

## **D7710's Guide for Developing Sustainable Projects**

TRFs' definition for sustainability is the capacity for maintaining outcomes long-term to serve the ongoing needs of a community after grant funds have been expended. 1/. The key factor here is capacity.

Following are the steps for designing, monitoring and evaluating Rotary funded Global Grants.

### **Step I:**

Project Proposals originate from several sources. The usual sources are from Hosts around the world. The problems that need to be resolved are embedded in the minds of those who live with problems that exist within their community infrastructure. Hosts live with these problems every day. Having said this, however, we should not overlook project ideas from Rotarians who have traveled abroad and who may have established relationships with local community leaders. Establishing a Project Purpose, therefore, is the first priority in project design. This is the reason for funding, planning and material support necessary to resolve a given problem. The statement of purpose is brief and concise. It also needs to be clear to those not directly affiliated with the project design.

The justification or rationale for the project may vary depending on the complexity of the project. It is a judgment call by those who will manage the project as to how to frame the project. Nevertheless there needs to be sufficient detail to enable the project manager to determine the parameters of the activity when ultimately evaluating the project.

The project application is initially prepared by the Host. Changes may be made following review by the international partner in collaboration with the Host. The justification of the project needs to address the question, "What does the project aspire to achieve?" It also begs the question as to what is needed in the way of funding and material support for the project to succeed.

The project purpose also needs to fit the values and culture of the host community and its capability to maintain the project in the future.

### **Step II**

At this stage of design it is necessary to establish "End of project Indicators". These are objectively verifiable conditions expected at the end of the project that will signal the successful completion of the project as intended by the Host and International Partner. These are the indicators that will create a sustainable framework on which to judge the project's success. The reason for selecting these indicators at the outset of project design is to ensure that we are evaluating the project on criteria that specifically relate to the project purpose. Otherwise we may be evaluating project criteria for an activity that has deviated from its intended course, but continues to resemble the original purpose.

These indicators are related to outputs generated by the project. They are the long-term results of specific outputs. For example, water systems that will continue to provide potable water on demand from wells that are adequately maintained. Another example is an education/literacy project that needs to have adequate training capability in the future for its teachers to continue to provide instruction that the project envisioned. Health projects need to be designed to provide on-going care long after the project funds are expended. For projects that provide medical or other equipment one needs to look at the capacity of the host to continue to properly utilize and maintain the equipment into the future.

Outputs such as books, computers, water pumps, and other material aids are not the outputs that necessarily spell success for a project. However, they are important building blocks that are necessary to achieve the project purpose. Their mere presence is not sustainability.

An important element in any design are the assumptions that project managers make in creating the design. They need to be identified and clearly stated. These will also be an integral part of the evaluation process as they will demonstrate whether the design may have been based on tentative criteria that need to be better understood.

### **Step III**

Implementation by the international partner including the securing of funds, materials and supplies required to achieve the expected results of the project. Funding by partners, including the host, is basic to the project's success. While a majority of funding will come from international partners, it is important that the host provide a share of the cost. Commitment to a project is often related to one's "skin in the game". Implementation by the Host expected in the application includes requirements such as approvals by local jurisdictions for the use of facilities, i.e. easements for water pipes and sanitary locations. If international delivery of equipment and supplies are called for, arrangements for clearing customs is essential. Arrangements need to be made for the maintenance of equipment that may be called for in the project design. In addition, responsibility for training needs to be spelled out clearly to ensure that the project purpose will be secured.

In the event that hands-on requirements are part of the project, the Host will need to provide evidence that local skilled personnel are available and willing to complete the job. The role of the Host Rotary club needs to be spelled out as well.

### **Step IV**

The final phase of project monitoring is evaluation. One needs to take note of the end of project indicators (Phase II) and examine the evidence that has been produced. Hopefully the results will show that we have achieved our project purpose. There will be times, however, when this result will not be achieved as expected, but the exercise should tell us why we missed our goal. When working in cultures that do not parallel ours, miscues will sometimes occur.

It is beneficial when project managers who have been involved with the design of a project are able to do the evaluation as well. There may be some controversy regarding a possible conflict of interest. International Agencies have demonstrated that project managers have done a credible job of evaluation on their "own projects". Moreover, over the long term it may not be possible to utilize "others" to follow -up on the evaluation of every global grant. It may be prudent, therefore, to send teams to evaluate a few of the grants. But, this is a funding problem that may have to be resolved by TRF.

The Evaluation process is largely dependent on the clarity of the design in identifying End of Project Conditions. If these conditions are clear and concise the evaluation process is enabled.

1/. This definition is taken from Abt SRBI's report to TRF