

SO, WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY PROJECT MANAGEMENT ?

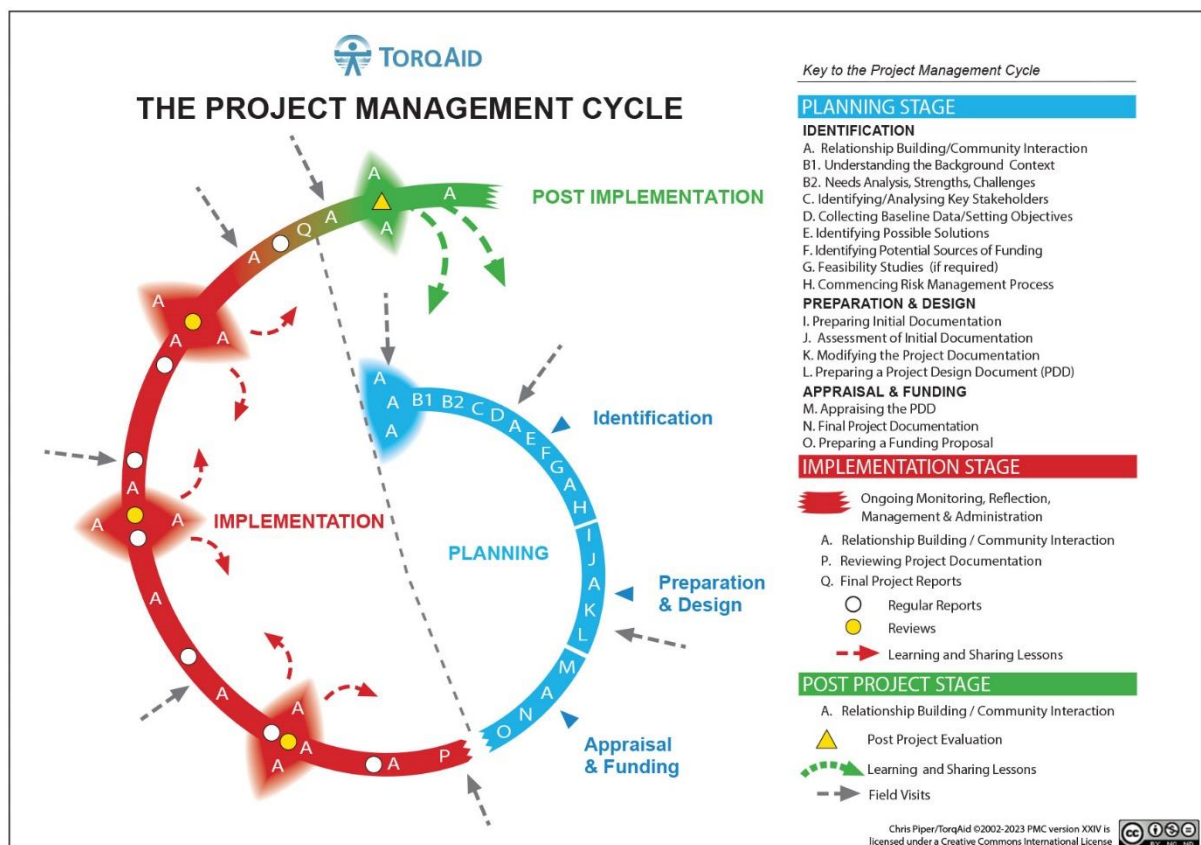


Overall

This document¹ briefly outlines the key aspects of what the author² understands as Participatory Project Management. Projects primarily involved *people*, and a genuine *participatory* approach to project management ideally ensures that this human dimension is not under-valued.

'If your intention is truly to help our people, then you must listen to them, respect them and treat them as equal partners, not as passive recipients of your aid'. Xanana Gusmao, the current Prime Minister of Timor Leste as quoted in Kirtsy Sword's 'A Woman of Independence', Macmillan, Sydney, 2003

Participatory Project Management is best expressed diagrammatically within the context of the Project Management Cycle (PMC) diagram³, which is illustrated below. This has three main stages, namely Planning; Implementation; and Post-Implementation



¹ Which can also be found at www.torgaid.com/what-is-ppm

² Chris Piper, an experienced Australian and Global Humanitarian and Development Practitioner, who has worked in Australia; the Asian-Pacific region; Southern & Eastern Africa; and Europe.

³ A link to this can be found at www.torgaid.com/resources

Key Project Management Competencies Offered

Ideally the Australian or Global Humanitarian or Development Practitioner should develop the following skills to carry out the following project management competencies. The competencies below relate to key components of the PMC:

Planning Stage

- The skills to develop and enhance good relationships with all key stakeholder groups.
- The ability to research and access the best possible understanding of the background context relating to the community; the situation on the ground; and the proposed intervention
- The willingness to visit the field, where possible and advisable, to gain first-hand knowledge of the situation there.
- The ability to identify the range of stakeholder groups to involve in any potential project, and possibly sensitively carry out some form of stakeholder analysis.
- The importance of identifying realistic, possible sources of funding, which could finance any proposed project initiatives.
- The ability to identify both the strengths and potential of the community in question; and also brainstorm and rank the key challenges facing key stakeholders groups⁴.
- The ability to seek out and access appropriate baseline data which will be used to measure key objectives
- The ability to dialogue with the community in question, and develop a series of complementary objectives (Goal/Purpose/Outputs) which relate to the proposed initiative
- The ability to work with stakeholders in identifying the key risks which may impact the proposed project; and to work through an appropriate risk management strategy designed to reduce as many of these as possible.
- The ability to first prepare some key project information, and then later go through a process of assessing and appraising this⁵
- The ability to develop a Project Design Document (PDD)⁶, this including the financial details as covered in this suggested PDD format
- The ability to use the PDD as the basis for preparing funding submissions or proposals for one or more donors.

⁴ This can be best achieved by using a 'tool-box' of appropriate participatory techniques, see www.torgaid.com/torgaid-toolkit for some examples of these, particularly the Ten seed Technique (TST) and the Seasonal Calendar.

⁵ The difference between assessment and appraisal, is that the former is normally carried out by the project management team in question; whilst the latter is usually offered to a separate team (but from within the same organisation), so that these people can cast 'a fresh eye' over the proposed initiative

⁶ See www.torgaid.com/torgaid-toolkit for the PPD template

Implementation Stage

- The ability to assess, and, if necessary, amend the original project documentation, before commencing project implementation.
- The ability to continually keep up good relationships with all key stakeholders, but particular those within the targeted group.
- The ability to effectively monitor and reflect on progress in the field, and make adjustments to outputs and activities as required.
- The ability to effectively manage and administer both projects and people. The skills of being able to motivate, lead and support staff members is crucial for project success.
- The ability to report on outputs on a regular basis, ideally these including financial statements.
- The ability to organise and manage reviews⁷ as required, these relating to progress of the project's purpose. Ideally reviews should be a participatory process, involving all key stakeholders.
- The ability to manage external visits to the field, these coming from a range of potential stakeholders.
- The ability to capture the key lessons learnt from reviews, and share them with interested parties.

Post-Implementation Stage

- The ability to keep up good relationships with key stakeholders, even after project completion.
- The ability to effectively organise an evaluation of the project, if and when this is required. The evaluation itself is the main means of measuring the project's outcomes (ie intended purpose and goal), as well as other details mentioned in the PDD⁸.
- The ability to recognise that crucial aspects of the evaluation relate to timing; involvement of key stakeholders; selection of the evaluation team, and particularly the team leader; and sufficient time to both access and absorb key background material.
- The ability to capture the key lessons learnt from evaluations, and to share them with interested parties.

Final Comments

In re-visiting the PMC diagram, it will be seen that Community Interaction/Relationship Building (A) is crucial throughout all three stages of the PMC. Indeed, it could be argued that effective project management is ultimately more of an art form, than a science.

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⁷ In humanitarian situations, reviews are sometimes referred to as 'Real-Time Evaluations = RTEs'

⁸ For example cross-cutting themes; standards and codes of conduct (PDD section 2.5) and effectiveness, sustainability and other project management criteria (PDD section 2.7)

