WILDE GANZEN

ONTWIKKELINGSSAMENWERKING

PI-DOC 3 CONTEXT-ANALYSIS

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PI-DOC 3: CONTEXTANALYSIS

Introduction

It is the intention of your organization to cooperate with a Dutch group, a so-called Private Initiative (PI), to realize a project that is important for your work. The Dutch want to provide (part of) the money, and also other forms of support. Before starting to work, however, it is very important to be certain that your project is absolutely necessary. Also, it is important to know which circumstances and people can influence your project, both in positive as in negative ways. To discover this, it is necessary to make a *context analysis*, before starting the project.

The context of a project is the environment in which the project will take place. This environment consists of: other organizations, target group and institutions (cultural norms and values, laws, etc.) that will have an influence on the project. By doing an analysis, you map out the other actors in the field of the project, their relationships and what sort of relationship the project would like to have with these organizations. Next to actors, there are also factors in the environment of the project that could have a positive or negative influence on the project, for example political situation, climate, culture, etc. You may even conclude that the project is not really necessary, or would be impossible to realize.

1. The importance of a context analysis

To know and possibly to make use of the other actors may enlarge the success of the project and can contribute to its sustainability. It is important to map out clearly: who does what, who communicates with whom, who provides which services and products. It will help avoiding overlapping activities, it can generate useful tips and it may lead to interesting possibilities to collaborate. It all serves the purpose of a project that will address real needs. A context analysis thus helps to clear:

- the role of the project in relation to other development activities and/or services,
- the relevance of the project, in other words the extent to which the project actually addresses needs which are not taken care of by others,
- the possibilities for collaboration,
- the risks.

2. Knowing the context is of importance for the sustainability of the project

Proper knowledge of the context enables you to set up a project that is most needed and increases the chances for the project to be sustainable.

A sustainable project is a project of which the positive results will remain even after the project has come to an end. A project that is accepted in its context and fulfills an important role, will live longer than a project that was planned and implemented in isolation, even though the concept was right. This means that a context analysis is an important instrument for the sustainability of a project.

3. How to do a context analysis?

By doing a context analysis, the following questions will be answered:
1. Who are the other actors in the direct environment of the project, with whom the project might want to collaborate and with whom relations already exist?
2. Which factors in the environment of the project could have an influence, positive or negative?

THE OTHER ACTORS

Before we decide on which actors are important in the context of a project, we need to choose our starting point. This could be *a project* or *the organization* that will implement the project.

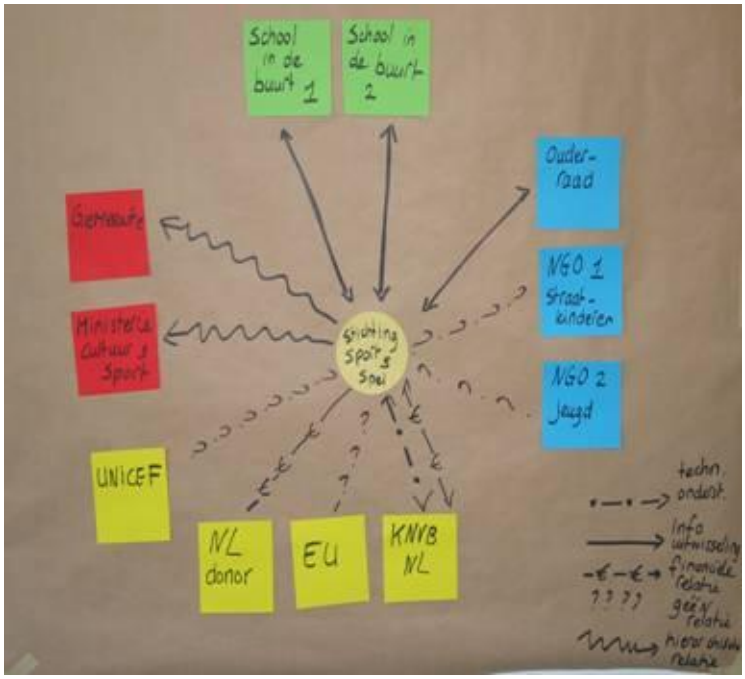
Step 1: Decide whether the organization or the project will be starting point of the analysis.
Formulate a question like the following:
Which actors do we need to take into account, and in which ways, in order to guarantee the viability and relevance of the project?
By doing the analysis based on a few specific questions, we will literally create a picture, a visualization of the organization or project and the existing relations with other organizations.

Step 2: Identify all stakeholders that have, will have or could have a relation to the project.
Think of:
- The target group (organized or not);
- Development organizations (NGOs, networks, etc.) which are already active in the area of the project, village, city or country;
- Political, social, socio-cultural, technical and religious organizations nearby (churches, schools, local government offices, companies, formal or informal leaders).

Step 3: Describe the relations of the organization with the actors identified in step 2.
Think of:
- Is the relation hierarchical: who gives orders to whom?
- The relation could be cooperative: who collaborates with who?
- Is the relation operational: are any services or products provided?
- Is the relation financial: who finances who?

Step 4: Describe the intensity of the relationship.
Intensity can be expressed in:
- amount of goods or services provided;
- frequency of communication;
- importance (power) of the relation.

Step 5: Make the relationships visible on a sheet of paper, like:



Step 6: Draw conclusions on the basis of the picture.
The image we made shows us the following:
- all important actors/organizations;
- all important relations;
- the intensity and quality of the relations.

The picture helps us to reach the following conclusions:
- how complex the environment of the project will be;
- which actors are important, but we do not yet have a relation with (so you could start to build that relation);
- whether there are other organizations active in the same field;
- which organizations are important/influential to the success of the project;
- the importance of the project in this context and how to explain this importance to outsiders (for example donors);
- whether the project needs to be adapted;
- and maybe: is it better to abandon the project altogether?

WHICH FACTORS AROUND A PROJECT CAN HAVE A POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE INFLUENCE?

Next to mapping out the actors in the field of the project it is also crucial to identify and analyse the factors that have positive or negative influence on the project.

Step 1: What is the central point in your analysis, the project or the organization?

Step 2: Formulate the question to be answered by the analysis.
For example: what rules and habits do I need to take into account (and in which ways) to guarantee the feasibility and relevance of the project?

Step 3: Determine the scope of the analysis.

Step 4: Make a list of all factors that have a positive or negative influence on the project.

Think of: political and legal factors, infrastructure, technical and economic aspects, financial factors, religious and cultural influences.

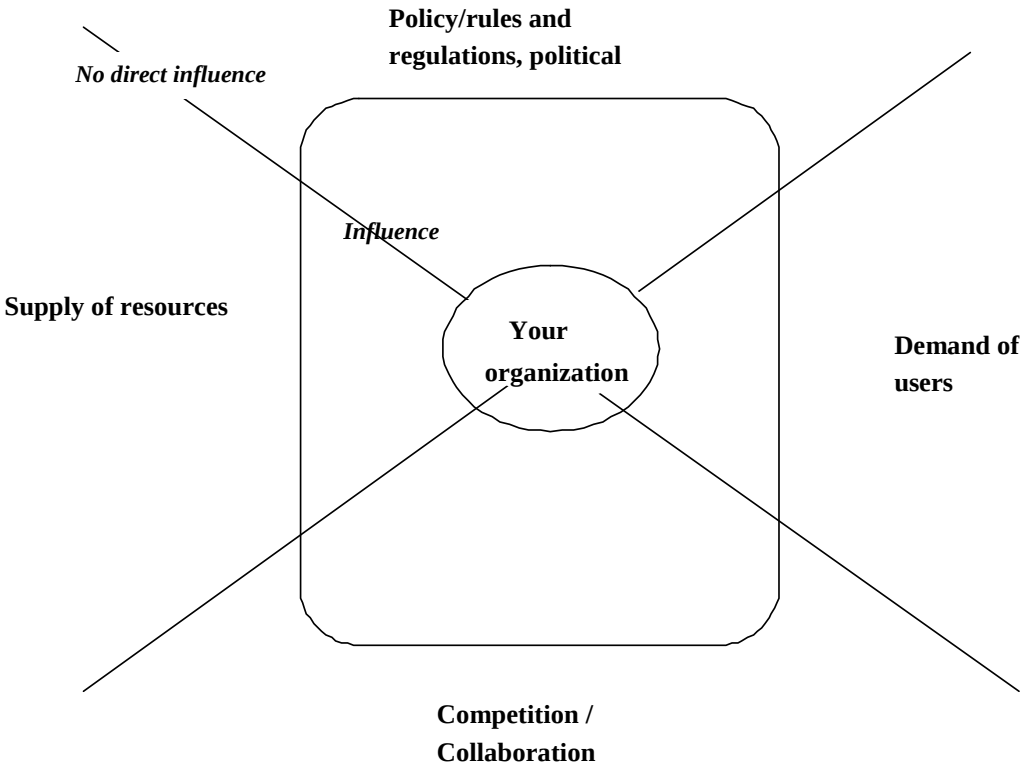
Step 5: How important is each factor for the success of the project?

Step 6: Could it be possible for the project to influence the factor? Is the project able to increase or decrease the importance of the factor?

Step 7: Group and analyze the factors in the following four categories:

1. Policy, politics and procedures
2. Supply
3. Demand
4. Collaboration/competition

Step 8: Complete the following picture:



Step 9: Looking at the picture, draw conclusions about the positive and negative influences and the extent to which the project is able to influence them.

4. Conclusions based on both context analyses: Relationships and Factors

How to draw conclusions to plan a successful project, based on both analyses? For this, they should be connected to each other. Put the conclusions of both analyses side by side and ask yourself the following questions:

- Do both analyses show any similar conclusions? This could confirm that we are right in some aspects.
- Are there major differences between the analyses, what are they and what can we learn from them? Are they positive or negative for the project?
- Are there any relations or factors we can make use of for the implementation of the project?
- Are there any relations or factors that could benefit the project, which do not exist yet, but we can work on?
- Do we need to adjust the project, or maybe even abandon the idea?

Sustainability

It is in the interest of both your organization and the target group that the project will continue to exist, even after the Dutch PI has withdrawn support. By positioning the project in its local context the chances of sustainability will increase. Doing the context analysis together with the target group means including their experience and knowledge about the local context. This will also increase the ownership of the project.
More about this topic can be found in PI-doc 4 “sustainability of the project”.

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