CONSULTANT: UPDATE Guidelines for Writing Project Proposals.

BACKGROUND ON THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

The Convention on Wetlands, also known as the "Ramsar Convention" is an intergovernmental treaty, which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. It was the first of the modern global multilateral environmental agreements and remains the only one devoted to a specific critical ecosystem.

TASK DESCRIPTION

The Consultancy is to update the existing **Guidelines for Identifying, Preparing and Drafting a Project Proposal**. These Guidelines are for Parties to the Ramsar Convention to provide information on how to prepare and write project proposals.

Previously, the Guidelines were developed and published in 2001. The objective of the Consultancy will be to upgrade these specific Guidelines ((**Attached as Annex 1**) to reflect current norms and practices by undertaking the following tasks:

- Review and update the Guidelines with information that reflects current information on designing project proposals. These Guidelines should be informed by recommendations as drawn from a variety of key international/ environment development funding agencies.
- Ensure that the information is complete, relevant; i.e. should be specific and take into consideration that the context for projects would be for wetland conservation, restoration or wise use.
- Structure and formulate the Guidelines so that they are targeted and actionable for a novice grant writer.

PRODUCT
- A document of maximum 3,500 words and should include references and a bibliography.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Excellent writing and drafting skills
- Previous experience writing guidance documents and more specifically funding or project proposals
- Good knowledge of how to structure project proposals including guidance tools and frameworks.

Number of Working Days
2-5 days, October 2019

Work Location
Home based

Deadline for Applications:
20 September 2019

Applications
All interested applicants are encouraged to send their letter expressing interest, a sample of a previously written document/publication and a cost estimate to ramsar@ramsar.org by **20 September 2019, 12.00 Midnight CET.**

Language
English

ANNEX 1

Advice on developing project proposals
08/01/2001

Identifying, Preparing and Drafting a Project Proposal

Introduction

These guidelines will provide the reader with basic information on how ideally to identify, prepare and draft wetland conservation and wise use projects to be funded by international development agencies. Some concepts might not be familiar to all and not easy to grasp, and this document is therefore not a substitute for formal training where needed. These guidelines are not on project management, which might be the subject of another paper of the Ramsar Bureau in the future. Nevertheless, the use of the logical framework as a management tool is briefly mentioned to show the reader its importance for the whole project cycle: identification, preparation, drafting, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation.

The international development/environment agencies and funds recognise that many of the project ideas they receive are good and might qualify for funding, but the proposals often fail to demonstrate how they fit into the broader development context of their country or institution. Unfortunately, the agencies also complain that too often, the content and/or the form of the project proposals they are receiving are quite poor, and many projects have to be turned down for technical reasons.

These guidelines will therefore concentrate on three important elements of the project cycle: (I) setting a project in its broader context; (II) improving the content of a project; and (III) improving the format of a project proposal. It also explains the importance of the Logical Framework Analysis (IV) and its use (V). Finally, it gives a standard format for project (VI) and for workshop (VII).

I. Setting a project in its broader context

Project ideas should not come singly out of the blue, but rather should be one component of a much larger national programme or wetland management strategy for the country or region. Ideally, a project should strengthen an existing programme or strategy and not substitute for it. If there is no broader programme or strategy, the project should pioneer and try to define, initiate or even set up this programme.

But too often projects are seen as remedies for a lack of national, regional or even municipal programmes. When this is the case, the project might well be implemented but it is very doubtful that it is going to be sustainable. On the contrary, the activities will probably disappear at the end of the project and its results will evaporate with time.

Preparing a wetland national policy and action programme is therefore an important prerequisite to the long-term and lasting success of a project. This is not an easy exercise and requires a well-structured approach. We would like to refer the reader to Ramsar Handbook No. 2, "Developing and Implementing National Wetland Policies", for more information on this topic.

II. Improving the content of a project

The content of a project refers to the way the problems are identified and solutions are sought. The first quality of a project is to be realistic. The objective of a project should not be to solve all problems of a country or sector. There must be a serious priority-setting exercise and a decision as to what is the most important job to be done and who can realistically do it. The proposers also have to evaluate who has the technical capacity to manage an important project.

It does not look very serious for a small non-governmental organisation (NGO) or a weak public institution to submit a proposal for a technically complicated multi-million dollar or EURO project. Development agencies would immediately refuse it on the grounds that it is unrealistic and would most probably lead to serious management problems.

On the other hand, development agencies and funds do not like too small projects because the administrative burden of approving, monitoring and evaluating a small project is the same as for a large one.

It is therefore important to find the right balance and, perhaps, to unite with more experienced partners from national or international institutions or NGOs.

Ideally, there should be a link between the project and public sector policies. If there are no public policies regarding wetland management or river basin management, then one of the priority objectives of the project might be to help define and implement sound wetland management policies. Projects that are not supported by adequate public policies, or at least backed by public authorities, are often doomed to failure in the long term. A strong public commitment is always seen as a very positive factor by development agencies and funds. This is the reason why national Ramsar Administrative Authorities should be informed and, if possible, involved in Ramsar-related projects.

The other important quality of a project proposal is to present the objectives, expected outputs and activities needed to reach these outputs in a logical sequence. If your project is about preparing a management plan for a particular wetland, it does not make sense to start by defining the type of activities that will be allowed on the site before you have set the limits and border of that site. Neither does it make sense to start a participatory process after the project management team has decided on the priorities for action on the site. Informing local people about decisions already taken is not a participatory approach to site management.

Another common problem in many projects is the over-emphasis given to equipment. Equipment is often needed but, according to international development agencies, should not represent more than 20% of the overall budget. Many international development agencies are also reluctant to finance the building of infrastructure.

III. Improving the format of a project proposal

The format of a project document is equally important. The document is just an instrument to show that the project has been well and logically designed. If the document is poorly drafted or structured, it will be difficult for the development officer reviewing a proposal to understand the rationale behind the project. The way the document is presented also gives a good indication of the technical and management capacity of the proposers.

Here again, there is a logical sequence to follow. Proposers should not talk about project activities before mentioning the project objective or expected outputs.

The correct use of terminology is not easy and might lead to misunderstanding, but it is of utmost importance that the right terminology be employed to make sure that everyone is speaking the same language and understanding the same message. Terminology may differ slightly from one development agency to another. Below is a short reminder of the meaning of the most commonly used terms:

Intervention logic: is the basic strategy underlying the project and covers all the steps to be taken within the project in order to contribute to the Development Objective.

Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI): are measures designed to classify the Development and the Project Objectives as well as the Outputs of a project. Where possible, they should be quantifiable and of course verifiable. Examples of OVI might be x Km of mangroves replanted within three years; decrease by 10% of collected bird eggs within one year; x number of meetings with the local population to discuss wetland management within 4 years; x number of training sessions provided for public civil servants within two years.

Sources of verification: are the elements (results of survey, reports, photos, etc.) which give the data needed to check the outputs against the indicators of success (OVI). If the expected output is to restore coastal wetlands in a Ramsar site, the OVI could be 10 Km of mangroves replanted along a wetland shore. Aerial photos would be a good source of verification to demonstrate that the indicator has been reached.

Assumptions: are factors external to the project over which project managers have no control but which nevertheless have potentially great influence on the project output: civil war, travel restrictions, weather, etc.

Development Objective: is also sometimes called "Overall Objective" or "Development Goal". This is the broad purpose to which the project is meant to contribute. It should be consistent with existing National Conservation Strategies or any other officially declared Development Strategies.

Project Objectives: are also called "Project Purposes" or " Immediate Objectives". This is what the project itself is expected to achieve. Be careful not to confuse project purpose with results or activities. If you have too many project objectives, the project becomes confused and may be difficult to deliver.

Outputs: are the concrete results of the intervention (the project). Physical outputs are the ones you can actually touch or see: an infrastructure built, a management plan created, a successful consultation process implemented, a new legislation in place, a site delimitation put on map, an inventory finalised, etc. Non-physical results are more difficult to evaluate and therefore often under-evaluated but are nevertheless very important: positive changes in policies, better trained staff, new mentality or new approach to problems, more positive behaviours, politicians and local communities more aware of the importance of wetlands. A very common mistake is to start defining an output by a verb, making it an activity!

Activities: is the work needed to be carried out to achieve the outputs. There can be numerous activities but it is important to be very realistic and link activities with Resources and Cost. Each activity should be linked to an output. An activity always begins with a verb: buy, contract, implement, do, visit, distribute, train, etc.

IV. The Logical Framework Analysis as an analytical tool for preparing projects

The success of a project is closely related to a series of factors: good planning, adequate organisational capacity, competent and motivated project teams, parties involved fulfilling their commitments, etc. But the most important starting point is, no doubt, the condition that the project must address the real problem. In order to ensure that the real problem is identified and well understood, before a project idea is formulated into a full-blown proposal you should undertake a "logical framework analysis". The purpose of undertaking the LFA is to arrive at a clear and well-documented analysis of the context in which the proposed project will be operating. It should set out the problems the project will deal with and, based on that, offer a clear statement of the objectives, outputs and activities that the project will pursue. The LFA should thus be undertaken before the Project Document (proposal) is put together and is, indeed, the basis of being able to prepare a well-argued project.

The main steps in the LFA process are:

1. The Problem Tree

To analyse the situation, start by stating the main problem and then break it down into various aspects. This tree will help you to establish cause-effect relationships between the negative aspects of an existing situation. Ideally, it should be prepared at a meeting or workshop that includes people directly concerned by the situation who have a good understanding of the problem.

The approach should take into account technical, economic, cultural and social aspects of the problem when working out the causes that lead to the problem. This exercise is considered extremely important, as it will be your basis for choosing the project activities.

Example of a problem tree:

sgf-advice1.gif (5509 bytes)

2. The Objective Tree

Once you have completed the problem analysis, you can start looking for ways to fix the "causes" so as to eliminate the problem or reduce its size. This can be done by way of an objective tree which would essentially address the "problems" (causes and effects) by converting them into "positive achievements" (ends and means), the "end" being the desired state at the completion of the project.

Example of an objective tree:

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3. Strategy

Once you have finalised the objective tree, you should decide on a strategy and articulate it into an achievable set of actions on how to get to that desired state at the end of the project. You must decide upon which of the means in the objective tree you would address with the project. Each actor should do what he or she is best at and has comparative advantages for. A fisheries department is not likely to be very good at promoting economic instruments; the finance, economic or planning ministry should be approached for this kind of activity. Alternatively, a special economic unit could be created within the fisheries ministry.

The process of making choices on what to actually do should be carried out in a very methodical way, giving due consideration to the hierarchy of objectives and to the end/means relationship in the objective tree. You should take into account the important factors such as: your institution's specific expertise, donor interest, likelihood of success, importance of assumptions, and budget available. During the course of the project design, it might well be identified that some of the other problems in the "problem tree" would be better addressed by other projects, undertaken either by your institution or another one (hence the importance of co-ordination amongst donors and field actors).

Strategy is not only important at the project design stage. It also is an important tool at the implementation stage and should not be seen as a rigid instrument. During the course of its implementation, the project will have to face unexpected situations and the strategy might have to be adapted to these new situations. Good project monitoring will give the project manager feedback on the efficiency and relevance of the strategic planning.

4. Planning

Planning means organise according to a plan. A plan is an elaborated project, comprising a logical sequence of operations in order to attain a clearly stated objective.

When the situation has been analysed, the next step is to plan the intervention. The planning phase is facilitated by setting up a logical framework ("logframe") in the form of a matrix showing four vertical columns and four horizontal ones. This matrix is concise, easy to use and to apply in reports.

If carefully done, this important exercise will save project managers a lot of time in the implementation phase. It will greatly facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the project. It also gives a clear view of the overall process taking place. Needless to say, it really is an essential tool in project planning and management.

Logical Framework Analysis (example)

LOGFRAME	(1) Intervention logic	(2) Objectively Verifiable Indicators	(3) Sources of verification	(4) Assumptions
(5) Development Objective	Improved wetland management to provide useful services to the community	Existence of a management plan, implementation of participatory approaches	Ramsar Convention Bureau, independent experts	
(6) Project Objectives	1. Sustainable fish stock 2. Good variety of plants	Number, size and variety of fishes and plants increase by x %	Independent reports	Political support from government authorities
(7) Outputs	1.1. Existing incentives for sustainable fishing	Number and type of legal measures taken	Population survey	Authorities and Government want to implement these measures
	1.2. Effluent pollution under control	Number of m3 of untreated sewage going into the river	Report by ministry for the environment and municipality	No cultural barriers
	1.3. Relevant and efficient legislation in place	Number and quality of laws and regulations	Report by IUCN Environmental Law Centre. Civil code and municipal laws	Participation of local parliament and legislative bodies

	2.1. Sustainable agriculture practices in place	Number and type of fertiliser used in the region. Variety of crops, surface eroded	Survey, independent reports	
	2.2. Sustainable ranching practices in place	Number and location of grazing fields. Animal density.	Aerial photos, independent reports, survey	
(8) Activities	1.1.1. set up of a fund to finance incentives, train civil servants on Market Based Intruments.	Means 120 man-months 3 cars	Costs (in SFr X 1000) 1200 60	Good relations with the local authorities; good participation by local population and feeling of project ownership
	1.2.1. survey sources of pollution 1.2.2. discuss with polluting company 1.2.3. plan subsidies for appropriate technology	4 offices fund for running costs	120 100 Total 1480	no armed conflicts in the region; free travel within the country
	1.3.1. contract environmental lawyer to advise government, 1.3.2. prepare relevant document for Parliament			Democratic government remains in place
	1.3.3. Train lawyers and field experts; prepare			

	briefing for parliamentarians			

V. How to use the Logical Framework Analysis beyond the project design stage

(This stage of expanding the LFA only applies to large projects)

Time schedule

Once the LFA has been completed, all activities set out in the logframe should be listed in the order that they will be implemented.

Implementation arrangements

As has been said above, the utility of the logical framework analysis is not restricted to project design or preparation. For very large projects (above EURO 1 million) with many activities, the logical framework may be used as a management tool, assigning responsibilities for each activity to project staff. The logical framework is therefore divided into several "sub-logframes", each of which describes components of the "master" logframe. The immediate objective of the "master" logframe becomes the development objective of the sub-logframe, etc.

This system is extremely useful to show coherence of components in a programme or project and to develop each component in detail, but it is not an easy exercise to execute and should be done by well trained and experienced project staff.

Programme		Project		Project Components
Development Objective				
Project Objectives	arrowtag.gif (92 bytes)	Development Objective		
Outputs	arrowtag.gif (92 bytes)	Project Objectives	arrowtag.gif (92 bytes)	Development Objective
Activities	arrowtag.gif (92 bytes)	Outputs	arrowtag.gif (92 bytes)	Project Objectives
		Activities	arrowtag.gif (92 bytes)	Outputs
				Activities

Monitoring and evaluation

To monitor the achievements or the evolution of a project means to follow some parameters or some activities on a regular basis

The logframe, whether "master" or "sub-logframe", is also very useful for monitoring and evaluating the achievements and progress of the project. The sub-logframes in particular will easily show the monitoring officer or evaluator what objective has not been met or what

activity has not been implemented. It will also be fast and easy to find out who was in charge of this activity and should report on the failure to implement it.

VI. Project proposal format

> The project proposals should reflect the conclusions of the LFA process. The level of detail and the size of the project document will of course depend on the size of the project itself. In other words, an expensive project will have to be much more elaborated than a simple seminar. The main headings of a project document set out below follow the general approach of the logframe structure.

Summary

A short executive summary is always useful for potential donors.

A. Introduction

Explain the environment in which the project will operate. It can include:

1. A short description of the objectives of the Ramsar Convention and the countries' commitment to promote wetlands conservation and wise use. Mention here the additional obligations for your country arising from the implementation of the Ramsar Convention.
2. A description of the overall environmental, social and economic situation in the country or region in question and the importance of wetlands as sources of environmental benefits and economic development. Mention the role of wetlands as a potential source of poverty alleviation.
3. A description of the host country's environmental strategy, specific plans, declared objectives, etc.
4. A mention of related or complementary technical assistance activities in the countries: national conservation strategies, etc.
5. A description of the institutional framework dealing with conservation activities, i.e. research and development, training, financing, regulating institutions, etc.
6. A short statement of what the project is designed to achieve.

B. Justification

Explain the reasons for undertaking the project, as well as for the choice of approach, including:

1. A description of the problem to be addressed.
2. A description of the expected end-of-project situation upon its successful completion.
3. Target beneficiaries: who will benefit from the results of the project and how?
4. The reasons for your institution or organisation's involvement.
5. A description of the implementing agency's support capacity.

C. Development objective and project objectives

Explain the long-term goal to which the project will contribute and list specific objectives that the project will achieve.

D. Project outputs and activities

Project outputs should describe the specific achievements that the project will seek to realise in order to attain the objectives. Project activities should describe the activities that will be carried out in order to produce the outputs listed. Projects should not have too many outputs but can have as many activities as are needed. If you want to achieve too many outputs, it is better to make several projects.

E. Inputs

  a. Government inputs: list all government/local counterpart/member inputs, including national staff, office space, equipment, travel or any other contributions in kind or in cash.
  b. Donor inputs: funding required for the project.

F. Assumptions/risks

This section should identify factors that are important for the success of the project, but lie outside its scope. Discuss here any significant risks that could arise during the course of project implementation and cause delay or prevent the achievement of outputs/objectives, for example: exceptional rainy season which impedes field activities; civil unrest; general strikes; serious change in the political situation; etc.

G. Prior obligations and prerequisites

Describe any actions or information required before the project can start its operation, eg; construction of a road; special training for local staff; legislation passed in parliament; Ramsar site officially designated; etc.

H. Implementation arrangements

Describe how the project will be implemented. This should clearly define roles and responsibilities of all actors, including those of the National Ramsar Committee.

I. Project reviews, reporting and evaluations

Describe which reports, technical and financial, should be prepared and with what periodicity. It also needs to be stated who is responsible for preparing which reports and for whom.

Describe the process to be applied with regard to project evaluation, internal as well as external.

J. Budget

The budget sheet should include three main types of items: staff time (local and international), equipment, and training (including meetings, formal and informal training, etc). It should also include financial resources for operational activities (telephone, printing, postage, office rent, field visit, travel, etc.). Normally, a 10 to 15 % charge on the overall budget is accepted.

An example of a budget sheet is included as an appendix to this paper.

Annexes

The nature of the annexes will depend upon the type and complexity of the project. All major proposals should however include the Problem Tree, Objectives Tree, and the Log Frame.

- Problem Tree, Objective Tree and the Logical Framework.
- A detailed workplan. The preliminary workplan attached to this document should be adapted and updated to the project requirements as soon as possible after the project is started.
- A schedule of project reviews, reporting and evaluations.
- Job descriptions/Terms of References for senior project staff.
- If relevant, a letter of support to the project by local authorities and/or from the Ramsar Bureau.

VII. Simplified format for workshops and seminars

> Project documentation for workshops and seminars generally does not require as much preparatory analysis and planning as does a large field project. The following simplified version of a project document may therefore be used for such projects.

Background and Justification

A short explanation of the situation the workshop or seminar is going to address, as well as the context in which this workshop/seminar is taking place, should be given under this heading. For example: standardisation of criteria for Ramsar site selection; standardisation of national reporting under the Ramsar Convention; wetland economic potential and wise use mechanisms; protection of birds; land pollution, etc.

The justification could be: preparation for the next COP; implementation of resolution X; exchange of experience; learning from other regional experience; etc.

1. The Project

   a. Project objective: should state the change or improvement that will result from holding the workshop. (Example: to provide Governments or members with assessed information on…, thereby facilitating their decision on the future development of …).
   b. Project Outputs: should clearly describe the expected outputs of the workshop that will make possible the attainment of the project objective. (Example: a report based on the inputs and deliberations of the workshop containing assessed information on…).
   c. Project activities: should describe in full the activities necessary for preparing and holding the workshop as well as post-workshop activities. A tentative deadline for each activity should be included.
   d. Project inputs: need for and role of speakers should be explained, as well as the role of consultants required to prepare papers.

2. Reporting, Evaluation and Follow-up

One person should be charged with reporting and, eventually, with collecting and publishing the proceedings of the workshop. A prompt evaluation of the relevance and effectiveness of the workshop/seminar should be carried out. The easiest way to do this is through a questionnaire passed to all participants at the end of the event. Once again, the level of detail of the evaluation depends on the importance, size and duration of the workshop/seminar.

If the objective of the workshop/seminar was to assign tasks to participants, someone should be nominated to follow up on the work to be done.

3. Budget

A budget for a workshop consists mainly of travel expenses (subsistence allowances and travel fares), organisation expenses (rent of meeting facilities, communication expenses, staff time, printing and publishing, postage, etc.). In some cases, there might be fees for invited speakers.