scheme reads as follows:

- if the preconditions are complied with, then the activities can be started;
- if the activities are realised, and if the assumptions at the activity level have come true, then the results will be realised;
- if the results are realised, and if the assumptions at the result level have come true, then the project purpose will be realised;
- if the project purpose is realised, and if the assumptions at the project purpose level have come true, then the overall objective will have significantly been contributed to.

What can you do with it?

Basic (sub-) questions

- Identify the limitations and assumptions for project intervention

Results

- Gives a clear description of assumptions that can influence the succes of a project.

How to use it?

Process

Clarification of important aspects of the assumptions

<i>Why introduce assumptions?</i>	The intervention logic never covers the whole reality concerned. External factors often have an important influence on the success of the intervention, and should therefore be identified and taken into account.
<i>What is the importance of assumptions?</i>	Assumptions influence or even determine the realisation of results, project purpose and overall objective. Already in the planning phase, these external factors should be known and it should be assessed whether they are likely to become true.
<i>How to identify the assumptions?</i>	Some of the 'objectives' included in the diagram of objectives may be assumptions. Other assumptions may be identified by experts or other parties involved.
<i>When do external factors become assumptions?</i>	External factors should be checked on their importance regarding the success of the intervention. If of (vital) importance, and if impossible to include in the intervention, then factors should be kept as assumptions.
<i>What to do if assumptions that are important for project success are unlikely to be realised (killer assumptions)?</i>	Cancel or reformulate the project, by adding certain results or by modifying the project purpose.
<i>How to formulate assumptions?</i>	Assumptions should be formulated as positive, reached states, so that they can be verified.
<i>At which level in the logical framework should assumptions be included?</i>	Assumptions link the different levels of the intervention logic. They should therefore be included at the appropriate level. The level at which an assumption is placed, depends upon whether the assumption contributes to the realisation of either the overall objective, the project purpose, or (one of) the results.
<i>What is a pre-condition?</i>	A pre-condition is an external factor that must be realised before activities of the intervention will be started.

Groundwork

The definition of the Logical Framework

Follow up

The definition of the indicators

Requirements and limitations

- Highlights the limits of control predictability and therefore responsibility by specifying key assumptions.
- Forces those involved to be explicit about the implications of carrying out planned activities, in terms of resources, assumptions and risks.
- Forces planners to think from the outset about how they will monitor and evaluate a project.

Example Demonstration case

Assumptions

Derived from the objective tree:

- Agricultural production on hills improved or at least stabilised
- Fewer people immigrate from neighbouring districts

Additional external factors are:

- Enough labour to harvest the rice production
- Access roads in good condition.
- Traders continue to supply inputs.
- Social relations permit farmers to organise themselves.

1. This assessment leads to one of the following three conclusions:
 - the external factor can be left out as it is almost 100 percent certain to be realised;
 - the external factor will be kept as an assumption or a precondition;
 - the intervention should be redesigned.
2. Develop tentative scenario's for assumptions that you monitor ('What do we do if...')
3. Check whether the intervention is logical and complete.

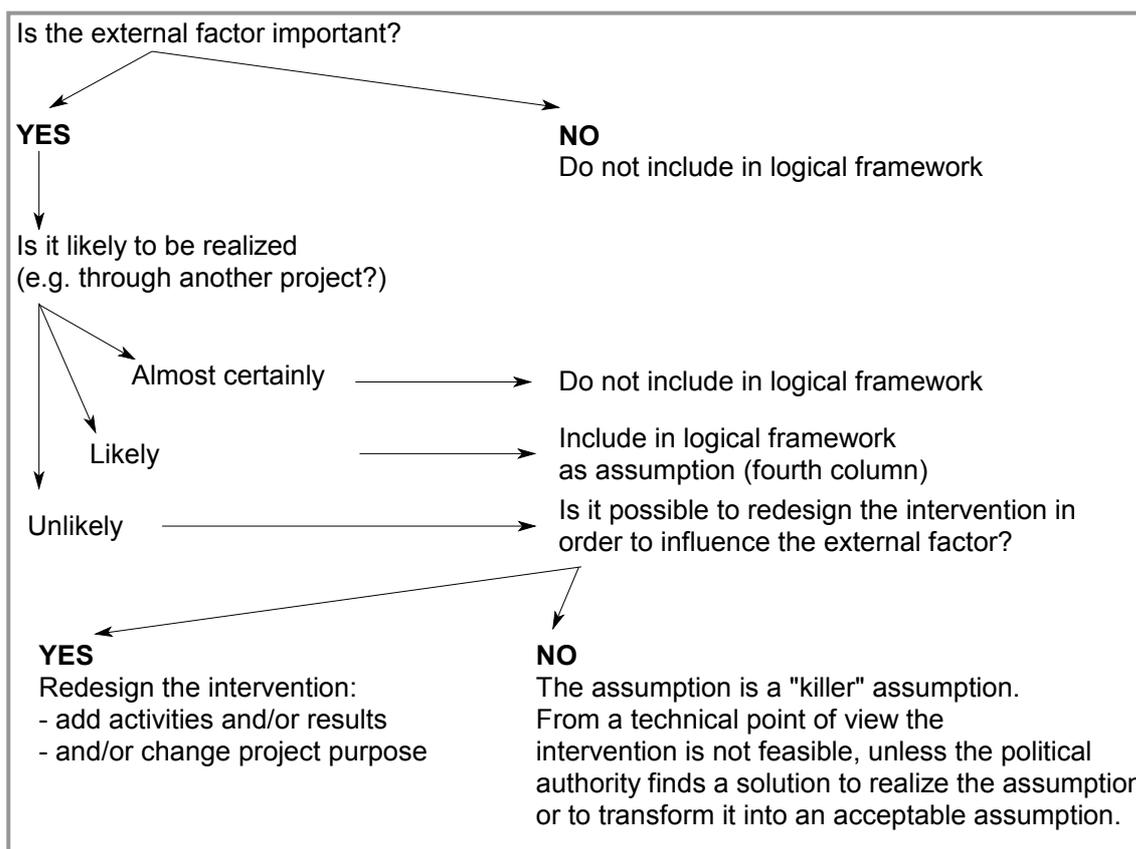
OO	<p>Reduced incidence of malnutrition</p> <p>Food situation improved</p>	<p>OVI</p> <p>Average 500 kg. white rice consumed per year per household (800 in total); same (indexed) price; in lowlands of Bogo; from 2004-2007</p>	<p>SoV</p> <p>Survey by Ministry of Agriculture in 2006</p>	<p><u>Assumptions</u></p>
PP	<p>Increased rice production</p>	<p>OVI</p> <p>Average husked rice production in kg. Increased from 2.000 to 4.000 kg. Per ha.; 240 small farmers (owning <2 ha.) in 7 villages; from 2003-2007; in lowlands of Bogo district Dubia</p>	<p>SoV</p> <p>Extension workers' reports</p>	<p>Agricultural production on hills improved or at least stabilised</p> <p>Fewer people immigrate from neighbouring districts</p>
R	<p>1. Fields sufficiently irrigated</p>	<p>2. More regular supply of inputs for rice production</p>	<p>3. Increased and applied knowledge on new agricultural practices</p>	<p>Enough labour to harvest the rice production</p>
OVI	<p>The quantity of irrigation water reaching the fields is in growing season 15.000 litres per ha. of 240 small farmers (owning <2 ha.) in 7 villages; from 2002-2003; the lowlands of Bogo</p>	<p>Seed and fertiliser available 1 month before planting season; 480 bags of 140 kg. urea and 480 bags of 50 kg. seed; 240 small farmers (owning <2 ha.) in 7 villages; from 2002-2005; in lowlands of Bogo</p>	<p>Average score of male and female farmers on test about the agricultural practices is 5 in 2002 and will be 9 in 2003</p>	
SoV	<p>V-notch measurements in the irrigation canal taken at random at different intervals during the growing season.</p>	<p>Annual survey at distribution points</p>	<p>Results tests done by extension workers and NGOs</p>	
A	<p>1.1 To organise local farmers associations</p> <p>1.2 To clear blocked canals and stop the leaking</p> <p>1.3 To heighten + strengthen dikes</p> <p>1.4 To train farmers in management and maintenance</p>	<p>2.1 To organise purchase of inputs</p> <p>2.2 To organise inputs distribution</p>	<p>3.1 To organise extension service</p> <p>3.2 To train extentionists</p> <p>3.3 To train farmers (male and female) in new agricultural practices</p>	<p>Access roads in good condition.</p> <p>Traders continue to supply inputs.</p> <p>Social relations permit farmers to organise themselves.</p>
<p>Preconditions:</p> <p>Government is willing to support the project by making the extension workers of the Agricultural Department available</p>				

Steps in defining assumptions and pre-conditions

After having described the intervention logic, the assumptions are developed. Assumptions answer the question: "Which external factors, that are not under the direct control of the project management, could significantly affect the realisation of the intervention?"

1. **Identify in the objective tree** those objectives that are not included in the intervention logic (first column), but that are important for the realisation of the stated objectives in the intervention logic.
2. **Identify other external factors**, not included in the objective tree, but important for the success of the intervention through institutional analysis tools like the Environmental scan and the Coverage matrix.
3. **Assess all external factors** upon their importance and chance to be realised, using the algorithm depicted below.

Algorithm to assess external factors



4. **Place these objectives as external factors at the appropriate level** (project purpose, results, activities).