

Part B: Implementation

3. Planning and Steering

3.1 Project planning and scheduling

► In this chapter

Project planning results in an overview and is usually done during an assessment mission or finalised in the project document. Based on the planned targets and means (human resources, finances and infrastructure), it defines the main activities within a given time frame. Equally important is the definition of milestones that provide some orientation to the stakeholders and beneficiaries, and emphasise target-orientation to the implementation team. Planning adjustment usually takes place during a mid-term review. If milestones need to be revised before that, the HQ must be consulted.

An implementation schedule is an instrument for planning the implementation activities in detail. Project management is responsible for this schedule, which defines activities on a weekly basis. Schedule updating is part of the implementation management and consists of a weekly review and outlook.

► Benefits

Planning, implementation schedule and milestones provide:

- **Orientation:** Besides the persons directly involved in project implementation, there are other actors as well: at the HQ, at the coordination office, consultants, local partners, beneficiaries and local authorities. To encourage the involvement and participation of these actors, the envisaged project implementation should be presented in a clear and transparent way.
- **Deadlines:** Cash Projects have a very limited intervention period and therefore time management with a focus on milestones is essential (i.e. a list of milestones must be used).
- **Anticipation:** Detailed planning helps to identify the path to take and the bottle-necks of the project. To ensure optimal outside support, the proper timing of the necessary measures has to be known in advance.
- **Budget security:** Cash Projects aim at low implementation costs. Realistic planning combined with cost-awareness on the part of the project team is one of the conditions for ensuring cost-efficiency.


► Procedure

- **Project planning**
 - Based on the preliminary general planning, the project management reviews and updates, if necessary, the existing overview of the main activities step by step and carefully checks the validity of the time frame.
 - Given deadlines have to be adhered to – even more so if the project helps to meet an immediate need (e.g. sheltering refugees before winter begins).
 - It is important for the implementation team that the setting of milestones emphasises target orientation and the achievement of intermediate results. This contributes to the visibility of the Cash Project and provides orientation to stakeholders and beneficiaries.
 - Special attention should be given to the transfer of funds from the HQ to the project, something that is crucial for the punctual hand-over of cash contributions to the beneficiaries. The steps and time requirements of the transfer necessitate some planning so that funds can be ordered in good time. Test transfers can provide realistic estimates and ensure the reliability of financial flows.
 - Planning adjustment is done periodically together with the local staff. The mid-term review is an appropriate moment to see whether the project is on track and on schedule, allowing for a comparison between planning and execution. The HQ gives the final approval to adjustments.
 - Planning revision may be required in exceptional cases (e.g. if the local situation calls for a complete reorientation or if new project components have to be added). Such changes must be integrated in the revised project document, and usually the new plan has to be approved explicitly by the HQ.
- **Implementation schedule**
 - Detailed planning of activities is one of the main steering instruments of project management.

- Schedule updating on a weekly basis is a team work task. It gives an opportunity for critical review and appreciation of activities performed.
- Forecasting allows the project team to inform about planned activities, to synchronise activities with partners and to set short-term targets.
- Certain activities requiring additional means, logistics or personnel, such as registration, verification or monitoring, need specific planning.
- The weekly review and outlook tables form the basis for the weekly report.

○ **Planning tools**

Cash Projects use various planning tools. The use of these tools depends on the agency's standards and on the tools available, but also on the individual Cash Project's requirements and the staff's personal experience.

	<p>Principles for planning Cash Projects</p> <p>Participation of local personnel and local partners in project planning encourages them to assume and share responsibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular check of applicability of planning tools: changes in figures, dates and procedures have to be reflected in updated planning tools. ▪ Regular comparison between planning and implementation: this prevents the over-view and a key element of professional steering getting lost. ▪ Respect for the agreed practice that the project document and the management tools are binding and cannot be changed unilaterally. Any revision of the implementation planning can only be done during the mid-term review.
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3.2 Public relations

► **In this chapter**

Public relations are essential for a successful implementation of Cash Projects. They include, in particular:

- **Relationships:**
 - with the local administration, not only at the central administrative level but also at the municipality or settlement levels, which increases efficiency during implementation.
 - with the local media, which helps the Cash Project in various ways. They are a quicker and more independent means of informing the beneficiaries about a Cash Project than the official administration channels.
 - with the major national and international humanitarian actors (UN agencies, ICRC, etc.).
- **Networking:** Cash Projects, as a humanitarian activity, can considerably improve efficiency by closely cooperating with agencies working in the same field and by exchanging information with like-minded organisations.
- **Positioning:** Cash Projects need to make their approach known to other humanitarian actors as a condition for exchange and cooperation, and also in response to scepticism and criticism expressed by other parties. Public information on progress and results increases the credibility of the approach and the visibility of the agency and its donors.

► **Benefits**

- Properly announced information regarding project aims, beneficiaries targeted, etc. reduces uncertainties among the population in general, and among the local administration and other humanitarian actors.
- Good public relations with the population create awareness, stimulating public attention and thus helping to reduce attempts at misuse. The cash approach and its advantages are better understood, and expectations concerning direct financial contributions remain realistic.
- Good relationships with local authorities and other partners help to demonstrate the Cash Project's purely humanitarian purpose. Thus the risk of political interference or "exploitation" can be minimised.

► **Procedure**



- **Main topics for initial relation building**
 - Cash Project intention
 - Sources of funds
 - Criteria for and intended number of beneficiaries

- Main project implementation steps
- Complaint mechanisms
- Implementing partners
- Offers for cooperation and information exchange
- Limits and restrictions (i.e. what the project will not do)

- **Preliminary steps**
 - Assessment of local media and information channels
 - Checking the potential of the wide variety of media in most countries, especially of TV channels, but also of informal information channels
 - Selection of the most popular and wide-range media in the target area
 - Contacting interested local journalists for independent announcements based on written handouts
 - Elaboration of a short PR and information concept to be disseminated by the media and by local means

- **Networking with interested groups and persons**
 - Participating in joint humanitarian coordination committees helps to communicate the project's key elements and offers an opportunity to exchange experience.
 - Finding like-minded actors for knowledge-sharing can be very useful to increase the quality and efficiency of project implementation (e.g. database, verification procedures, quality of targeting).

- **Positioning**
 - Visibility of humanitarian action and its implementing agents can be enhanced by providing clear and specific information about the cash approach, by regularly reporting on progress and milestones, as well as on the results achieved, at the end of the project.
 - Credibility can be ensured at any time by means of open, transparent and regular progress reporting related to areas of accountability such as achievement of goals and cost-efficiency.

	<p>Risks of wrong information</p> <p>Very active press work in South Serbia prevented the spreading of rumours as to the Cash Project being sponsored by the Milosevic regime.</p>
	<p>Security versus Public Relations</p> <p>In 2001, after an initial highly successful appearance on local TV, the Project Manager of the Cash for shelter project Ingushetia was not permitted to appear on this medium again because of UNSECOORD security considerations.</p>

3.3 Progress reporting

► In this chapter

Reporting is a communication tool as well as a monitoring instrument. Reporting reviews implementation progress and problems. It forms the basis for constructive feedback from the HQ persons responsible and, if needed, from supporting experts.

Before project start	Implementation	Closing down
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessment report ▪ Risk analysis ▪ Project document (ProDoc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weekly report ▪ Implementation progress monitoring ▪ Financial report ▪ Impact monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final (project) report ▪ Final financial report

► Benefits

- Weekly progress reports provide an opportunity for reflection on a period of time while impressions are still fresh, and allow for consequential planning for the week to come.

- Good progress reports provide transparent and uniform information to all participating parties such as local staff and partners, the various persons involved in the HQ, the embassy, the coordination office, and the consultant.
- As Cash Projects are often carried out in insecure regions, it is imperative for weekly progress reports to inform about the current security situation and measures taken.
- Informative weekly reporting allows the HQ and supporting consultants (backstoppers) to give substantial feedbacks.

► **Procedure**

○ **Weekly report**

The format of the reporting is agreed on at the beginning of the project and must be maintained throughout project implementation. Usually the structure of the weekly report is as follows:

- **Tabled programme executed:** during previous week
- **Security situation:** a short description with measures taken
- **Commentaries on status and progress** of implementation, including important or urgent topics requiring quick answers or decisions
- **Tabled activities outlook:** activities for next week
- **Annexes:** a) Implementation progress monitoring data concerning registration, verification, payments, etc.; b) Table of milestones




The weekly report provides a comprehensive view of project reality and should not exceed three to four pages. The content concentrates on the essential developments and is not overloaded with general political information.

If weekly reports maintain the same structure during project implementation, they may also serve as a monitoring tool. The distribution of the weekly report (HQ, backstopper, other stakeholders involved in project steering) has to be agreed upon at the beginning of the project implementation.

○ **Implementation progress monitoring**

Implementation progress monitoring forms an integral part of the weekly report based on facts and figures. Monitoring:

- Concentrates on key information in order to supervise implementation
- Assesses whether the project targets will be reached in time
- Helps to update planning continuously
- Contributes to formulating lessons learnt and best practices.

	<p>Advantages of good progress reporting:</p> <p>Progress reporting in writing and with a weekly rhythm has obtained optimal results, as it provided the basis for positive project steering, feedback by the HQ, and constructive guidance by the consultant/backstopper.</p>
	<p>Management by “mobile phone”:</p> <p>Information by mobile phone is not a feasible form of reporting. It involves two parties only and can never replace written reports.</p>
	<p>Time efficiency</p> <p>A mutually agreed and applied weekly reporting system facilitates project steering, avoids time-consuming explanations and allows continuous support to be provided by external experts.</p>

3.4 External support – backstopping

► In this chapter

Implementation of Cash Projects appears to be easy – at least to people not familiar with them. In reality this proves to be a rather demanding task.

Therefore, many HQs decide in favour of supporting measures to help project management to successfully implement a Cash Project. Adequate external support can be provided by a backstopper or by experienced desk officers.

► Benefits

External support in the form of backstopping has achieved very good results so far, and justifies the additional costs. The main benefits are:

- To ensure professional implementation (conforming to standards, rules, experiences, time schedule, etc.).
- To reduce the HQ's workload considerably.
- To allow Cash Project managers to increase their know-how and be backed by strategic and operational topics.

► Procedure

The HQ decides at an early stage whether a Cash Project is to benefit from external support or not. Later modifications of a Cash Project design and corrections of the set-up have proven difficult, and often provoke a defensive attitude.

○ **The HQ's decision on external support:**



- Type of backstopping: HQ and project manager agree on the appropriate level of support and clarify what contributions are needed.
- Time needed for support: The HQ desk officer responsible checks whether he can allocate 4 – 5 hours for steering and follow-up or if this has to be delegated.
- Cash competence: HQ and project manager appraise their needs for additional cash know-how.
- Institutional set-up: HQ, project manager and backstopper agree on the information flow(s) and define the appropriate and accepted line of command.

The following possibilities exist for external support (backstopping):

Specific consultancy	Support during implementation (backstopping)			Mandate for implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept development ▪ Cash inputs on request ▪ Review ▪ Final evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Backstopping for HQ: as an external partner or as a member of the Project Team Cash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remote backstopping for the Cash Project: counselling based on reporting and e-mail requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full backstopping for the Cash Project: counselling and missions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full responsibility for implementation of the Cash Project, based on project document and SDC contract

○ **Backstoppers' main tasks during implementation:**

- ToRs: To negotiate his ToRs with special attention to institutional set-up, information flow and line of command (steering topics).
- Relationship: To establish a personal relationship with the project manager (and the team); without mutual trust, backstopping as a remote support task might be seriously hampered.
- Briefing: If possible, jointly elaborating the start-up phase of the Cash Project and providing adequate procedures, tools and templates needed. Specific topics of Cash Projects can be clarified step by step at this early stage.
- Feedback: To give regular backstopping feedback on the weekly reports. This also includes proposing additional know-how and appropriate tools together with explanations, or even amending documents.
- Missions: Field visits lend particularly important support at two vital moments of implementation: during the mid-term review and usually during the closing down phase.
- Know-how management: To assist during the final phase: debriefing at the HQ, upgrading of cash know-how for cash know-how management.

	<p>Backstopping only makes sense ...</p> <p>... if it is based on a good personal and professional relationship. Whenever backstopping as external support was welcome, it proved to be a very productive and cost-efficient measure for the Cash Project, the field staff, the HQ and the cash know-how management.</p>
	<p>Project Team Cash</p> <p>A small expert team was mandated to build up a Cash knowledge management system (Cash Workbook with CD, Cash Library); it also offers individual backstopping.</p>

3.5 Project adjustment

► In this chapter

Implementing a Cash Project in a structured, efficient and effective manner is essential so as to serve the people in need and to confirm the usefulness of cash approaches. Consequently, the performance of project implementation has to be assessed.

Development projects – most of which have a medium or long-term perspective – use standard tools based on project cycle management for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In Cash Projects – most of which have a much shorter duration – selected tools are used for steering, monitoring, review of achievements and final evaluation.

► Benefits

- Reviews constitute an opportunity for stopping or slowing down project activities and for reflecting together on aims planned and goals achieved. Based on internal and external viewpoints, adjustments can be made in a structured way.
- Reviews – as well as evaluations – offer another opportunity for knowledge sharing and knowledge management, which is of particular importance for cash approaches if the reviews are organised as a learning process.
- Reviews – usually in mid-term – are generally much appreciated. Encouraging personal feedback is very important for implementation teams, that often work in relative isolation.



► Procedure

- **Timing:** The Cash Project manager is in a position to determine the most appropriate moment for the review: either before payments begin – after registration and verification – or when important adjustments are envisaged.
- The **ToRs** must clearly define the type of analysis, the results expected and the working programme review in order to meet the expectations of HQ, Cash Project management and backstoppers.
- **Follow-up:** At the end of the review, backstopper and project manager agree on how to turn the outcome into adjustments and how to integrate lessons learnt and experiences made into the implementation process and cash knowledge management.

The following table gives an overview of the different aspects to be looked at during a review:

Aspect	Project development		Tasks
Results	planned	unplanned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comparison between planning and implementation ▪ Evaluation of success and failures (SWOT analysis) with project team ▪ Programme adjustments
Processes	furthering	hindering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation of office management and procedures ▪ Analysis of progress monitoring and reporting ▪ Improved working procedures ▪ Update of management tools ▪ Improved presentation of results

Impact	desired effects	undesired effects	
Context	furthering effects	hindering effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis of security aspects ▪ Local partners and other actors ▪ Adjustment of Local Security Plan ▪ Planning of supporting measures

	<p>Monitoring instrument</p> <p>See the very useful brochure “SDC Monitoring – Keep in touch with reality” (July 1997), which can be ordered free of charge at the SDC’s Media and Communication Division.</p>
	<p>Review as a team building occasion</p> <p>Reviews are a good opportunity for involving all staff – not necessarily all the time – and contribute to identification and team building, which is critical for successful implementation. Often contributions made by ordinary local staff help to gain a better understanding of the context and to improve procedures.</p>