

HUMANITARIAN FUNDS



**How to Impress Your Donors with
this
Project Results Framework**

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Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a trend wherein most donor agencies use internationally agreed principles of results-based management to measure, manage and report results. International agencies rely on results-based planning while developing country strategies and projects, so as to make the development work more effective and sustainable. Adoption of results-based tools helps in developing clear linkages between multiple objectives in a project and how the activities assist in fulfilling the goals of the project.

While selecting NGO partners for implementing projects, most donor agencies look for organizations that can systematically gather and analyze data to assess the success or failure of the project. Measuring results is therefore essential for nonprofits, as it helps not only in improving the overall performance of the project, but also in making a strong case to the funding agency.

There are different tools that can be used for quantifying the project results and one such tool is the Results Framework. Developing a results framework and making it an integral part of the project lifecycle makes your project easy to implement, monitor and evaluate. The project results framework helps you share the necessary information (quantifiable and measurable results) to funders and donor organizations in a professional and efficient manner.

It is a well-acknowledged fact that results framework is an important aspect of development interventions, however, most NGOs face challenges in developing a results framework in practice. In this guide, we shall learn about the basics of developing a project results framework.

To help you ace in developing results frameworks, the guide has been divided into the following five sections:

- A. Introduction to Results Framework
- B. Key Elements of A Results Framework
- C. Importance of A Results Framework
- D. Steps for Developing A Results Framework
- E. Examples of Results Framework

A. Introduction to Results Framework

The concept of results-based management started way back in the early 90s when USAID introduced the concept of monitoring the programs through the use of Performance Monitoring Plans (PMP). The most important tool, central to the PMP was the use of Results Framework. World Bank has also been using the term “results framework” over the last decade to monitor the success of the project. Other organizations also use similar conceptual tools like the logical frameworks, logic models, results chains and results mapping, etc. to manage and record the results in an efficient and proper way.

The most remarkable international agreement to mainstream results-based planning was the establishment of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000), which established the Millennium Development Goals. Other landmark agreements that emphasize results-based management and the importance of achievement of goals in development work include The Monterrey Consensus (2002), The Rome Declaration on Harmonization (2003), The Paris Declaration (2005), The Hanoi Conference on Managing for Development Results (2007), The Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011).

A Results Framework is a tool to assist in measuring the results at different levels (Impact – long term, Outcomes – intermediate and Outputs – short term) from a particular project intervention usually laid out in a graphical or tabular manner.

The term “Results Framework” is used by several international agencies and some of the most common definitions are listed below:

World Bank	A Results Framework serves as a key tool in the development landscape, enabling practitioners to discuss and establish strategic development objectives and then link interventions to intermediate outcomes and results that directly relate to those objectives.
USAID	The Results Framework (RF) is a graphic representation of a strategy to achieve a specific objective that is grounded in cause-and-effect logic.
OECD	The program logic that explains how the development objective is to be achieved, including causal relationships and underlying assumptions.

In simple terms, a results framework is a tool that is used to assess the success or failure of a project by representing the intended changes at various levels. A Results Framework helps a person to understand the basic principle of how a particular project intends to achieve the desired objectives and goals. A simple results framework looks at the following:

- a. Inputs (resources/activities) required in achieving the project objectives.
- b. Ways of data collection/monitoring the project.
- c. Proper analysis of the data collected to assess the success/failure of the project.

B. Key Elements of a Results Framework

As the name indicates, the most important element in a Results Framework is the proper linkage of the results at all the three levels – Impact, Outcome, and Output. To further define how a results framework should be made, we should look at the key elements of a Results Framework individually.

Goal: It is a broad statement that defines what you plan to do on a project. It gives an idea to the reader of what problem your organization intends to address.

For Example:

- Ñ Improving the livelihood of tribal population of 5 villages in XYZ district using local resource-based approach.

Objective: These are detailed statements describing the ways through which you intend to achieve the goal.

For Example:

- Ñ To promote local community-based institutions by the formation of 5 Primary Collectors' Group to empower the tribal communities, in XYZ District by the end of the first quarter.
- Ñ To build capacities of 500 tribal families through 10 training sessions on the collection, grading and primary processing of identified products in the first year.

Results: Results refer to the output that comes out as a result of the completion of the activities/interventions. Results can be further classified into output, outcome, and impact.

- Ñ **Output:** These are the tangible results that will be delivered within a specified time frame of your project. Outputs are the targets that will be achieved during the life of the project.

For Example:

- 100 trees planted
- X no. of people trained
- Solar cook stoves installed

- Ñ **Outcome:** It refers to the effects or the changes that have been produced as a result of the completion of several activities in a project.

For Example:

- Improved water availability in 10 villages
- Reduced exposure to harmful gases

• **Impact:** These are the long-term positive or negative effects produced by a project intervention directly or indirectly. They are also the long-term results that are not achieved during the project duration but are achieved as a result of several activities.

For Example:

- Improved health of people in XYZ area
- Improvement in the quality of groundwater available in ABC area

Activity: These are the sequential steps necessary to achieve the results/outputs. It is important for you to write the activities in a sequential manner to achieve the desired results. Activities are expressed as a process and are written in the present tense.

For Example:

- Organizing training workshops
- Providing comprehensive sexuality education and information to young people with a disability in schools
- Community mobilization
- Organizing road shows

Indicator: They provide the basis for monitoring the project progress (completion of activities and the delivery of outputs) and evaluating the achievement of outcomes. Indicators specify how the achievement of project objectives will be measured and verified. It is important that the indicators are specific and measure the success of the objective in terms of Quantity, Quality, Time, Target Group, and Location.

For Example:

- Change in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions
- Number of people trained
- Number of plantation activities held
- Number of springs revived

Means of Verification: These specify the source of information used to measure or verify the indicators. MOVs help to test if the indicators can be verified or not. The MoVs should be cost-effective, easily accessible and should be formulated as a part of the project.

For Example:

- Reports
- Attendance sheets
- Photographs
- Survey sheets

External Factors (Assumptions): These are external factors that have the potential to influence the success of the project. For the project to be successful, it is important for the project team to assess the external factors that can influence the project in a positive or negative way. These can be climatic, political or economical factors.

For Example:

- Market prices for farmers' products remain stable or increase.
- Prices of agricultural inputs remain stable or decrease.

C. Importance of a Results Framework

Now that you have understood the basic concept of a Results Framework, you might want to know the importance of developing one; but before we talk about it, let us understand why measuring and managing results are important in development interventions.

Result measurement and its management are important as it helps in:

- Better communication
- Enhanced accountability
- Enabling an organization to use results information to understand what works and what does not.
- Creating stronger partnership between development partners
- Improving project implementation.
- Developing better proposals and case for support documents.

Results frameworks offer several advantages to development professionals, by offering a systematic approach to planning and project management. Let us take a look at some of the advantages that a Results Framework offers:

- 1. Enhances clarity with respect to the linkages between different interventions of the project:** Defining the cause-effect linkages between different inputs and activities, lays the foundation of a results framework. Thus, the development of a good results framework enhances the understanding of how and why the project activities are carried out and how they feed into achieving the final goal of the project. As the development of the framework requires multiple consultations with stakeholders and project staff, these discussions lead to the development of a better understanding of the project interventions and activities.
- 2. Developing sound monitoring and evaluation plans:** As the project results framework emphasizes on concrete outcomes/outputs, it helps in laying down a proper plan for monitoring and evaluating the project. The indicators, means of verification and other variables help in the assessment of the progress in achieving results, at the outputs, outcomes and impact levels. As the framework establishes how to measure the success of all the inputs, it serves as an excellent tool for evaluation. It clearly identifies suitable indicators to assess the results at various levels, thereby serving as an excellent tool for evaluating a project.

3. Graphical/tabular representation of the data is easy to understand:

A good results framework is easy to understand and gives the reader to get an insight of the project in a very systematic and logical way.

4. Eases the process of project planning: The process of designing a results framework helps the practitioners establish practical objectives and also offer a systematic approach to achieve the objectives.

5. Fosters coordination and ownership: A results framework provides an excellent opportunity for the project staff to work in collaboration with various teams and stakeholders. This inculcates a sense of cooperation and ownership amongst the project team.

6. Better communication: A results framework sets the tone for proper communication with donors and other stakeholders as it helps to illustrate what a project is meant to achieve and how to achieve it. Therefore, it helps in communicating about the resources, activities, and outcomes in a systematic manner.

7. Learning from experience: The systematic use of results frameworks allows practitioners to test the effectiveness of various interventions and see which approach yields the best results.

D. Steps for Developing a Results Framework

The following steps will guide you through the process of developing a results framework:

1. **Establish Strategic Objective (GOAL) for the problems to be addressed:** The strategic objective is central to any results framework. The strategic objective is the most ambitious result that your project intends to achieve during the course of the project.

While writing the strategic objective, remember the following:

- Use active verbs like create, identify, promote, enhance, increase, develop, etc.
 - Use clear wording to describe the strategic objective to avoid ambiguity and vagueness.
 - Emphasize the results of action
 - Make **SMART** objectives:
 - Specific: This means that the objectives should be clear and unambiguous, giving details of how and what you intend to achieve.
 - Measurable: This means that the objectives should be quantifiable so that one can see if they are being achieved or not. This can be done by assigning a numeric value to your objective by answering questions like: How many? How much? By when?
 - Achievable: This implies that the objective should be feasible, viable and within the control/capacity of the organization. While drafting the objective, the organization should keep in mind its own capacity, constraints and abilities to achieve the objective.
 - Realistic: This means that the objectives are realistic and can be attained within the available resources and time frame. While drafting the objectives, this must be ensured.
 - Time-bound: This states that a time-frame for completing a particular objective should be decided as it is quite crucial. Deciding the time-frame in advance helps in timely delivery of the outputs and outcomes without unnecessary delays.
2. **Identify the intermediate results (Outcome):** Once the strategic objective is identified, you will have to identify the set of lower level results that are necessary to achieve the higher level results. For identifying the intermediate results ask your team how will you achieve the desired results and accordingly suggest possible interventions. While identifying the

intermediate results, you may come up with several possible results but you will have to settle down for a few important intermediate results.

3. **Define immediate results (Outputs):** Define immediate results of the project activities that will help in achieving the intermediate results. These will be the lowest level of results in your results framework and the successful delivery of these results will help in fulfilling the higher level results.
4. **Define the activities for each output:** Identify all the activities that will be needed to achieve the output. There will be several activities which will be required to accomplish a single output.
5. **Establish the cause and effect logic:** Once you are through with defining all the three levels of results, start constructing the linkages between each one of them. You will have to logically see how the accomplishment of the lower level results will help in achieving the next higher level result. When establishing the linkage between the different levels of results, make sure that there are sufficient numbers of immediate and intermediate results to achieve the Strategic Objective.
6. **Identify critical assumptions:** Assumptions related to external factors that may impact the project results should be noted against each output and outcome. Identifying these assumptions will help in developing a contingency plan to reduce the associated risks.
7. **Assign indicators:** The outcomes and outputs will have to be translated into a set of measurable indicators; so that we can assess whether they are being achieved or not. You will have to assign multiple indicators and targets at each level to ensure result measurement at each level. While assigning the indicators, make sure that the required data elements are available.
8. **Complete the framework:** Review the framework and check that the results in the framework are measurable, feasible and practical. Also, look for logical linkages between the various result levels and how each lower level result helps in accomplishing the higher result.

Tips for developing a good results framework

- Invite key partners or stakeholders to results framework development sessions. Make the entire process consultative so as to include viewpoints of varied stakeholders.
- It is often helpful to have one person (preferably with experience in strategic planning and facilitation) to lead these sessions. This person should focus on drawing out the ideas of the group and translating them into the results framework.
- Before starting with the process you can consider the following few questions:
 - Why are you developing a results framework?
 - Which approach and process would you opt while developing the framework?
 - Who all will be involved in the process of developing the results framework?
 - What are the problems that your project intends to resolve?
 - When do you plan to develop the framework?
 - Who will lead the process of planning and developing the framework?

Answering these questions will help you developing a proper schedule to plan out the process for developing the results framework.

- Revise the framework as and when required, keep updating the results framework so that you can keep track of what is being achieved and what is not.
- Assumptions/risks that are not valid should be removed or changed as the project progresses.
- Select only a few numbers of strategic outcome/objectives and track them with a limited number of indicators.
- Do not over complicate the process by placing too much information in the framework.
- Provide proper training to the project staff both for developing and then analyzing the information in the framework.

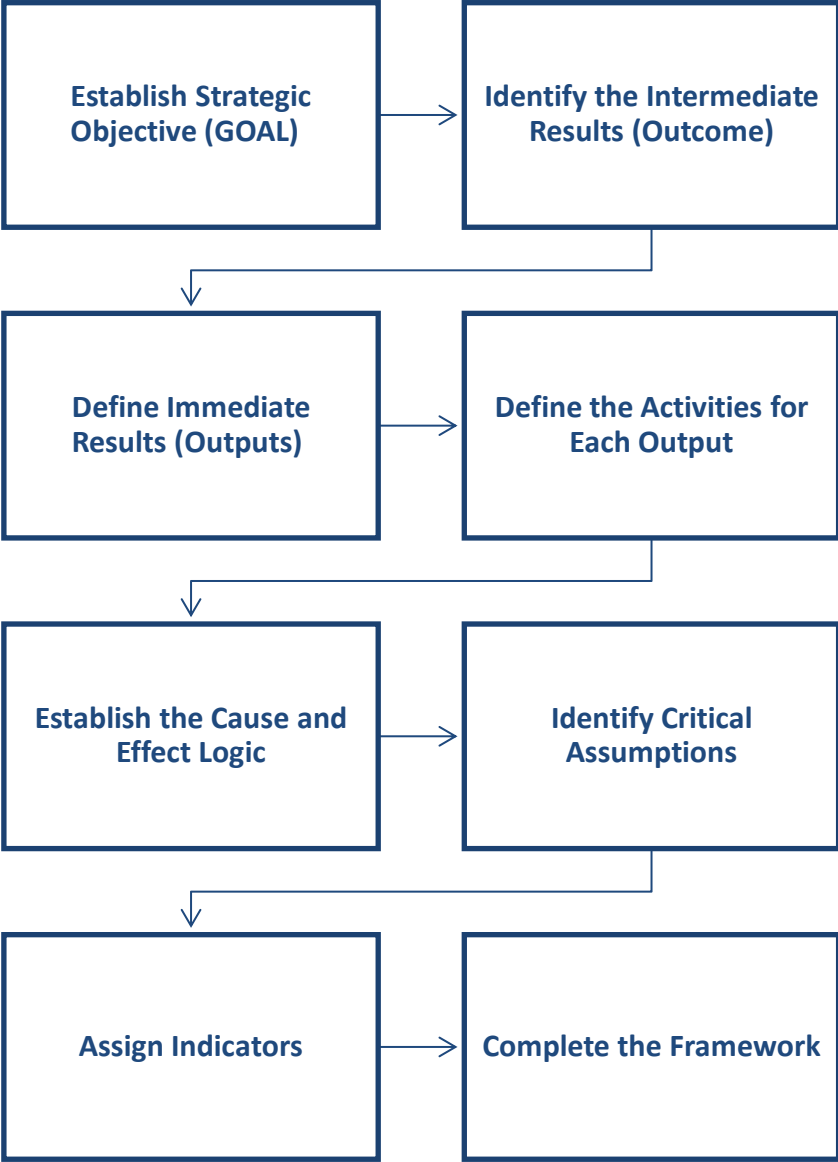


Figure: Steps for developing a results framework

E. Examples of Results Framework

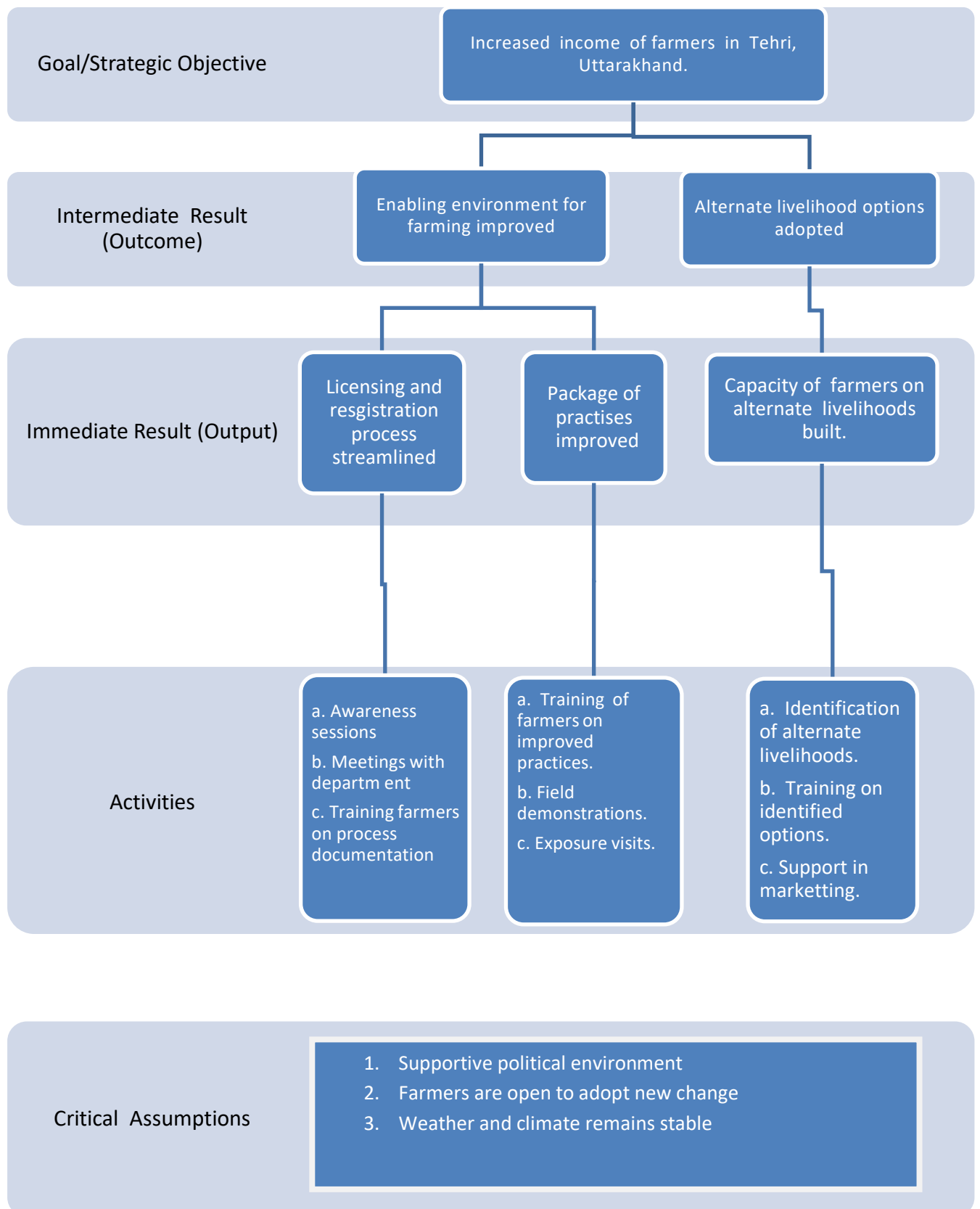
Example 1

Description	Indicators	MoV
<p>Strategic Objective</p> <p>Reduced poverty and improvement social welfare in XYZ Area</p>	<p>Increase in per capita income of the population.</p> <p>Poverty headcount declines by 30% in 2 years.</p> <p>Malnutrition (Under 5) declines to less than 20%.</p> <p>Increase in literacy rate</p>	<p>Government Reports</p> <p>Health Records</p> <p>School Reports</p>
<p>Intermediate Results (Outcome)</p> <p>IR1. Improved access to basic social welfare schemes and Programs (Education and Health)</p>	<p>Number of people who have enrolled under different govt. Schemes and programs.</p> <p>Percentage increase in the enrollment in primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>Percentage increase in primary completion rate.</p> <p>Improvement in Immunization rate.</p> <p>Improvement in health.</p>	<p>Govt. Records</p> <p>School Records</p> <p>Health Reports</p> <p>Immunization Cards</p>
<p>IR 2.</p> <p>Increased income and employment opportunities</p>	<p>Average annual increase of at least 10% in the existing income.</p> <p>Reduction in youth unemployment by 25%.</p>	<p>Bank Statement</p> <p>Expenses' Records</p> <p>Income Receipts</p>

<p>Immediate Results (Outputs)</p> <p>Output 1.1 Students enrolled in primary school</p>	<p>No. of children enrolled in primary</p> <p>No. of children who completed primary school</p>	<p>Student Registration Forms</p> <p>Report Cards</p> <p>School Attendance Sheets</p> <p>Teachers' Feedback</p>
<p>Output 1.2 People vaccinated for various diseases</p> <p>Awareness on health and sanitation improved.</p>	<p>No. of people vaccinated in various health camps</p> <p>No. of participants in health awareness sessions</p>	<p>Immunization Records</p> <p>Health Camp Photographs</p>
<p>Output 2.1 Rural Enterprise setup</p> <p>Output 2.2 Employability of youth improved</p>	<p>No. of enterprise setup</p> <p>No. of people engaged in rural enterprise</p> <p>No. of people trained</p>	<p>Registration Documents</p> <p>Certificates</p> <p>Training Certificates</p>
<p>Activities</p> <p>Output 1.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness sessions conducted • Meetings with government officials • Established linkages with ongoing projects and schemes • Stakeholder consultation • Meetings with school officials • Support in documentation <p>Output 1.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness sessions conducted • Meetings with government officials done • Established linkages with ongoing projects and schemes • Stakeholder consultation • Health camps organized 		

<p>Activities</p> <p>Output 2.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ñ Meetings with government department Ñ Mobilization through screening of movies shows and street plays Ñ Conduct awareness sessions on income generation and entrepreneurship Ñ Conduct comprehensive training on enterprise setup and development <p>Output 2.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ñ Mobilization through screening of movies shows and street plays Ñ Skill development training conducted 		
<p>Critical Assumption</p>		
<p>Government schemes and programs support similar interventions. Political stability. Condition of roads is well maintained. Rainfall and other critical weather conditions remain stable. Willingness of the local youth to participate and adopt changes.</p>		

Example 2



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