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Core Concepts in Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) of Projects in IUCN

**An IUCN Training Course for Project
Managers**

Participants Manual

November 2004

IUCN
The World Conservation Union

IUCN – The World Conservation Union

, regional Founded in 1948, The World Conservation Union brings together States, government agencies and a diverse range of non-governmental organizations in a unique world partnership: over 900 members in all, spread across some 138 countries.

As a Union, IUCN seeks to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. The World Conservation Union builds on the strengths of its members, networks and partners to enhance their capacity and to support global alliances to safeguard natural resources at local and global levels.

The IUCN Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Initiative

The mandate of the Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative is to establish a Monitoring and Evaluation System for IUCN at regional and global levels that:

- ✓ Supports learning, improvement and accountability through a regular cycle of reviews of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of IUCN's work at project, programme and organizational level.
- ✓ Promotes a learning culture of self-assessment and reflection.
- ✓ Builds capacity of staff, partners and members in planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- ✓ Supports the implementation of the IUCN Evaluation Policy and Standards.

Publications from the M&E Initiative are available on-line on the IUCN website <http://www.iucn.org/themes/eval/index.html>

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Foreword



The Origin and Intent of these Course Materials

This course is based on the rich collective experiences of the planning, monitoring and evaluation facilitators and trainers who are listed below, and who have worked with IUCN programmes and project managers in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe helping them to better plan, monitor and evaluate their projects and programmes.

Managed by the global Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative, these facilitators and trainers developed, over a 6 year period, a range of training materials that formed the foundation for this *IUCN Project Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Training Course*. Through developing and testing concepts and approaches, and through dialogue with regional and global managers they established a general consensus on acceptable and realistic standards and core practices for planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes in IUCN.

The intent of this core PM&E Training Course is to provide project managers with a common understanding of core concepts of planning, monitoring and evaluation as practiced in IUCN. While it is understood that managers may be required to use other concepts and tools specifically required by some donor agencies, this course is intended to strengthen the understanding of core PM&E concepts that, if necessary, can be adapted to the requirements of specific donors.

This is a core course in PM&E concepts and approaches, not an advanced training in the use of specific techniques such as sustainability assessment, PRA (participatory rapid appraisal) and gender analysis, or an in-depth course on data collection and analysis.

The list of core references provides information on complementary PM&E resource materials available through the IUCN M&E Office or from regional Programme Coordinators and M&E staff.

We sincerely hope that IUCN project and programme managers find this course useful in carrying out their responsibilities for improved planning, monitoring, evaluation and delivery of project work.

We warmly welcome your comments on how these materials may be improved.

Nancy MacPherson
Coordinator, Global M&E Initiative

Bill Jackson
Director, Global Programme

Acknowledgements:

The course materials were written by Veronica Muthui, Natalia Ortiz and Nancy MacPherson with inputs from Alejandro Imbach and Julia Robinson.

The materials are based on the training materials developed by IUCN PM&E facilitators and trainers based in different regions of the world: in Africa by Jim Woodhill, Veronica Muthui, Mine Pabari, Francois Corneille Kedowide, Diana Lee Smith and Bill Jackson; in Latin America by Alejandro Imbach, Natalia Ortiz, and Claudia Bourancle; in Asia by Imtiaz Alvi, Alejandro Imbach and Julia Robinson; and at global level by Nancy MacPherson, Tom Hammond and Alex Moiseev.

The course materials also benefited from testing and feedback from participants of four regional training events – Sri Lanka (2002), Kenya (2003), Ghana (2003) and Costa Rica (2004). We thank participants of these regional training events for their helpful feedback and suggestions for improvements.

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Finally, in putting the course materials together into one package, we are very grateful to Anna Grzybinska, Marie Helene Adrien and Charles Lusthaus of Universal Management Group who provided professional advice, support and coaching in developing the content and structure of the training course, and to Marie Helene for her excellent coaching of the trainers during the test phase.

Introduction to Project Planning in IUCN

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**Learning Objectives:**

At the end of the Module, participants will:

- ✓ Understand the importance of good project planning in IUCN
- ✓ Be reminded of the Definitions of Project
- ✓ Be familiar with the concept of Theory of Action and Logic Models
- ✓ Be familiar with the Results Based Approach to Project Planning Adopted by IUCN.
- ✓ Understand the Project Cycle

Approximate Duration:

1hr 30 minutes

Overview:

In this module:

- ✓ Presentation: Projects and Project Design
- ✓ Presentation: Approaches to Project Design and Planning
- ✓ Presentation: Project Management Cycle
- ✓ Exercise: Project Management Cycle



Introduction



When Alice encounters the Cheshire cat in Wonderland, she asks, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to walk from here?"

That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

I don't much care – as long as I get somewhere," said Alice.

Then it doesn't matter which way you walk," said the Cat.

- *Lewis Carroll*

1. The Importance of Good Project Planning in IUCN

Approximately 80 per cent of the delivery of IUCN's work is carried out through projects that are designed to improve knowledge, build capacity and strengthen the governance of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. For IUCN to achieve its Mission and remain relevant in an increasingly complex world it must ensure that project and programme managers in IUCN are able to design and implement projects that address the most relevant conservation issues, that are well focused and realistic, and that are regularly monitored and evaluated in order to learn from experience.

Internal and external reviews of IUCN's work have recommended that if IUCN is to optimize the potential impact of the three pillars of the Union (the Secretariat, the Commissions and the Membership) to achieve the Mission of the Union, that it should undertake increased efforts to build and maintain project and programme planning, monitoring and evaluation capacity across the component parts of IUCN. This course represents one of the ways in which IUCN is responding to this challenge.

2. Defining Projects

A project is a set of well-defined resources dedicated to achieving specific results in a defined period of time. A project has a clear time frame (start and end), and a clear strategy of how to use resources to produce results. Projects are designed and implemented to address developmental needs or problems. IUCN projects specifically address conservation and development needs and problems.

2.1. Projects and change

Usually IUCN projects are designed and implemented to meet a felt conservation and/or development need. The critical assumption underlying these projects is that conditions will change as a direct result of the projects (Exhibit 1.1). At the heart of project design is deciding what to improve or change, and how a project can bring about that change.

However not all projects bring about dramatic change. Stabilising a situation or slowing the rate of decline could be just as important (Exhibit 1.2).

Exhibit 1.1 Conditions Improve as a Direct Result of Projects¹

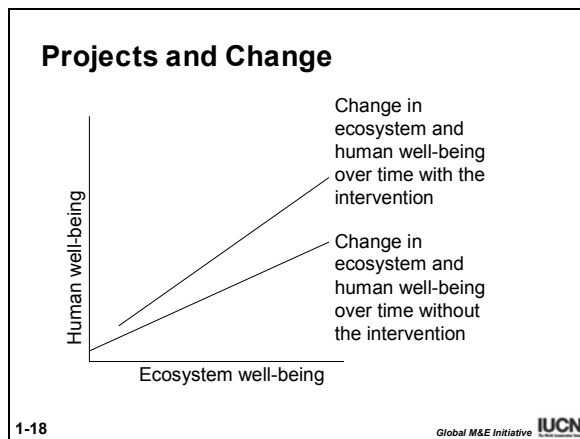
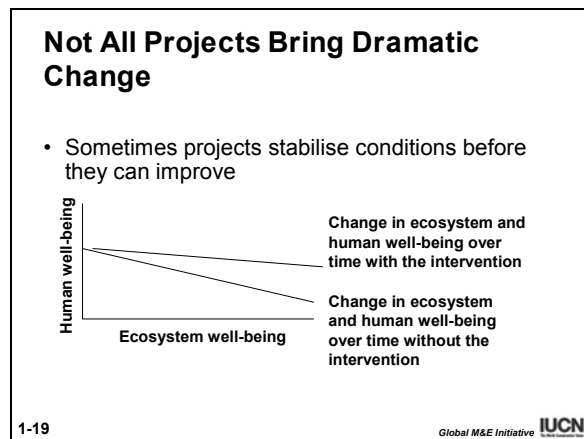


Exhibit 1.2 Condition Stabilises as a Result of the Project



All projects are based on assumptions about the nature of the needs or problems, the interventions needed to address them, and how the project interventions incrementally achieve the changes². Therefore, behind each project is a theory of action – a set of beliefs held by those who plan a project about how change will come about and why. If x, then y: For example, a personal theory of action might be “If I go to school, I will get better qualifications; better qualifications will help me get a better paying job and therefore more income and a better livelihood”.

This theory of action is based on several assumptions: that I am capable of learning and getting good grades; that I will study in a field that is not already flooded by good qualifications and so I can get a higher paying job; that the economy can support high salaries and finally that my income can cope with the rate of inflation. Any set of actions will lead to expected results only if certain conditions exist.

The validity of the connection between project initiatives and outcomes and impacts depends on the existence of conditions necessary for success, otherwise known as assumptions. Defining and mapping these conditions or assumptions provides a clearer road map of how the

¹ Based on ideas modified from Eric Oldsman, 2002. Using Logic Models in Development Evaluation. International Program for Development Evaluation Training and IUCN and Prescott-Allen, 1997. Barometer of Sustainability. Measuring and communicating wellbeing and sustainable development.

² Eric Oldsman, 2002. Using Logic Models in Development Evaluation. International Program for Development Evaluation Training

activities lead to eventual results. Most projects however do not do not make this road map clear, and even when they do, in some cases, it may be quite invalid³.

While the concept is simple, it has been confused by the many approaches and terms used by various development agencies. Communication has become complicated by, rather than facilitated by, the many different terms used to express the same idea.

IUCN works with a variety of donors who often require that their particular approach and terminology be used. Staff will therefore always need to understand the concepts underlying the variety of terms so that they can move easily among the languages and approaches of the different donors and partner organisations. The key, therefore, to cutting through the confusion created by different sets of terms is to understand the core concepts underlying the project design and planning process.

3. Approaches to Project Design and Planning

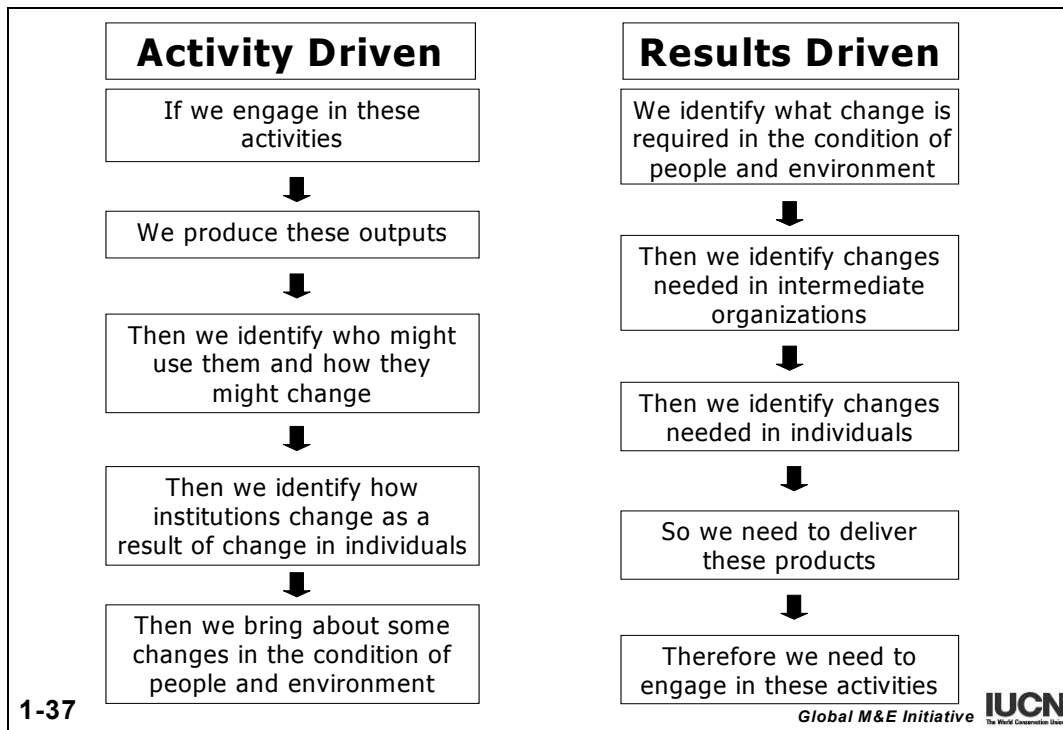
Different agencies use different methods to design project. The most commonly used methods include:

- ✓ The logical framework analysis (LFA);
- ✓ Objective oriented project planning (ZOPP in German, a close derivative of LFA);
- ✓ Logic models; and
- ✓ Results Based Management (RBM) or managing for results.

All these methods can be categorized as either a results based approach or an activity driven approach (Exhibit 1.3)⁴.

³ ibid

⁴ Modified from Alexandro Imbach (editor) – 2001. Finding the Way. A practical guide to self-evaluation of sustainable development projects.

Exhibit 1.3: Two common approaches to project design

A results driven approach is now the standard for planning in IUCN. Past experience in IUCN has revealed that IUCN projects were found to be busy with a wide range of activities, but were unclear on the specific results they were supposed to be delivering and the longer term changes they were supposed to be achieving.

Within the results based planning approach different institutions use it in different ways however there similar underlying design principles. In essence, they are:⁵

- ✓ To develop projects based on a thorough understanding of the situation in which an intervention is planned.
- ✓ To involve stakeholders in a participatory process of project design and evaluation.
- ✓ To develop a set of clear logical objectives that can realistically be achieved within a specific timeframe and budget, and that will make a significant and sustained contribution to a higher-level development objective.
- ✓ To make explicit the cause and effect relationships and external factors that influence or underpin the project, and that must hold true if planned activities are going to lead to desired results and impacts.
- ✓ To establish a monitoring and evaluation system which will show if the objectives have been achieved and will provide information to support effective management decision making and learning.

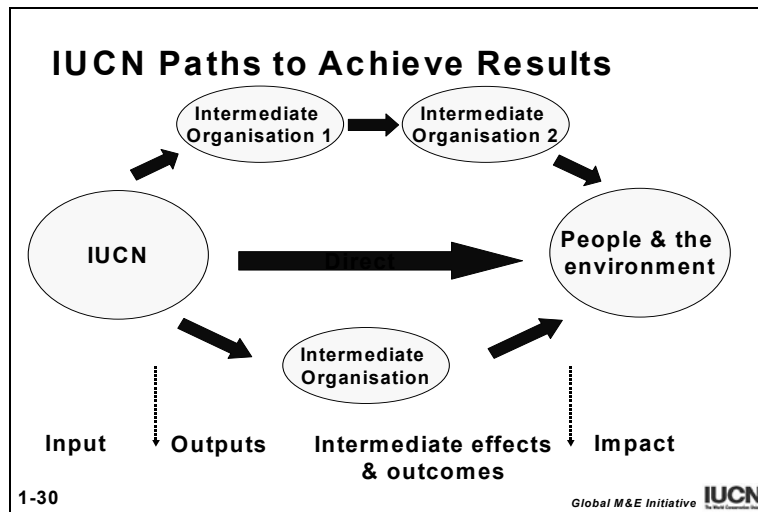
⁵ Jim Woodhill, 2000. Introduction to Key Concepts, Approaches and Terms - Working Draft Version 1. IUCN Global Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative

3.1. Principles of project design adopted by IUCN

The approach adopted by IUCN is one that emphasises the participation of stakeholders in analysing the situation and identifying realistic results. This requires clearly identifying project stakeholders and then designing projects that meet their needs and priorities (covered in Module 1). It also requires a clear identification of both the users and beneficiaries of project outputs. This is because the nature of IUCN is such that in most projects the use of outputs to achieve results is often outside the direct control of the projects and therefore IUCN (Exhibit 1.4).

During implementation, this approach emphasises the need to monitor progress and resource use by means of indicators (covered in Module 3 and 4). IUCN recognises that given the complexity of conservation and natural resource management and a rapidly changing wider environment, an adaptive approach to project management is essential. Monitoring information is used to adapt management strategies. Lessons are captured to increase knowledge about the processes that work well and why, as well as those that do not work so well. These lessons are incorporated in further practice in a learning cycle (Exhibit 1.5). Risks are identified and managed as part of the management strategy, and reporting is based on performance (achievement of outputs and results).

Exhibit 1.4: IUCN's Path to Results⁶

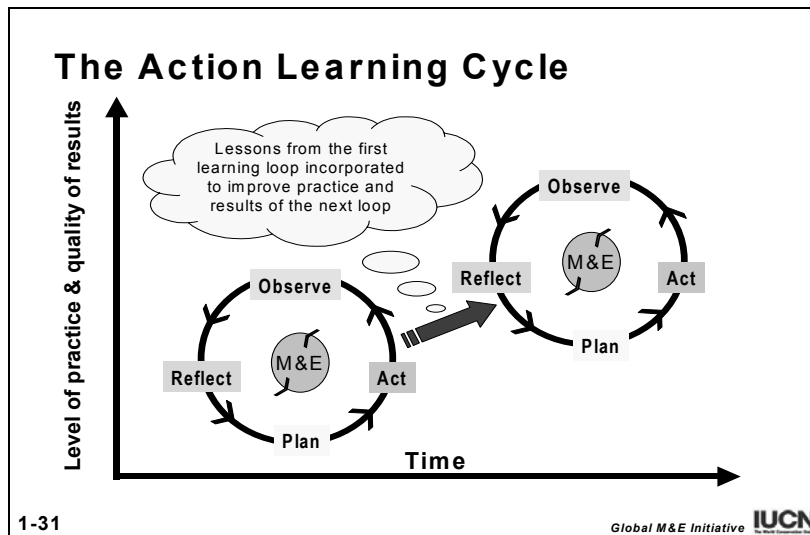


In designing a project that supports learning, analytical tools should be used during the planning process to clarify the project logic model, and indicators should be used to observe progress. Monitoring and reporting systems that support data collection (as one input into the

⁶ Alexandro Imbach 2000. Finding the Way. A guide to Practical self evaluation for development projects.

reflection process) are developed. Systems to support successful implementation are also developed and information from other parts of the cycle is used to engage in adaptive management, and best practices in the field of natural resources management is assessed and used.

Exhibit 1.5: Action Learning Cycle⁷



4. The Project Management Cycle

A project management cycle refers to the various stages required to conceive of and deliver a project. In IUCN the stages that have been adopted are - situation analysis, identification and design, project approval and funding, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, reporting and communication. (Exhibit 1.6).

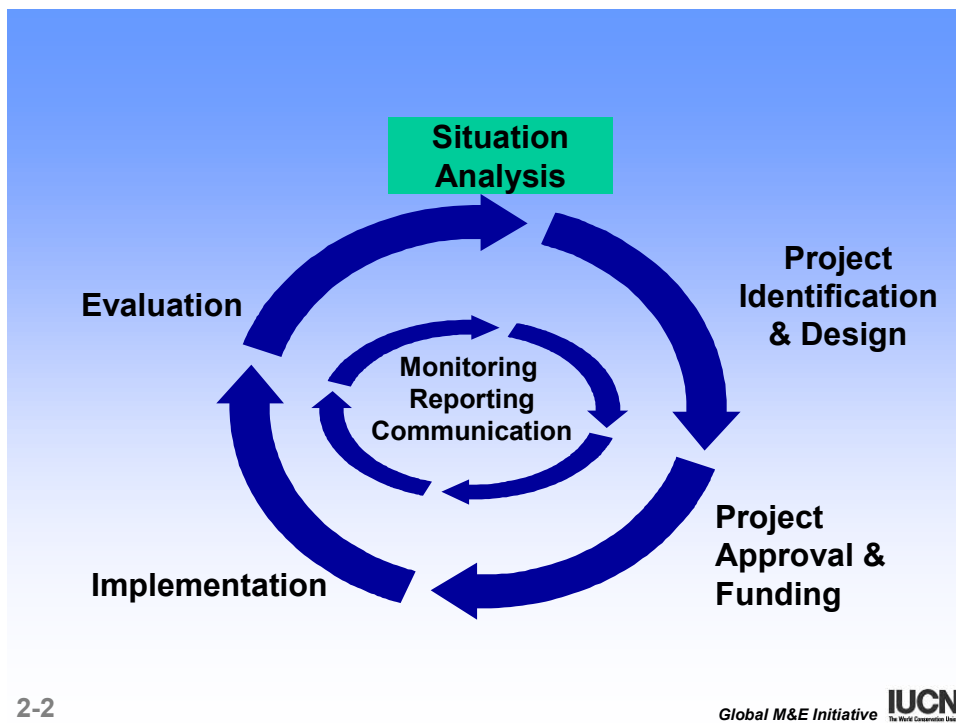
Often the cycle is repeated again for multiple phases of projects. Each stage of the cycle has different requirements in resources (time, money and staff) and usually institutions have

⁷ Modified from the following sources: 1) Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. 2) Ross, R., Smith, B., & Roberts, C. (1994). *The wheel of learning: Mastering the rhythm of a learning organisation*. In P. Senge, R. Ross, B. Smith, C. Roberts, & A. Kleiner (Eds.), *The fifth discipline fieldbook*. New York, NY: Currency/Doubleday.

standards to which they require each stage to meet. It is important to note that the cycle is not as linear as it appears, as illustrated by the elements of project design –

- √ Understanding the context (situation analysis) – Module 1
- √ Building logic models – Modules 2 and 3
- √ Developing a monitoring plan – Module 4
- √ Developing an evaluation plan – Module 5

Exhibit 1.6: Project management cycle in IUCN





5. Exercise 1.1 - Identifying stages of the Project Management Cycle



Time: 25 minutes

Instructions:

1. Working on your own, draw the IUCN project management cycle, labeling the various stages (5 minutes).
2. Share your results with your two neighbors and make one project management cycle from the three (5 minutes).
3. Discuss and agree 3 reasons why the project cycle is important (5 minutes)
4. We will discuss the results in a large group (10 minutes).

Test your understanding

1. What is a project?
2. What is a theory of action? Can you think of a quick example of theory of action?
3. What are the most critical issues one has to deal with during project design?
4. Why is it important to analyse conditions underlying a project's theory of action?
5. What is results based planning?
6. What are the underlying principles of results based planning?
7. Which principles are adopted by IUCN?
8. Why is it important to understand the underlying principles?
9. What are the two common approaches to project design and which one is adopted in IUCN?
10. Why is it important to understand the project management cycle?

Introduction to Project Planning in IUCN

Module 0

Importance of good project planning in IUCN

- 80 per cent IUCN's work is delivered through projects
- Critical that projects are relevant, well focused, realistic, monitored, evaluated
- Managers must have skills and capacity for PM&E if they are to learn from experience
- External and internal reviews have recommended that if IUCN is to optimize the potential impact of the Union – Members, Commissions, Secretariat - that project and programme managers must strengthen planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning from our work.
- This course is one contribution to meet that challenge.

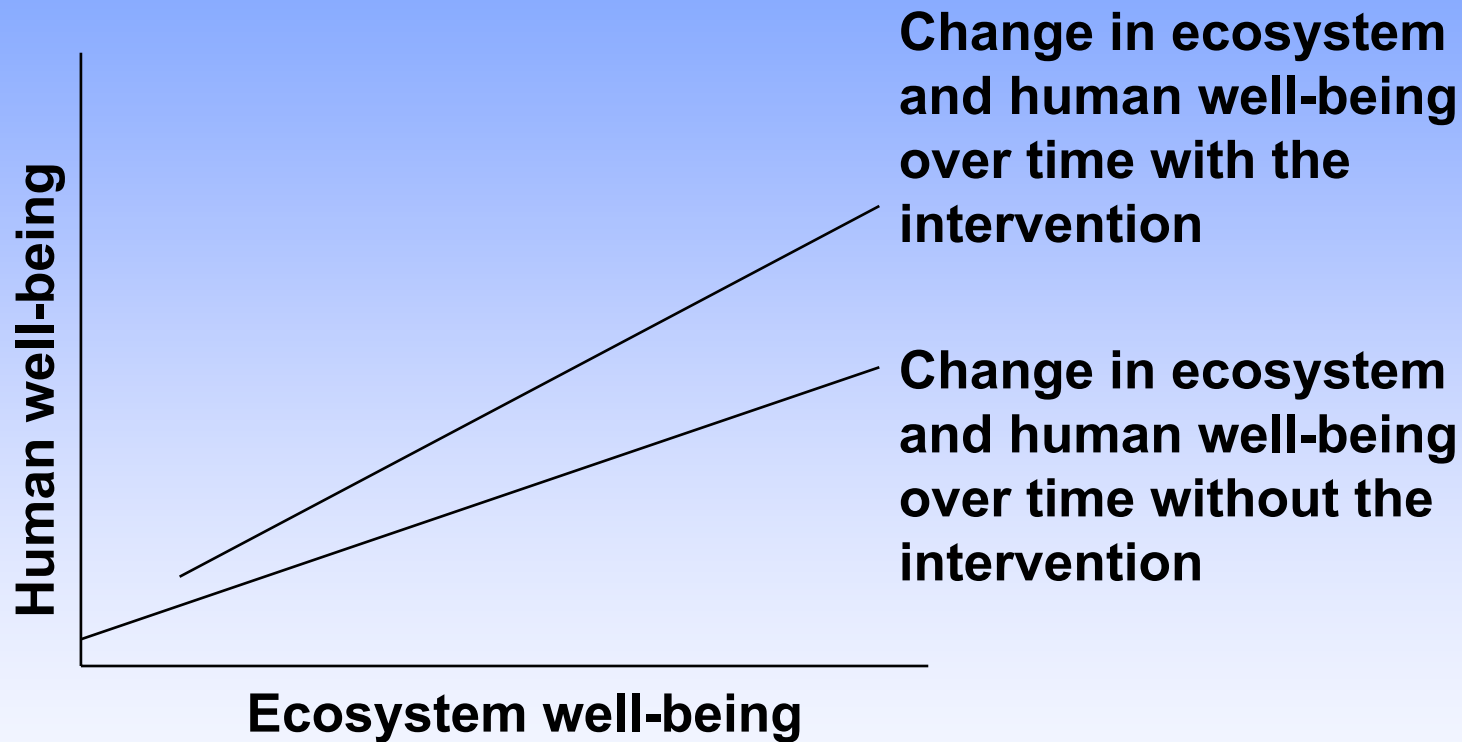
Objectives of the Module

- At the end of this session you will understand -
 - Importance of good project planning in IUCN
 - Definition of a project
 - Theory of action and logic models
 - Results-based approach to planning
 - Project management cycle

What is a project?

- A project is a set of well-defined resources dedicated to achieving specific results in a defined period of time
- Has a clear strategy of how to use resources to achieve results
- It is developed to meet a felt conservation and development need or problem

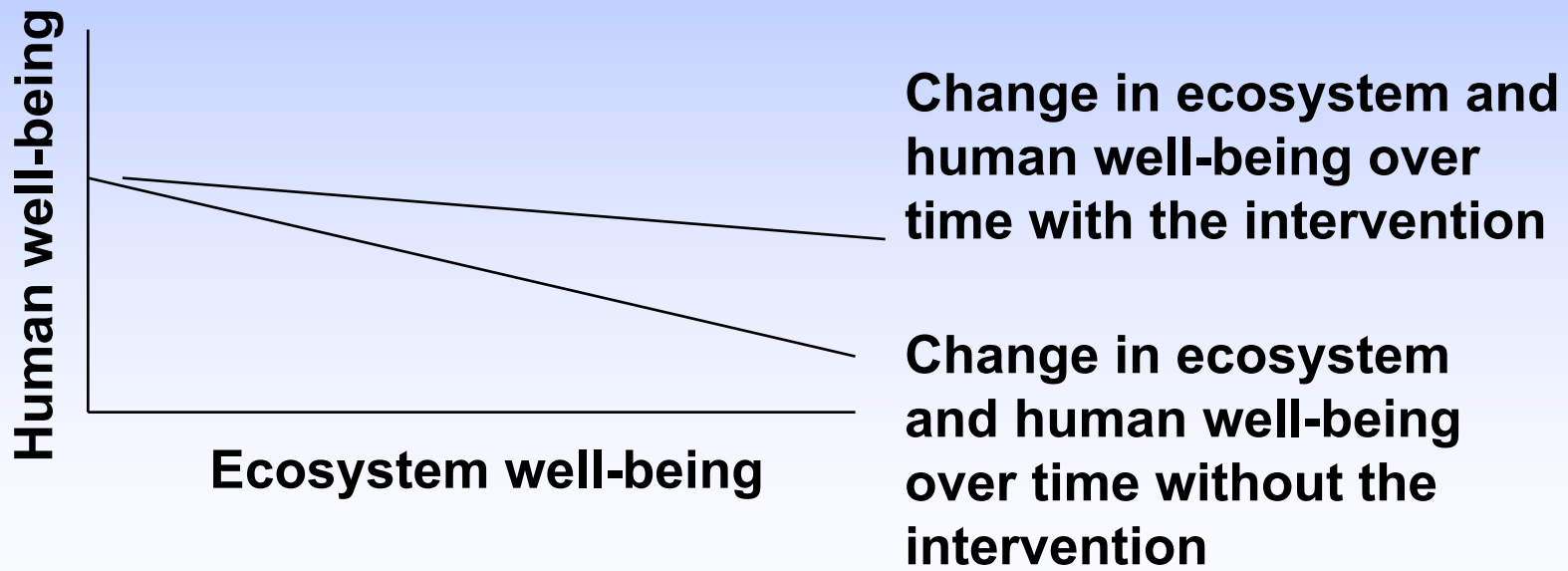
Projects and Change



Underlying assumption = conditions will change as a direct result of the project

Not All Projects Bring Dramatic Change

- Sometimes projects stabilise conditions before they can improve



Project design

- At the heart of project design is deciding -
 - WHAT to improve or change
 - HOW the project can bring about or contribute to the improvement or change
 - WHAT it will cost
 - HOW to obtain the necessary resources
 - HOW to tell if you are achieving your desired results

Theory of action as the basis of projects

- Projects are based on:
 - beliefs about the nature of the problem
 - assumptions about the interventions needed to address them, and
 - assumptions about how the project interventions build up to achieve the changes
- Behind each project is a theory of action – a set of beliefs held by those who plan a project about how change will come about.
- If x, then y – example:
 - “If I go to school, I get better qualifications; better qualifications lead to a better paying job and therefore more income and a better livelihood”.

Assumptions that underlie a Theory of Action

- Theory of action is based on several assumptions:
 - that I am capable of learning and getting good grades
 - that I will study in a field that is not already flooded by good qualifications and so can get a higher paying job
 - that the economy can support high salaries
 - that income obtained can cope with the rate of inflation.
- Any set of actions will lead to expected results only if certain conditions exist.

Project achievement depends on assumptions

- Validity of the connection between project initiatives and outcomes and impacts depends on the existence of conditions necessary for success - assumptions.
- Defining and mapping these conditions or assumptions provides a clearer road map of how the activities lead to eventual results.
- Most projects do not do not make this road map clear, and in some cases it may be quite invalid

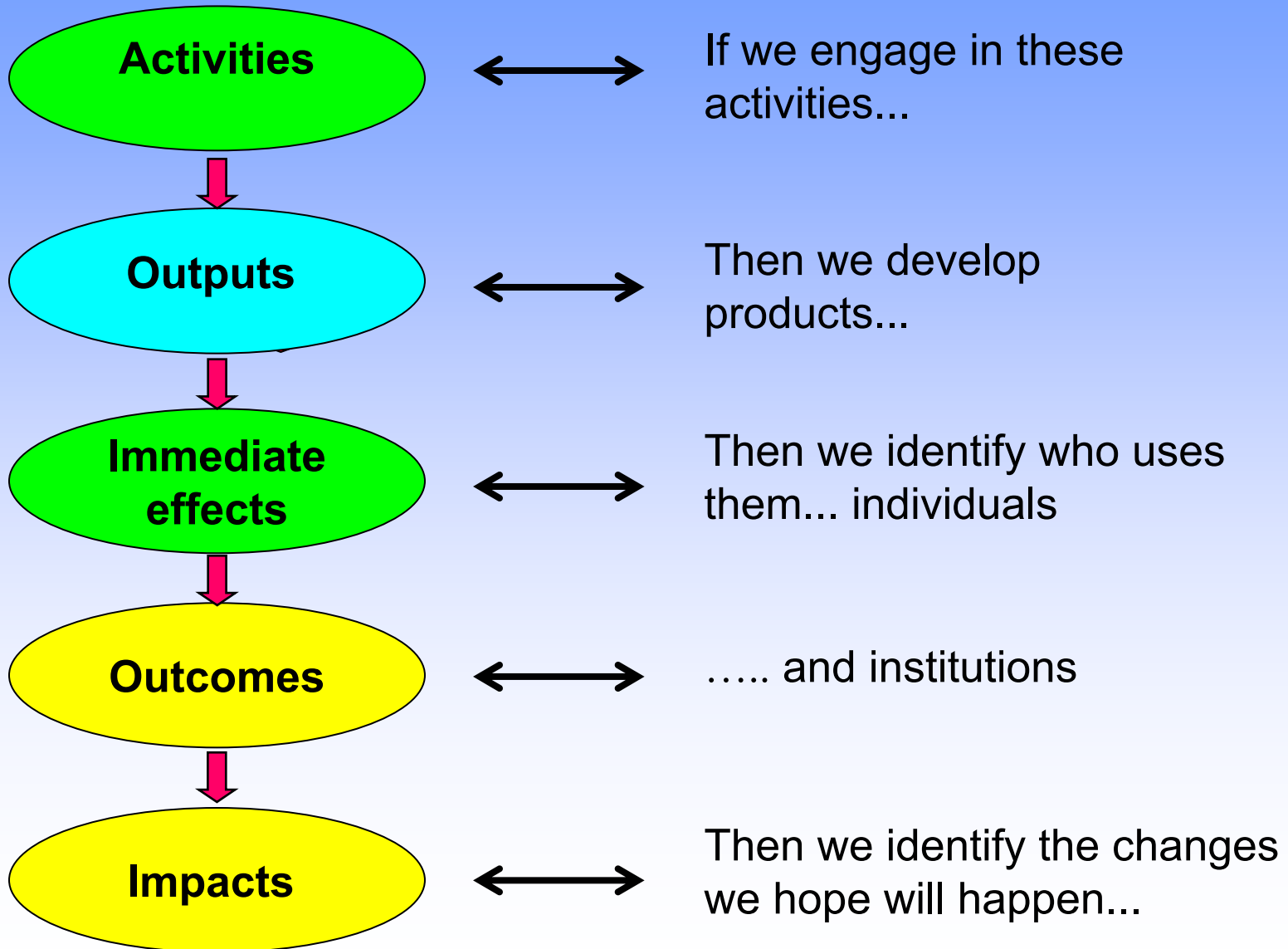
Confusion among approaches?

- IUCN works with a variety of donors who often require that their particular approach and terminology be used.
- Simple concept of theory of action is complicated by many approaches and terms used by various development agencies.
- This complicates communication and understanding unnecessarily
- Staff need to understand the concepts underlying the variety of terms so that they can move easily among the languages and approaches of the different donors and partner organisations.
- The key is to understand the CORE CONCEPTS underlying the project design and planning process – regardless of what terms are used.

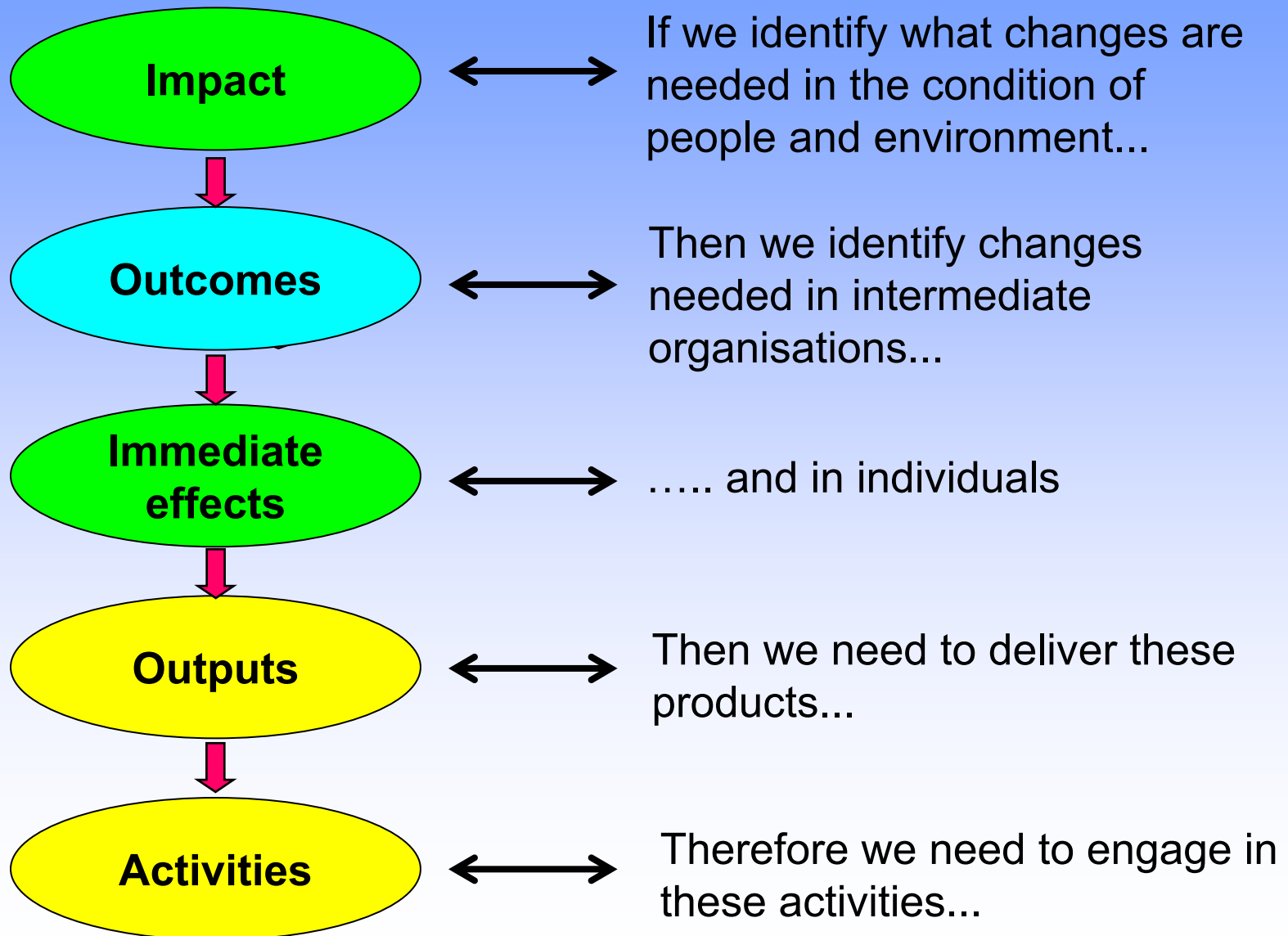
Common approaches to Project Design

- Different agencies use different approaches
- Most commonly used methods include:
 - The logical framework analysis (LFA)
 - The objective oriented project planning (ZOPP in German, a close derivative of LFA)
 - Logic models
 - Results Based Management (RBM) or managing for results.
- Some are product or activity driven, some are change or results driven

Activity Driven



Change Driven – Results Approach



Results Based Approach

- Most commonly used today – adopted by IUCN
- A planning approach that emphasises identification of change as a basis for planning
- Concept borrowed from (RBM) - Results Based Management
- RBM emphasises management driven by the need to achieve results
- Requires clarification of the theory of action and underlying assumptions

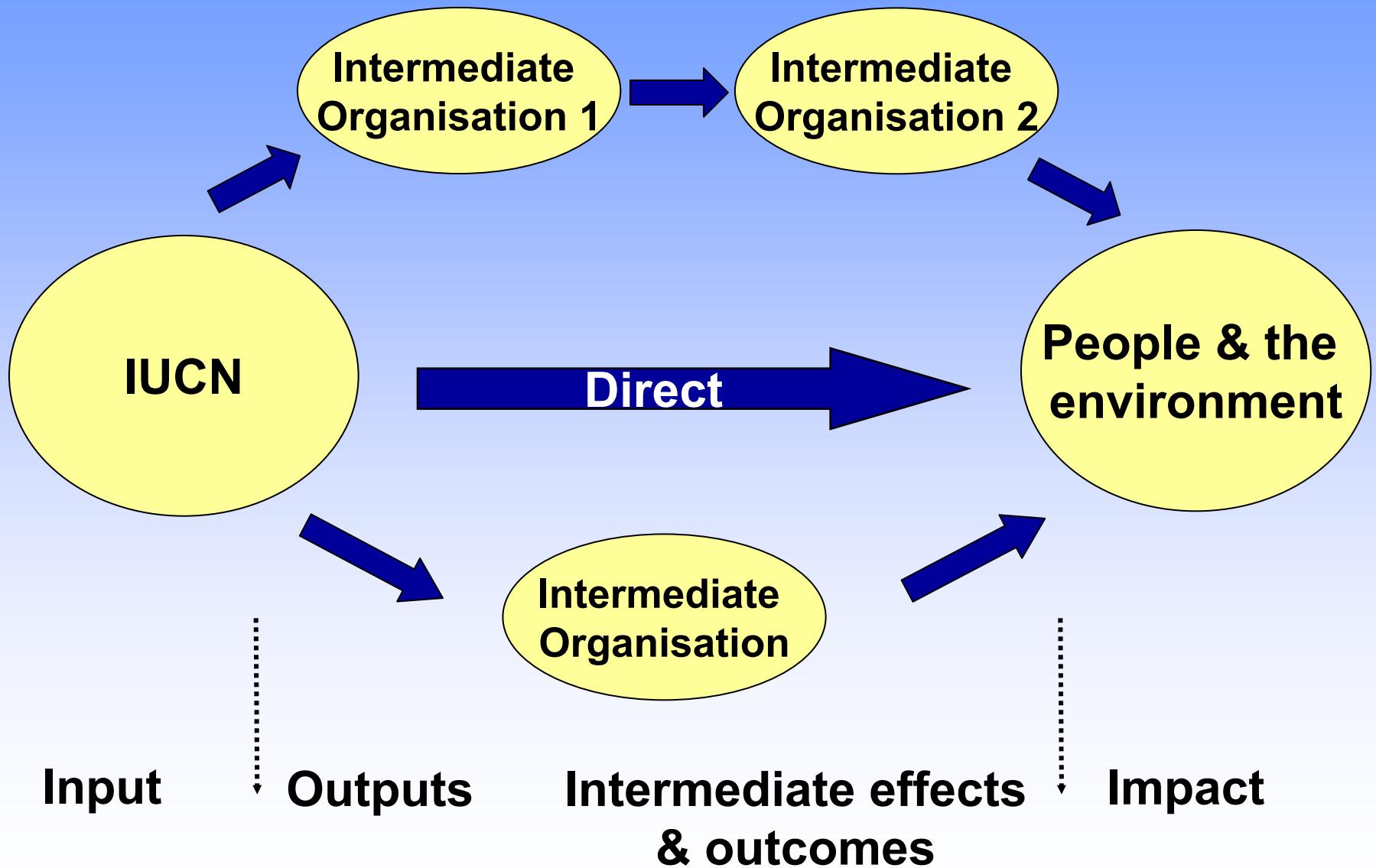
Approaches to Generating Results

- Different agencies, different approaches, different methods
- Similar underlying principles:
 - Develop projects based on thorough understanding of situation to improve
 - Participatory process - involve stakeholders
 - Develop clear logical achievable objectives
 - Select results that make significant contribution to improving condition
 - Make explicit cause and effect
 - Establish and use monitoring systems in adaptive management
- They all have implicit logic models

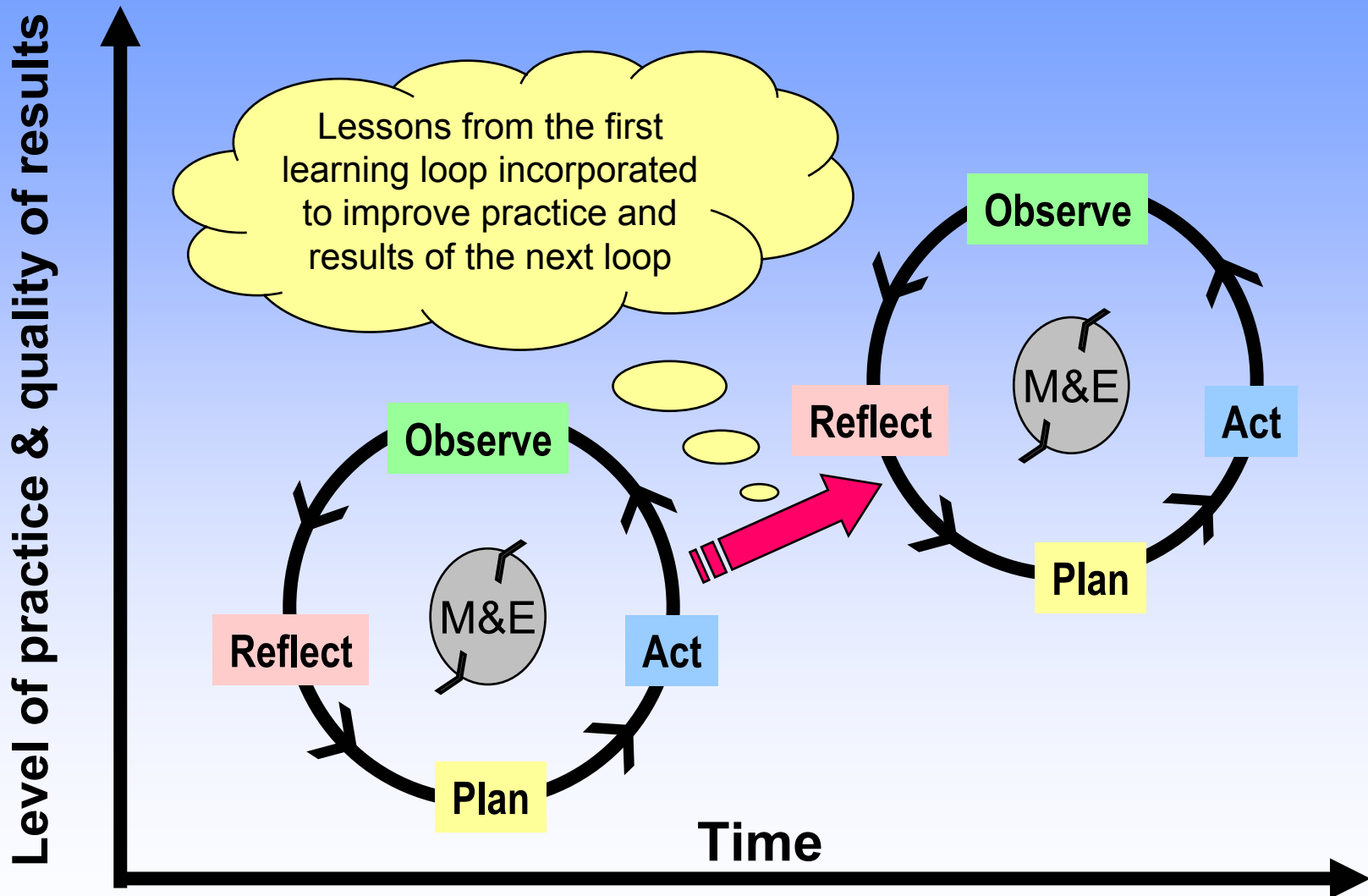
Principles of Results Based Approach Adopted by IUCN

- Clearly identify beneficiaries and partners
- Clearly identify outputs and users of the outputs
- Design relevant projects
- Define realistic results
- Monitor progress
- Use monitoring to support adaptive management
- Evaluate and capture lessons to increase knowledge and improve practice
- Identify and manage risks

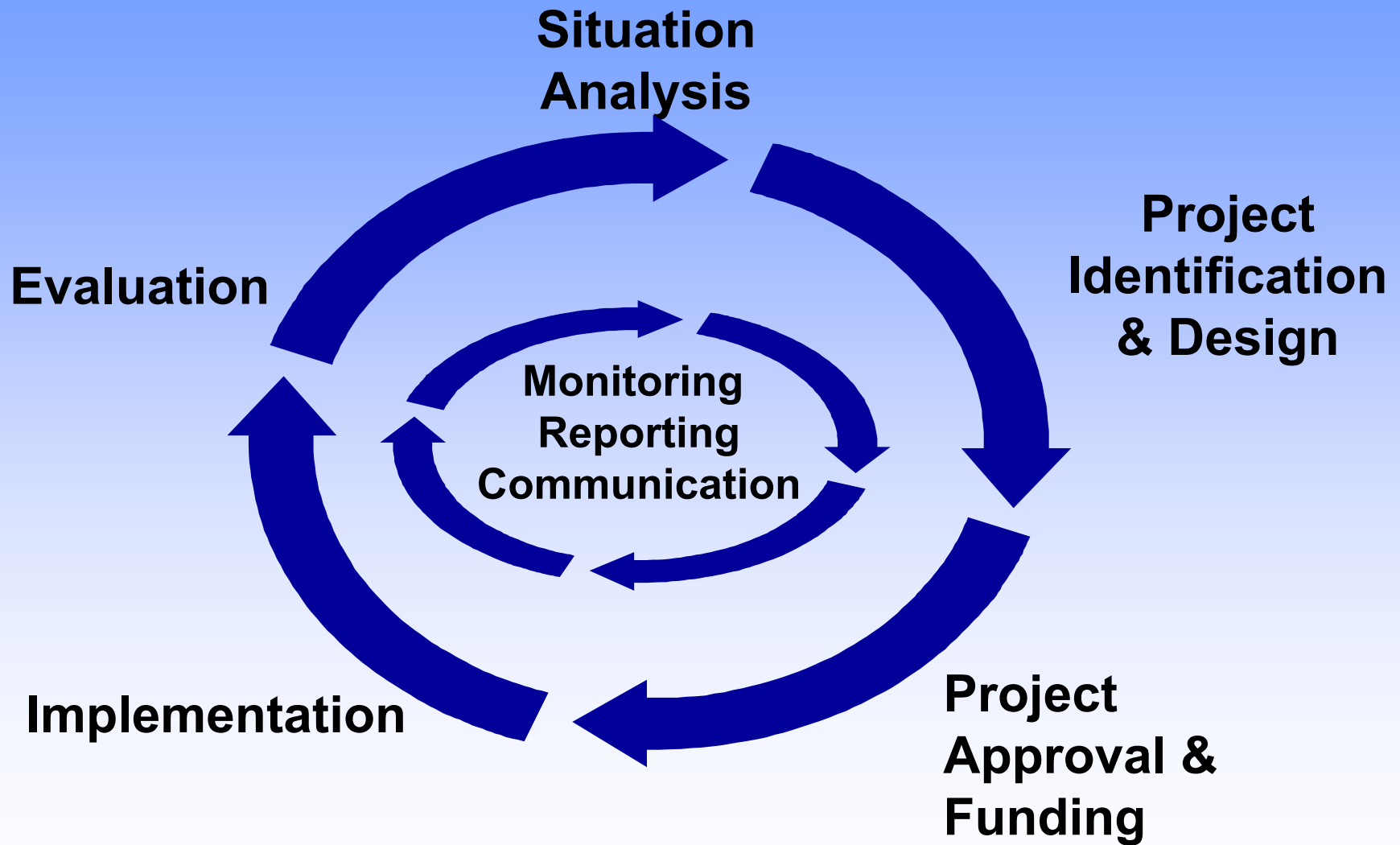
IUCN Paths to Achieve Results



The Action Learning Cycle



Project Cycle



Steps in project cycle and modules

- The following steps are used to design projects:
 - Understanding the context (situation analysis) – module 1
 - Building logic models – modules 2 and 3
 - Developing a monitoring plan – module 4
 - Developing an evaluation plan – module 5

Link to Project Cycle - exercise

- Projects are implemented within institutions as managed processes
- Exercise
 - Individually draw a project cycle (5 minutes)
 - Turn to your next two neighbours, compare and agree on one project cycle (5 minutes)
 - List 3 ways in which the project cycle is important (5 minutes)
 - We will discuss in plenary (10 minutes)

Test your understanding

1. What is a project?
2. What is theory of action? Can you think of a quick example of theory of action?
3. What are the most critical issues one has to deal with during project design?
4. Why is it important to analyse conditions underlying a project's theory of action?
5. What is results based planning in IUCN?
6. What are the underlying principles of results based planning?
7. Which principles are adopted by IUCN?
8. Why is it important to understand the underlying principles?
9. What are the two common approaches to project design?
10. Why is it important to understand the project management cycle?