

***Module 6.***

## ***AR4D Project Activity Planning***

***A complement to Module 4: Impact-Oriented Project Planning***

***A Distance-Learning Module***

**NOTE:**

***Samples of this module are presented below: Unit 1, Unit 2, Evaluation and Reference***

# AR4D Project Activity Planning

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## Preface

The *AR4D Project Activity Planning* learning module was developed to provide the PNG NARS organizations with the opportunity to further work on the planning of activities linked to the priority projects that were identified during the program formulation process with a view to develop the prerequisites required to engage in the M&E system development and implementation processes.

The PNG NARS organizations are expected to undertake project activity planning following the step-by-step guidance provided in ARDSF Module 4: ‘Impact-Oriented Project Planning’ and in this learning module, to promote self-learning for individuals who, by working with the thematic area/program and project team members, will continue developing the priority projects to build the AR4D project portfolios of their organizations.

The overall purpose of the *Project Activity Planning* learning module is to enhance the capacity development and application of learning for NARS organizations’ project leaders and technical project staff to develop logframes, work plans and budgets for project activities. As a short-term outcome it is expected, that the project leaders and technical project staff develop realistic and well-designed activity proposals that are aligned with the design of the corresponding project. In the medium term it is expected that NARS organizations will implement AR4D projects that contribute to achieving the expected development outcomes of their organization.

To strengthen the learning and application of knowledge and skills related to project activity planning, this module will (i) review terminologies to foster participants’ understanding of definitions used in the cascading logic and their relationship; (ii) describe the model of the cascading logic and its relationship to planning ; (iii) provide further guidance on the approach how to develop an AR4D project activity work plan to make sure the right level and detail of activities/work actions are used; and (iv) provide further guidance on what AR4D project activities may be included in a proposal, ranging from different types of scientific research activities to non-scientific research activities, such as development or extension activities, L&CB activities, policy development activities or networking activities.

ARDSF expects the project leaders and technical project staff of PNG NARS organizations to respond positively to the purpose of this *AR4D Project Activity Planning* learning module, by completing the exercises in interdisciplinary teams in preparation for face-to-face events.

ARDSF plans to carry out Review Events, during which the participants from the NARS organizations will have the opportunity to present and discuss the results of their AR4D Project Activity Planning based on the guidance provided in the learning module. This event will also include guidance on developing quality indicators and discuss the development of an action plan for NARS organizations to participate in a learning workshop on developing NARS organizations M&E systems. In preparation for this M&E learning workshop it is anticipated that the logframes at strategic, program, project and activity level will be re-visited to ensure that quality indicators at all levels have been identified. Developing quality indicators is a prerequisite to develop and implementing realistic and meaningful M&E systems to manage programs, projects and activities in the NARS organizations.

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# Unit 1. The Cascading Logic

## Instructions for Participants from NARS Organizations

### KEY ISSUE

NARS organizations may need to ascertain the consistency of their use of terms and definitions in describing the design elements of the hierarchy of objectives and describing the four decision making levels in their planning documentation. As much as possible, the planning documentation for all decision making levels should adhere to the same use of terms.

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this introductory unit, you will be able to:

- define specific terms related to the model of the cascading logic with accuracy;
- realize how the different decision making levels in a NARS organization are linked;
- explain how the objectives at one decision making level of a NARS organization contribute to the achievement of the objectives at the next higher level.

### PROCEDURE

The Project Team responsible for working on the Priority Project under the Thematic Area selected during the workshop on “Impact-Oriented Project Planning” (which took place at Ela Beach Hotel) will continue working and refining the same project throughout this Distance-Learning Module and the Face-to-Face Event. In this exercise the Team members will work individually (step 1) and in a group (step 2 and step 3).

### EXPECTED RESULTS

Participants demonstrated self-confidence in discussing openly and competently the issues related to a cascading logic for NARS organizations, and were able to use the terminology appropriately .



## Exercise 1. Getting acquainted with the concept of the Cascading Logic and its Terminology

(individual and group work)

### Step 1. Individual work (plan 2 hours to undertake this phase)

1. Read handout 1.2 on “The Cascading Logic”. While you carry out this exercise, you are advised to read and take notes not only of concept and terminology in handout 1.2, but also in the “Glossary of Key Terms” presented at the beginning of this learning module.
2. Focus on Figure 1 (handout 1.2) which shows a generic version of a cascading logic for a hypothetical agricultural research and development system.
3. Respond in your own words to the questions in the boxes below. Use the worksheet (handout 1.3) to record your responses to aid your discussions with your colleagues during the group work phase. *Remember your project team will share the results of this exercise during the face-to-face event which ARDSF is planning for you soon.*

***A. The cascading logic is a model that illustrates how the components of a system are combined sequentially, to form a cascade like arrangement. ARDSF is encouraging the use of this cascading logic model.***

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Explain the concept of the cascading logic using separate hierarchies of objectives.</li><li>b. <i>In summary, the essence of this model is conveyed through the horizontal linkages between neighboring system components.</i> How are the elements of the hierarchies of objectives of the higher and lower system components related?</li><li>c. What is the aim of the cascading logic model?</li><li>d. Cite two strengths and two challenges to use the cascading logic in your organization. Suggest ways to deal with these challenges.</li></ol> |
|--|

4. Focus on Table 1 (handout 1.2) and respond to the following questions.

***B. Applying the concept of the cascading logic to a NARS organization helps to realize how the different decision making levels in a NARS organization are linked.***

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>e. Explain the four decision making levels of the organization.</li><li>f. What does the model contribute to the reader to understand better?</li><li>g. How would you explain “the development pathway” and what does it require?</li></ol> |
|--|

5. Reflect on the contents of the boxes (handout 1.2) regarding ARDSF specific AR4D definitions and terminology and UNDP’s programme approach respectively, to respond to the following questions.

***C. ARDSF recognizes that there are different types of outputs, outcomes and impacts along the impact pathway.***

- h. Justify with your own words the importance of the ARDSF and NARS organization's decision to adopt the systems perspective.
- i. Summarize UNDP's similar decision presented in box of the text (handout 1.2).

- 6. Record your individual responses on the "Learning Review" worksheet (handout 1.3). Be clear and concise.

**Step 2. Group work** (plan 1 hour 30 minutes – spend about 30 minutes in each section A, B and C above)

- 7. Invite the Project Team members of the Priority Project and elect a group work coordinator to moderate this session and a rapporteur to record results of the group discussion.
- 8. The coordinator invites the members to share the results of each section. First results of section A. Then, discuss and the rapporteur summarizes the group results in the handout 1.3. Next, the results of the section B, and so on.
- 9. The coordinator is advised to manage an open discussion on the questions posed under the sections of Step 1 and all members must assist the rapporteur to note down the results of the discussion clearly.

**Step 3. Recording final results** (30 minutes)

- 10. The coordinator manages the time for the rapporteur to summarize and present the final results to the audience. These results will be presented during the face-to-face workshop to be scheduled by ARDSF.



## Unit 1. The Cascading Logic

The cascading logic is a model that illustrates how the components of a system are combined sequentially, to form a cascade like arrangement. A generic version of this arrangement for a hypothetical agricultural research and development system is shown in Figure 1.

The cascade consists of hierarchies of objectives<sup>1</sup> for the individual system components. The hierarchies of objectives consist of the design elements goal, purpose, outputs and activities. The model shows how the hierarchies of objectives of neighboring system components are linked horizontally and how the design elements of the hierarchy of objectives within one component are linked vertically. In Figure 1 these linkages are indicated by arrows.

The essence of this model is conveyed through the horizontal linkages between neighboring system components, which is illustrated by the following examples:

- The purpose of the higher system component is equivalent to the goal of the next lower system component.
- The purpose of the lower system component is equivalent to the output of the next higher system component.
- The activities of the higher system component are equivalent to the outputs of the next lower system component (please note that the arrows indicating this linkage are missing in Figure 1).

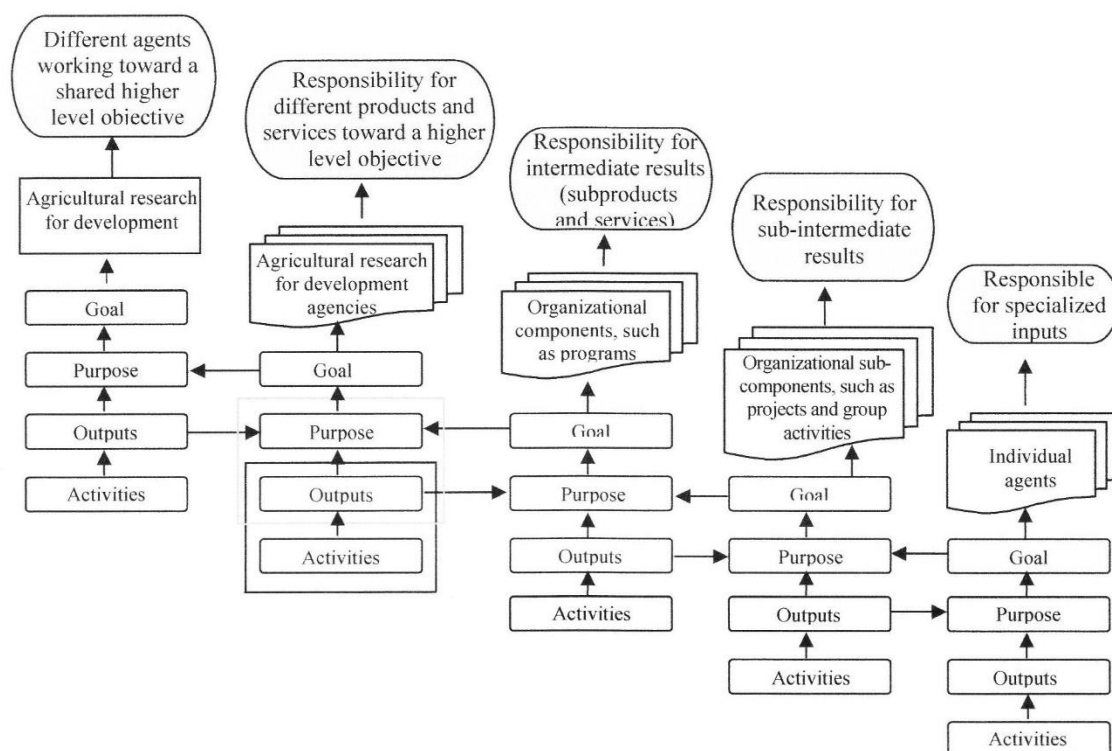
Using this model helps to understand how the objectives<sup>2</sup> of a lower level system component, such as a project, are matched with or contribute to the objectives of a higher system level component, such as the program, organization or the national agricultural research system (NARS). The aim of this model is to show the path by which each system component ultimately contributes to the development goal (or people level impact) of the highest system component. Obviously this assumes that the objectives of the higher system components indeed express the development orientation or people level impact in the first place. This is the case for the PNG NARS organizations as articulated in their new Strategic Plans and Programs.

Closely related models that are described in the literature and express similar concepts are: impact pathway, impact chain, results chain or results framework. Despite their slight variations in definitions and context, these models are often categorized as 'outcome models' or 'impact models'.

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• <sup>1,2</sup> Goal, purpose, outputs and activities are all considered to be objectives, albeit at a different level.

**Figure 1: A generic cascading logic for a hypothetical agricultural research for development (AR4D) system**



Source: Mbabu, A. N. and Ochieng, C. (2006)

Applying the concept of the cascading logic to a NARS organization helps to realize how the different decision making levels in a NARS organization are linked.

Table 1 shows how this model can be applied to a NARS organization. The columns in the model relate to the four decision making levels of the organization, such as the project activity level, project level, thematic area/program level and strategic level. The rows describe the design elements of the hierarchy of objectives (activities, outputs, purpose, goal) for each decision making level. In the same way as for the generic cascading logic above, the arrows indicate the relationships between the design elements within and across the decision making levels.

In the right hand side column and at the lowest level of the ‘cascade’ one finds the hierarchy of objectives of the project activities that are implemented within a project. The next column to the left and a level up shows the hierarchy of objectives of a project. At the next higher level in the next column to the left, the hierarchy of objectives of the thematic area/program is shown, and in the left column and at the highest level, the hierarchy of objectives of the NARS organization is represented. Further up the cascade, but not shown in Table 1, one could imagine the hierarchy of objectives of the NARS, then the agricultural sector, and at the highest level the national development sector.

A good appreciation of the model will enable the reader to understand the linkages between the decision making levels and how the objectives at one level contribute to the achievement of the objectives at the next higher level: different types of project activities contribute to projects; different types of projects contribute to thematic areas/programs; the latter contribute to the organization. Annex 1 shows an example of a cascading logic for a hypothetical ‘Coffee Quality Improvement Project’.

By going up this ‘development pathway’ NARS organizations will be able to demonstrate how all decision making levels ultimately work towards achieving development change, either in the short, medium or long term. Again, this assumes that the goal of the organization expresses the intended development orientation or the people level impact of the NARS organization. This concern was addressed and captured in the NARS organizations’ Strategic Plans and formulation of programs/thematic areas.

***This is the pathway to change people’s lives for the better.***

ARDSF recognizes that there are different types of outputs, outcomes and impacts along the impact pathway. For example, a short term project can deliver early intermediate results (project outputs, purpose and goal); while a medium term program through sequentially related projects can deliver more advanced intermediate results (program outputs, purpose and goal) closer to people level impact; while a cumulative effect of several programs within an organization and in partnership with relevant organizations will deliver the ultimate impact at people level. This is often represented by the organizational outputs, purpose and goal.

ARDSF also recognizes that the traditional usage of the terms ‘outcome’ and ‘impact’ are associated with high level results in terms of changes in development conditions for people and society as a whole arising from development project interventions. However, this projects-based approach to achieving development outcomes and impact has been found limiting. ARDSF and the NARS have therefore adopted the systems perspective and the AR4D framework which recognizes the programme approach. Others such as the UNDP have also realized the same and are adopting the programme approach (see box below).

The AR4D framework articulates this programme approach through the cascading logic (Table 1) linking results from activities to projects which are organized in programmes to deliver on long-term organizational objectives (purpose and goal) associated with development outcomes and impact. The cascading logic shows that there are different results at different levels, hence outcomes and impacts are associated with the different levels of purpose and goal respectively for activities, projects, programmes, organizational and higher order systems.

**ARDSF approach to achieving outcomes and impact in agricultural research**

**UNDP Country Programme Document, Papua New Guinea: 2008-2012**

“Past practice indicates that projects that are thematically or geographically isolated often lack the critical mass necessary to achieve the desired project outcomes and impact on the population. UNDP should base its work on the programme approach. The advantages of this include (a) advocacy and policy advice relating to human rights, gender and the MDGs; (b) capacity development at the national and sub-national levels, with a particular focus on institutional and leadership development; (c) assisting the Government with donor coordination; (d) normative and technical advisory services, setting standards, providing methodologies and instruments (for example, small grants methodologies, human development reports and leadership development methodologies); (e) the neutrality and convening power of UNDP (for example, in peace-building in Bougainville); and (f) best practices, as shown in other UNDP programmes countries, which can be applied as South-South cooperation in the context of Papua New Guinea.”

*(an excerpt from 'Past cooperation and lessons learned', UNDP Country Programme 2003-2007.)*

**Table 1: A Model of an Impact Oriented Cascading Logic for a NARS Organization<sup>3</sup>**

NARS Organization Objectives			
Strategic Level Objectives (Organization or Agency)	Thematic Area/Program Level Objectives	Project Level Objectives	Project Activity Level Objectives
<b>Organizational Goal</b>			
<b>Organizational Purpose</b>	<b>Thematic Area/Program Goal</b>		
<b>Organizational Outputs</b>	<b>Thematic Area/Program Purpose</b>	<b>Project Goal</b>	
<b>Organizational Activities</b>	<b>Thematic Area/Program Outputs</b>	<b>Project Purpose</b>	<b>Activity Goal</b>
	<b>Thematic Area/Program Activities</b>	<b>Project Outputs</b>	<b>Activity Purpose</b>
		<b>Project Activities</b>	<b>Activity Outputs</b>
			<b>Activity Tasks<sup>4</sup></b>

<sup>3</sup> ARDSF has adopted specific definitions and terminology for the design elements of the cascading logic. See Glossary for further clarification.

<sup>4</sup> As shown, the more accurate term for ‘activity tasks’ would be ‘Project Activity activities’. This is consistent with the design logic of the logical framework approach and the model of the cascading logic as shown here. However, this is a mouthful of a term, hence, the term ‘activity tasks’ is suggested here.



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## Exercise 1. Learning Review Worksheet

### 1. Results of my individual work

**A. *The cascading logic is a model that illustrates how the components of a system are combined sequentially, to form a cascade like arrangement. ARDSF is encouraging the use of this cascading logic model.***

- a. Explain the concept of the cascading logic using separate hierarchies of objectives

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- b. *In summary, the essence of this model is conveyed through the horizontal linkages between neighboring system components* How are the elements of the hierarchies of objectives of the higher and lower system components related?

(i)

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(ii)

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- c. What is the aim of the cascading logic model?

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- d. Cite two strengths and two challenges to use the cascading logic in your organization. Suggest ways to deal with these challenges.

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**B. *Applying the concept of the cascading logic to a NARS organization helps to realize how the different decision making levels in a NARS organization are linked***

- e. Briefly, explain the four decision making levels of the organization

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- f. What does the model contribute to the reader to understand better?

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g. How would you explain “the development pathway” and what does it demand?

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***C. ARDSF recognizes that there are different types of outputs, outcomes and impacts along the impact pathway***

h. Justify with your own words the importance of the ARDSF and NARS organization’s decision to adopt the systems perspective

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i. Summarize UNDP similar decision presented in the box of the text (handout 1.2)

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## **2. Results of group work**

a)
b)
c)



d)

e)

f)

g)

h)

i)

**Please bring this page to the ARDSF face-to-face workshop**



## Unit 2. The Planning Process for NARS Organizations

### Instructions for Participants from NARS Organizations

#### KEY ISSUES

The concept and content of the ARDSF Learning Module 4: ‘Impact-Oriented Project Planning’ combines the subjects of project and project activity planning.

The present Distance Learning Module 6: ‘Project Activity Planning’ is designed to complement Learning Module 4, providing more learning opportunities specifically with regard to ‘project activity planning’.

As described in the preface, the analysis of the results of the project planning capacity building event, using Learning Module 4, revealed that not enough emphasis had been given to the planning of project activities. Therefore.....**read on to learn about AR4D project activities and project activity planning**

#### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this introductory unit, you will be able to:

- Analyze a model of the Planning Process for a NARS Organization.
- Identify the “planning pathway” in the model.
- Discuss the benefit of applying this model, citing real examples.

#### PROCEDURE

The project team responsible for working on the priority project under the thematic area selected during the workshop on “Impact-Oriented Project Planning”:-which took place at Ela Beach Hotel - will continue working together. The team members will follow the exercise guidelines. They will elect a coordinator and rapporteur who will assist the team in completing the exercise to be presented during the ARDSF workshop to be scheduled soon. Note that for this exercise the Team members will work individually (step 1) and in a group (step 2 and step 3).

#### EXPECTED RESULTS

- (i) Participants demonstrate clear understanding of the research planning process applied by the NARS organizations;
- (ii) Participants describe the planning pathway in the model and summarize the benefit of applying the model with real examples from their organizations.



## Exercise 2. Reviewing the planning process for NARS organizations

### (individual and group work)

#### Step 1. Individual work (plan 60 minutes to undertake this phase)

1. Read handout 2.2 on “The Planning Process for NARS Organizations”. To strengthen your learning during this exercise, you are also advised to consult the *Figure 1. “Project Planning as an Integral Part of Agricultural Research for Development Planning”* in your Module 4: ‘Impact-Oriented Project Planning’ on page 58.
  2. Respond in your own words to the questions below. Remember you are reviewing the planning process for NARS organizations. This means that you have already studied the model presented in Table 2 (handout 2.2) and are familiar with it.
- **Table 2 in the text below describes a model of the planning process in a NARS organization. This model is closely related to the cascading logic and is made up of the same elements (see Unit 1). Focus on Table 2 below and on your previous learning from Figure 1, page 58 (Module 4, Day 1/Session 2/Handout 2) to write your answers.**

- a. What do the columns and rows of the model describe?
- b. Based on your previous learning (Figure 1, page 58 of Module 4) indicate at each level who is responsible to achieve the “purpose”?
- c. Briefly, jot down your understanding and experiences of defining AR4D project activities and developing the purpose of project activities, which were addressed in both planning stages, thematic area/program planning and project planning.
- d. From your understanding of Table 2 and based on your experience in participating in the planning process of your organization, what makes the planning process an iterative process? Justify
- e. What could be the impact or benefit of finding the right solution to change people’s life. Cite a real example from your organization.

3. Record your individual responses on the “Learning Review Worksheet” (Handout 2.3). Be clear and concise.

#### Step 2. Group work (plan 60 minutes for this session with your team members)

4. Invite the Project Team members of the Priority Project and elect a *group work coordinator* to moderate this session and a *rapporteur* to record results of the group discussion.
5. The coordinator invites the members to share their responses to the questions.
6. The coordinator manages an open discussion on the tasks presented in Step 1. All team members must assist the rapporteur to note down the results of the discussion clearly. Use the second part of handout 2.3 to record the results of the group work.

#### Step 3. Recording final results (30 minutes)

7. The coordinator manages the time for the rapporteur to summarize and present the final results to the audience. These results will be presented during the face-to-face workshop to be scheduled by ARDSF.



## Unit 2. The Planning Process for NARS Organizations

As much as the change or development process that NARS organizations are seeking is a pathway going up, the planning process that NARS organizations have almost completed has followed a pathway that was going down.

Table 2 describes a model of the planning process in a NARS organization. This model is closely related to the cascading logic and is made up of the same elements (see Unit 1). In the columns, the model shows the four decision making levels of a NARS organization: strategic level, thematic area/program level, project level, and project activity level. The rows describe the hierarchy of objectives for each decision making level. However, in comparison with the cascading logic model, the arrows indicate a downward process, starting at the strategic level, moving down to the thematic area/program level, and finishing with the project and project activity level. The design elements of the cascading logic that were covered during the strategic planning stage are highlighted in light yellow. The design elements that were covered during the thematic area/program planning stage are highlighted in dark yellow; and the design elements that were covered during the project/ project activity planning stage are highlighted in red.

Two elements, the definition of AR4D project activities and the purpose of the project activity, are highlighted in both, dark yellow and red. This indicates that the project activities and their purposes were discussed and refined at both stages, during thematic area/program planning and during project planning. At the thematic area/program planning stage, indicative purposes for the project activities were defined (in the documentation they are often entitled 'sub-project objectives'). These indicative purposes were then further refined at the project planning stage with the aim to come up with a set of project activities and their purposes for each project.

In reality the planning process is not strictly linear but rather an iterative process. The model presented in Table 2 is just what it is 'a model' and cannot truly represent the reality of the AR4D planning process. The reality of the planning process in NARS organizations may indeed be far more complex than this model suggests.

By going down the 'planning pathway' the NARS organizations are able to define how the needs and constraints expressed by people will be addressed at all decision making levels, ultimately leading to implementing the project activities that will help to fulfill people's needs and find solutions to their constraints.

***This is the pathway to the right solutions that may change people's lives.***





**Table 2: A Model of the Planning Process for a NARS Organization**

NARS Organization Planning Level			
Strategic Level Planning (Organization or Agency)	Thematic Area/Program Level Planning	Project Level Planning	Project Activity Level Planning
Organizational Goal ↓			
Organizational Purpose ↓	Thematic Area/Program Goal		
Organizational Outputs ↓	Thematic Area/Program Purpose	Project Goal	
Definition of Thematic Areas/Programs ⇒	Thematic Area/Program Outputs ↓	Project Purpose	Activity Goal
	Definition of Projects ⇒	Project Outputs ⇒	Activity Purpose
		↓	Activity Outputs
		Definition of Project Activities ⇒	↓
			Definition of Activity Work Plan and Budget

Source: Authors

Elements of the cascading logic identified during strategic planning

Elements of the cascading logic identified during thematic area/program planning

Elements of the cascading logic identified during project and project activity planning

## Exercise 2. Learning Review Worksheet

### 1. Results of my individual work

*Table 2 in the text (handout 2.2) describes a model of the planning process in a NARS organization. This model is closely related to the cascading logic and is made up of the same elements (see Unit 1). Focus on Table 2 and on your previous learning from Figure 1, page 58 (Module 4- Day 1. Session 2. Handout 2) to write your answers*

a. What do the columns and rows of the model describe?

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b. Based on your previous learning (Figure 1 of Module 4, Day 1. Session 2. Handout 2) indicate at each level who is responsible for achieving the “purpose”.

<b>Organizational Purpose</b>	
<b>Thematic Area/Program Purpose</b>	
<b>Project Purpose</b>	
<b>Activity Purpose</b>	
<b>Activity Outputs</b>	

c. Briefly, jot down your understanding and experiences of defining AR4D project activities and developing the purpose of project activities, which were addressed in both planning stages, thematic area/program planning and project planning.

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d. From your understanding of Table 2 and based on your experience in participating in the planning process of your organization, what makes the planning process an iterative process? Justify..

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e. What could be the impact or benefit of finding the right solution to change people’s life. Cite a real example from your organization.

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## 2. Results of group work

a)
b)
c)
d)
e)

**Please bring this page to the ARDSF face-to-face workshop**

**Evaluation of the Distance-Learning Module:  
AR4D Project Activity Planning:  
(individual)**

*(You do not need to provide your name)*

The main topics of the units of this distance learning module are listed below. Please mark the number that most closely indicates how you feel each topic has been understood and assimilated by you. The scale is from 1 (low, not satisfied at all) to 5 (high, completely satisfied).

a.	Introductory Unit: Overview of implementation of project and project activity planning.	1	2	3	4	5
b.	Unit 1. The cascading logic	1	2	3	4	5
c.	Unit 2. The planning process for NARS organizations	1	2	3	4	5
d.	Unit 3. AR4D project activities.	1	2	3	4	5
e.	Unit 4. AR4D project activity planning.	1	2	3	4	5
f.	Unit 5. The logical framework of an AR4D project activity.	1	2	3	4	5
g.	Unit 6. The work plan of an AR4D project activity	1	2	3	4	5
h.	Unit 7. The budget of a project activity	1	2	3	4	5
i.	Unit 8. The outline of the final project activity proposal	1	2	3	4	5

### Opinion and Feedback

What is your overall rating of the module and the project team member's performance for each of the following items? Please circle the appropriate number.

	Very low	Low	Average	High	Very high
1. Module Units: instructions and clarity	1	2	3	4	5
2. Group atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
3. Interest and motivation	1	2	3	4	5
4. Participation	1	2	3	4	5
5. Productiveness	1	2	3	4	5
6. Leadership effectiveness	1	2	3	4	5
7. Punctuality to respond to the work requirements	1	2	3	4	5
8. Completeness of the distance learning module exercises by the project teams	1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the following questions

1. How would you rate this distance learning program?

Poor  Fair  Good  Excellent

2. What were three strong points?

1.
2.
3.

3. What were three weak points?

1.
2.
3.

4. Which three improvements would you suggest?

1.
2.
3.

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