Save the Children® | OXFAM

THE LOCAL ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK:

A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO INTEGRATING COUNTRY

Ownership

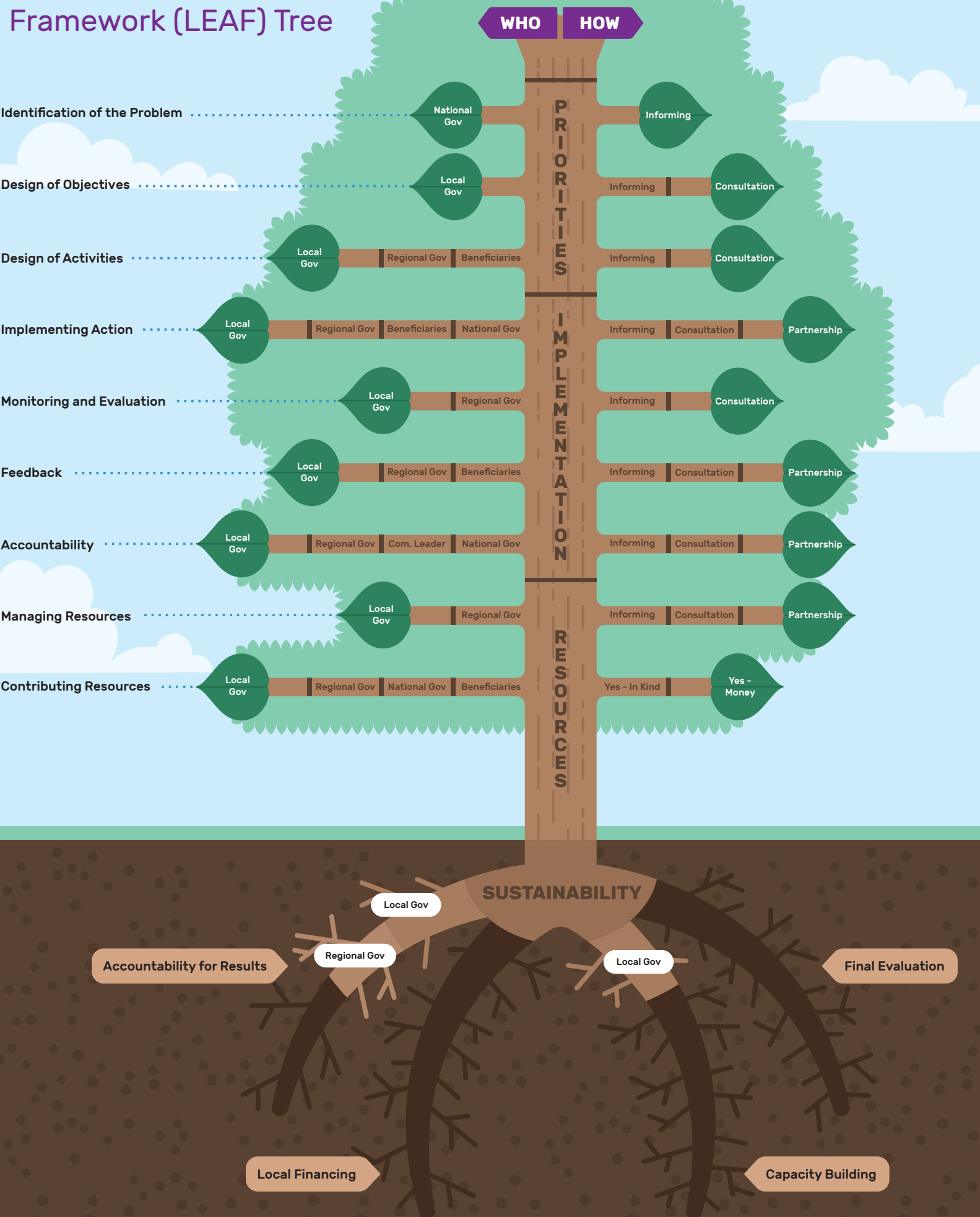**INTO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

Contents

The Local Engagement Assessment Framework (LEAF) Tree

WHO | **HOW**

PRIORITIES

Stage	WHO				HOW		
Identification of the Problem	National Gov						Informing
Design of Objectives	Local Gov					Informing	Consultation
Design of Activities	Local Gov	Regional Gov	Beneficiaries			Informing	Consultation

IMPLEMENTATION

Stage	WHO				HOW		
Implementing Action	Local Gov	Regional Gov	Beneficiaries	National Gov	Informing	Consultation	Partnership
Monitoring and Evaluation	Local Gov	Regional Gov				Informing	Consultation
Feedback	Local Gov	Regional Gov	Beneficiaries		Informing	Consultation	Partnership
Accountability	Local Gov	Regional Gov	Com. Leader	National Gov	Informing	Consultation	Partnership

RESOURCES

Stage	WHO				HOW		
Managing Resources	Local Gov	Regional Gov			Informing	Consultation	Partnership
Contributing Resources	Local Gov	Regional Gov	National Gov	Beneficiaries	Yes – In Kind		Yes – Money

SUSTAINABILITY

Local Gov

Local Gov

Regional Gov

Local Gov

Accountability for Results

Final Evaluation

Local Financing

Capacity Building

Definition of Key Terms

Country ownership

Allowing countries that are recipients of international development assistance to lead their own development in those partnerships.

Development project

A limited, closely related set of activities funded by an international donor, usually implemented by a single (or small number of) organization(s) and/or actor(s), to improve development outcomes in a country.

Local stakeholders[1]

Communities, organizations, or institutions that are indigenous to the partner country. This includes government at all levels, civil society, the private sector, communities, and individuals. It does not include international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) or the international private sector – even those based in the country – or other external implementers.

LEAF assessment of ownership by category

Priorities: Local stakeholders' level of engagement is assessed in identifying the development problem and designing project goals and plans to address the problem.[2]

Implementation: Local stakeholders' level of agency and decision-making power is assessed against their responsibilities in carrying out and managing the implementation of project activities, including implementing project interventions, monitoring and evaluation, and collecting and integrating local feedback into the project.[3]

Resources: Local stakeholders' level of engagement is assessed against their involvement in project budgeting decisions, financial management of project resources, and contribution of local financial or in-kind resources to the project.[4]

Sustainability: Local stakeholders' level of engagement is assessed against indicators deemed important for local actors to sustain project results, including whether or not there is local accountability for continued results; whether the project makes investments towards long-term, local financing; whether it includes investments in local capacity building; and whether it plans for an ex-post evaluation. The project is assessed on a binary scale for each of these, noting which local actors are involved.

LEAF rubric for assessing local actors' engagement in setting priorities and implementation

Informing: Local stakeholders receive information regarding a project phase and may share their views, but without any effort by the donor/implementing partner to consider or act on these views.

Consultation: Local stakeholders share their views on a project phase, with the donor/implementing partner obligated in some way to consider or act on these views and to communicate how this input impacted the project.

Partnership: Local stakeholders are part of a formal system that provides them an opportunity to work with the donor/implementing partner to make decisions jointly for a project phase.

Delegated Power: Local stakeholders take the lead in making decisions and taking action with regard to a project phase within agreed parameters.

I. Introduction

The Local Engagement Assessment Framework (LEAF) was designed by Oxfam America, Save the Children, and the Overseas Development Institute as a tool for planning and assessing the level of local stakeholder engagement in development projects. Save the Children and Oxfam America have produced this Practitioners' Guide – which explains how to use the LEAF – as a planning tool to help development professionals design, monitor, and evaluate projects to integrate strong country ownership principles.

The goal of the LEAF is to encourage the highest level of local ownership that is appropriate, based on the project and the context, in each phase and element of a discrete project or activity. It can be used across agencies, countries, and development sectors.

The LEAF facilitates an assessment of ownership by graphically depicting **who** among the host country government, civil society, and private sector was engaged with a project, **how** that engagement empowered local stakeholders, and during **what** parts of the project cycle the engagement took place. This guide includes:

- A step-by-step description of how to apply the LEAF to a project

- A workbook for using the LEAF for project planning

- A sample, real-world application of the LEAF

- An examination of the LEAF's limitations

II. How to Apply the LEAF to a Project

The following section provides a concise, step-by-step guide on how to apply the LEAF to a development project. It is written as if the LEAF tool is being used as a planning tool; however, it can also be used as a monitoring and/or evaluation tool during or after the project. Section III provides a workbook for planning how local ownership will be pursued in each aspect of a project in addition to a blank tree to fill out.

STEP ONE: Identify local stakeholders

Before applying the LEAF, practitioners should define the cohort of stakeholders for the 'who' variable. In order to best identify which stakeholders should be engaged in the project, analyses of the national and local political economy should first be conducted. (If the LEAF is being used as a monitoring or evaluation tool, this determination could be made by drawing on project documents and interviews with a diverse group of respondents – both local and representing the donor – who are familiar with the project.)

The resulting cohort of stakeholders may include national government ministries, civil society organizations, private sector organizations, community beneficiaries, and local government organizations, among others.

Only local stakeholders are mapped on the 'who' section of the LEAF tree (see step two below). International stakeholders, including donor agencies and implementing partners, are not mapped.

In order to be mapped on the tree for a specific project phase, local stakeholders need to be engaged at least at the minimum level of having been 'informed,' as defined in the list of key terms above. Project phases conducted exclusively by the donor, or on the donor's behalf, with no engagement of local stakeholders reaching the 'informing' threshold are left blank on the tree.

STEP TWO: Map stakeholders' engagement levels for priorities and implementation

After a complete list of engaged local stakeholders has been compiled, the second step is to map each one according to the degree to which they will be engaged at each stage. The local actors should be captured on the left side of the tree under the 'who' and the level of engagement on the right side of the tree under the 'how.'

For the **priorities** and **implementation** phases, each of the local stakeholder groups that will be engaged in that phase at the level of informing or higher should be listed in one of the cells on the left side of the tree. The group with the highest level of engagement should be listed farthest from the trunk of the tree. Once this is completed, the 'how' side of the LEAF maps the quality of ownership only for the stakeholder group with the highest level of engagement (see sample LEAF below for details).

To determine the 'how' assessment for each branch, consult the criteria for each phase and fill in one cell for *informing,* two for *consulting,* three for *partnership,* and four for *delegated power.*
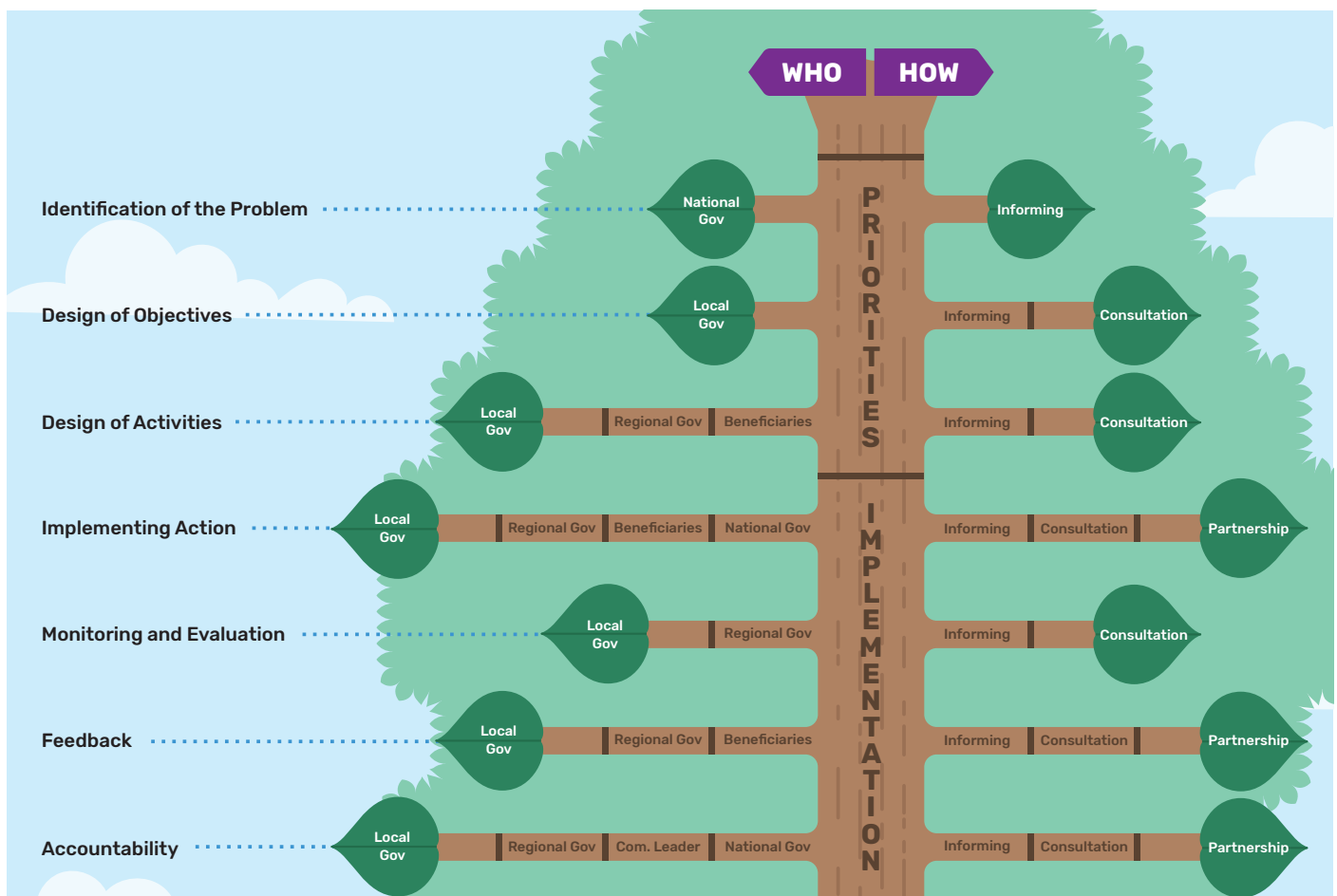
STEP THREE: Map stakeholders' engagement for resourcing and mapping sustainability

In terms of the **resources** section of the tree, the role of local stakeholders in managing resources is mapped in the same manner as above, with the relevant local actors appearing on the left under the 'who' section, and the extent of their engagement being captured on the right under the 'how.' In addition, the contribution of resources is assessed against yes or no criteria and is noted on the 'how' side of the tree.
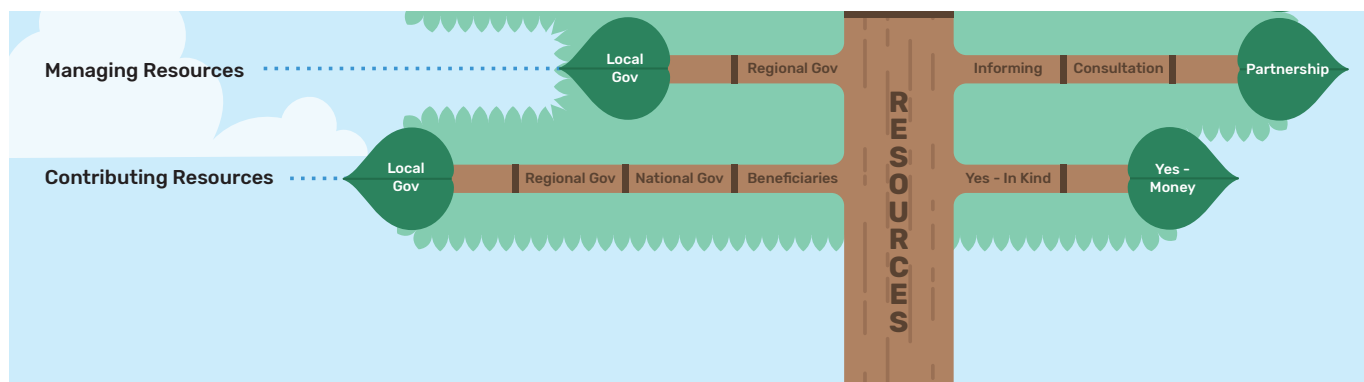
For **sustainability** questions, which form the 'roots' of the tree, the methodology is also binary: four yes or no questions. The root extends further down for each local stakeholder group that is engaged in that activity – so the longer the root, the more local stakeholder groups are involved – with the groups noted on the roots.
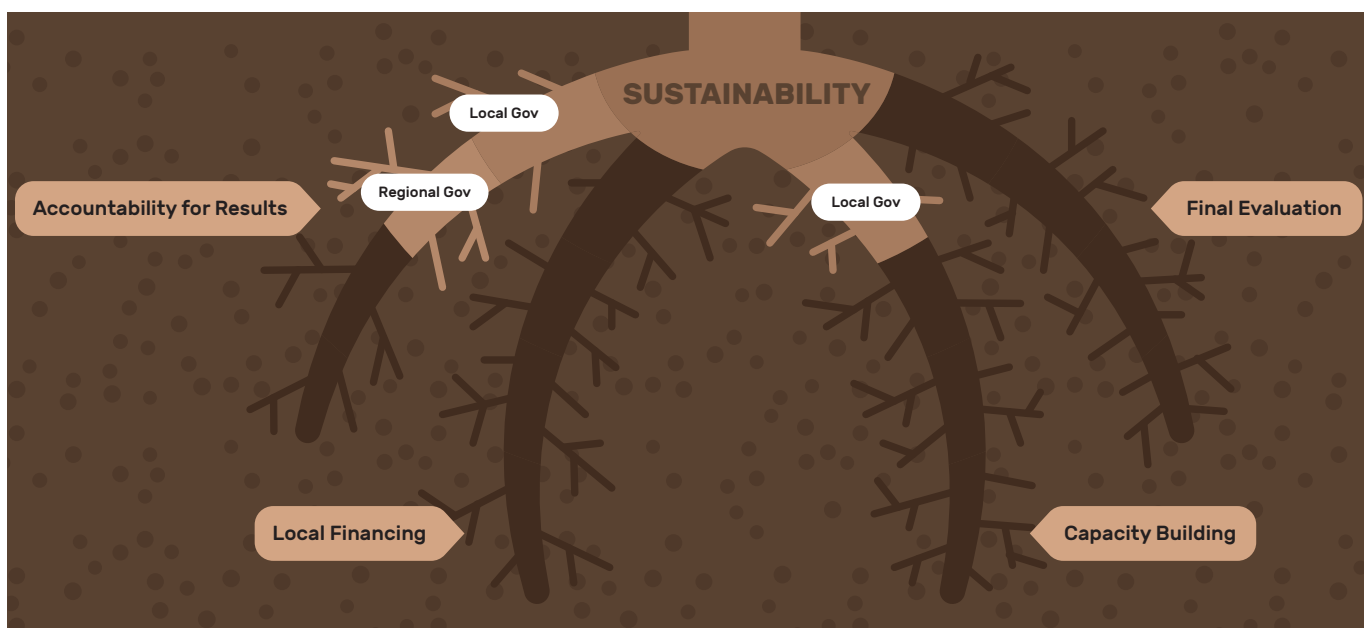
STEP FOUR: The LEAF narrative

The LEAF is not only a graphic depiction of the country ownership quality of a development project. In order to capture some of the nuances and complexity of ownership during each project cycle phase, a LEAF assessment should also include a narrative description of how a particular level of engagement will be determined. See Section IV for a sample LEAF assessment narrative.

III. PRACTITIONER WORKBOOK

The following workbook prompts the practitioner to describe how local ownership will be pursued at each stage of a development project as well as the specific stakeholders engaged. As mentioned in the key terms at the start of the toolkit, local stakeholders are defined as communities, organizations, or institutions that are indigenous to the country. When planning local stakeholder engagement, it's key to identify the local institutions and processes which already exist in the local context. Working through local processes and institutions could include adapting project design to align with national, regional, and local development plans, implementing the project using local organizations or government structures, and using local governance structures for ensuring feedback and accountability of the project.

STEP ONE: Results of Stakeholder Analysis

Which stakeholder groups will the project engage at the "informing" level or higher at any stage of the project?

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STEP TWO: Mapping Stakeholders' Engagement Levels for Priorities and Implementation

Priorities

1.1: Identification of the problem – What is your plan to engage local stakeholders in identifying the problem? (Examples include: Child survival, small and medium enterprise development, women's political participation, etc.)

Informing – Local stakeholders will be informed about donor priorities/challenges to be addressed, but without any effort by the donor/international implementing partner (unless otherwise specific, referred to henceforth as 'the donor') to consider or act on these views

Consultation – Local stakeholders will share their views on development priorities/challenges and the donor will provide formal feedback (for example through subsequent meetings or written communication) explaining how these views will be considered in the identification of the development problem

Partnership – The development issue/challenge will be determined through a formal dialogue/process between the donor and local stakeholders to jointly decide priority issues

Delegated power – Local stakeholders will lead the process of defining the priority development issue/challenge to address and these priorities will be adopted with minimal influence from the donor

List stakeholder groups that will be engaged in identification of the problem and the planned level of engagement (informed, consulted, etc.) Mark with a star the stakeholder groups that will be engaged at the highest level.

Stakeholder group:

Level of engagement:

Describe the plan for stakeholder engagement:

1.2: Design of objectives – What is your plan to engage local stakeholders in a process to determine the project objectives?

Informing – Local stakeholders will be informed about donor project objectives

Consultation – Local stakeholders will share their views on the development project objectives, and the donor will be accountable either formally or informally (for example, through subsequent meetings or written communication) for considering those views and explaining how and why they will be incorporated (or not) in the project objectives

Partnership – Project objectives will be determined through a formal dialogue or process through which the donor and local stakeholders will jointly decide project goals

Delegated power – Local stakeholders will lead the creation/selection of the project objectives with minimal influence from the donor

List stakeholder groups that will be engaged and the planned level of engagement in the design of objectives. Mark with a star the stakeholder groups that will be engaged at the highest level.

Stakeholder group:

Level of engagement:

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Describe the plan for stakeholder engagement:

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1.3: Design of activities – What is your plan to engage local stakeholders on the selection of activities?

Informing – Local stakeholders will be informed by the donor about project activities, but without formal donor accountability to act on those views

Consultation – Local stakeholders will share their views on project activities, and the donor will be accountable to explain how their views were or were not incorporated

Partnership – Project activities will be determined through a formal dialogue/process between the donor and local stakeholders to jointly decide on and design the most appropriate activities

Delegated power – Local stakeholders will lead the design/selection of project activities, and these will be adopted for the project with little influence from the donor

List stakeholder groups that will be engaged and the planned level of engagement in the design of activities. Mark with a star the stakeholder groups that will be engaged at the highest level.

Stakeholder group:

Level of engagement:

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Describe the plan for stakeholder engagement:

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Implementation

2.1: Implementing action – What is your plan for local stakeholders to implement project activities?

Informing – Local stakeholders will participate in delivering/implementing project activities, but will have no or a minimal role in management/decision-making on activity implementation

Consultation – Local stakeholders will hold some responsibility for the overall management of implementation activities, but the majority of implementation decision-making will be controlled by the donor

Partnership – Local stakeholders will partner with the donor to manage project implementation against the planned project objectives

Delegated power – Local stakeholders will lead the implementation of project activities and will retain independent decision-making power throughout implementation

List stakeholder groups that will be engaged and the planned level of engagement in the implementation of project activities. Mark with a star the stakeholder groups that will be engaged at the highest level.

Stakeholder group:

Level of engagement:

Describe the plan for stakeholder engagement:

2.2: Monitoring and evaluation – What is your plan for local stakeholders to be engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of project activities?

Informing – Local stakeholders will be informed about the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, objectives and metrics. The donor will generate M&E data and determine whether or not the project is on track. The donor will share data and findings with local stakeholders, but local stakeholders will not have decision-making power

Consultation – Local stakeholders will be informed about the donor M&E system, objectives, and metrics; the donor generates the data and determines whether or not the project is on track. The donor will share data and findings with local stakeholders and seek feedback and suggestions. The donor will explain to local stakeholders how their views were or were not incorporated into M&E design and reports

Partnership – Local stakeholders will partner with the donor in determining and carrying out key M&E activities including targets, tools, data analysis, and recommendations. Joint decisions will be made on project success and failure and on whether or not to make changes as a result of M&E findings

Delegated power – Local stakeholders will lead M&E design and activities, assess whether or not a project is meeting success criteria, and determine if and what changes are needed as a result of M&E findings

List stakeholder groups that will be engaged and the planned level of engagement in monitoring and evaluation activities. Mark with a star the stakeholder groups that will be engaged at the highest level.

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Level of engagement:

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Describe the plan for stakeholder engagement:

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2.3: Feedback – What is your plan for how local stakeholders will be engaged in providing feedback and considering how to adapt the project during implementation (beyond formal M& E processes)?

Informing – Local stakeholders will be informed about the overall implementation of project activities and given an opportunity to provide input, but the donor will not be held accountable for considering or acting on these views

Consultation – Local stakeholders will be given the opportunity to provide input about the overall implementation of the project activities, and the donor will explain – either formally or informally – how their views were or were not incorporated into the project

Partnership – A formal process will exist whereby local stakeholders provide ongoing feedback regarding the implementation of project activities, and the donor will be required to share project adaptation decision-making with local stakeholders

Delegated power – Local stakeholders independently gather local feedback and lead the process to identify necessary project modifications

List stakeholder groups that will be engaged and the planned level of engagement in the process of providing feedback during implementation of project activities. Mark with a star the stakeholder groups that will be engaged at the highest level.

Stakeholder group:	Level of engagement:
_____	_____
_____	_____
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Describe the plan for stakeholder engagement:

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2.4: Accountability – What is your plan for how local government authorities will provide oversight during implementation?

Informing – Local government authorities will be informed about the project, but the donor is not accountable to them for project success

Consultation – The donor will collaborate with local government authorities either formally or informally (for example, through meetings or written communication) about progress in achieving project outcomes and will receive input, and be responsible for reporting to them how feedback is or is not addressed

Partnership – The donor will be formally responsible to local government authorities for project success, and these authorities will be continually engaged with the donor to ensure the project is on target to meet its goals

Delegated power – Local government authorities will be formally responsible for the project's success and will ensure the project is on target to meet its goals

List local government authorities that will be engaged and the planned level of engagement in providing oversight during project implementation. Mark with a star the local authorities that will be engaged at the highest level.

Stakeholder group:

Level of engagement:

Stakeholder group:	Level of engagement:

Describe the plan for stakeholder engagement:
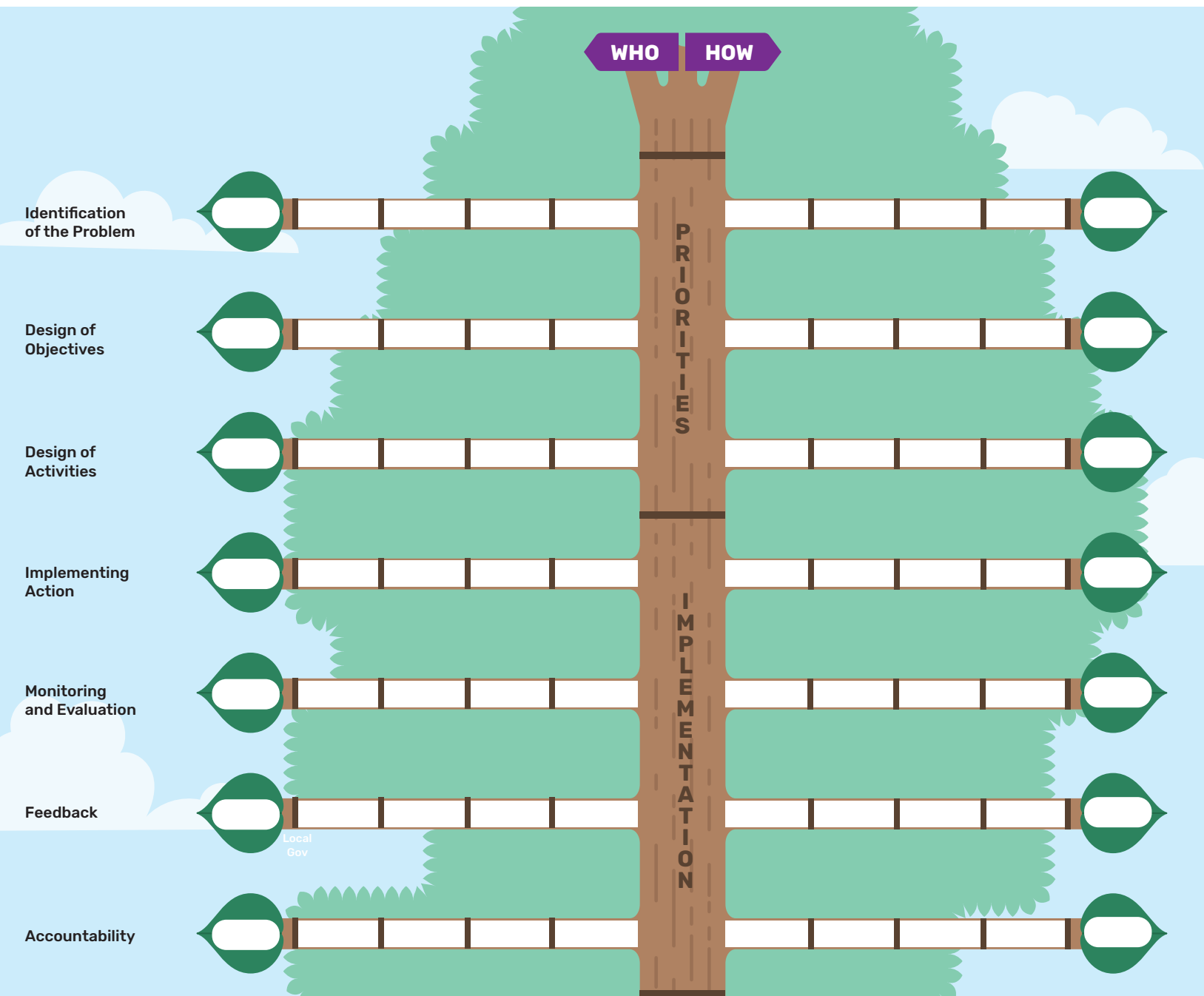
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Write the names of stakeholder groups on the appropriate branches on the "who" side of the tree with the most engaged stakeholder group written on the corresponding leaf.

Shade the cells on the "how" branches according to the level of engagement of the most-engaged stakeholder group (as identified on the leaf on the left side of the tree). Shade one cell for informing, two for consultation, three for partnership and four for delegated leadership.

Identification of the Problem

Design of Objectives

Design of Activities

Implementing Action

Monitoring and Evaluation

Feedback

Accountability

WHO HOW

PRIORITIES

IMPLEMENTATION

Local Gov

STEP 3: Mapping Stakeholders' Engagement for Resourcing and Mapping Sustainability

Resources

3.1: Managing Resources – What is your plan for how local stakeholders will be engaged in budgeting decisions related to the project?

Informing – Local stakeholders will be informed about the project budget, but the donor will not be accountable for considering or acting on their views and suggestions

Consultation – Local stakeholders will have the opportunity to share their views on the project budget, and the donor will share how local stakeholder input was or was not incorporated

Partnership – Local stakeholders and the donor will jointly manage the project budget through a formal process/system

Delegated power – Local stakeholders will lead decisions regarding project budgeting, reporting these decisions to the donor

List stakeholder groups that will be engaged and the planned level of engagement in budgeting decisions. Mark with a star the stakeholder groups that will be engaged at the highest level.

Stakeholder group:

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Level of engagement:

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Describe the plan for stakeholder engagement:

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3.2: Contributing resources – How will local stakeholders contribute resources to the project?

List each of the stakeholder groups that will contribute resources to the project. Check the appropriate box/boxes to indicate whether the corresponding contributions will be financial and/or in-kind. Describe the contributions in the box on the right side of the table.

Stakeholder group	Financial/In kind	Type of contribution
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	
	☐ ☐	

Sustainability

The sustainability questions form the "roots" of the tree, and they are assessed on a binary yes or no basis. The root extends further down for each local stakeholder group that is engaged, with the groups noted on the roots.

4.1: Accountability for results – Will local stakeholders have a clear and actionable plan in place to maintain, expand or integrate the project results, regardless of donor funding?

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

Stakeholder groups that will be engaged:

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Describe how the project will engage stakeholders in creating a plan to maintain, expand, or integrate project results without donor funding:

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4.2: Local Financing – Will the project support a clear and actionable plan (including activities, budget and results) by local stakeholders that moves the country towards sustainable financing without development assistance?

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

Stakeholder groups that will be engaged:

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Describe how the project will contribute to efforts to generate sustainable local and national development financing:

_____

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4.3: Capacity Building – Will the project include a clear and accountable plan to build or strengthen the ability of local stakeholders to maintain results?

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

Stakeholder groups that will be engaged:

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

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_____   _____

Describe how the project will build or strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders:

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4.4: Final Evaluation – Will the project plan for and support an ex-post evaluation of the project's results?

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

Stakeholder groups that will be engaged:

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Describe how the project will engage stakeholders in creating a plan to maintain, expand, or integrate project results without donor funding:

_____

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Write the names of stakeholder groups on the appropriate branches on the "who" side of the tree with the most engaged stakeholder group on the corresponding leaf.

Shade the cells on the "how" branches according to the level of engagement of the most-engaged stakeholder group (as identified on the leaf on the left side of the tree). One for informing, two for consultation, three for partnership and four for delegated leadership or one for in-kind, two for money.

For the sustainability "roots" write the names of the stakeholder groups engaged in each component in the cells on the appropriate root.

You can download a blank tree graphic to fill out at www.powerofownership.org/tree.
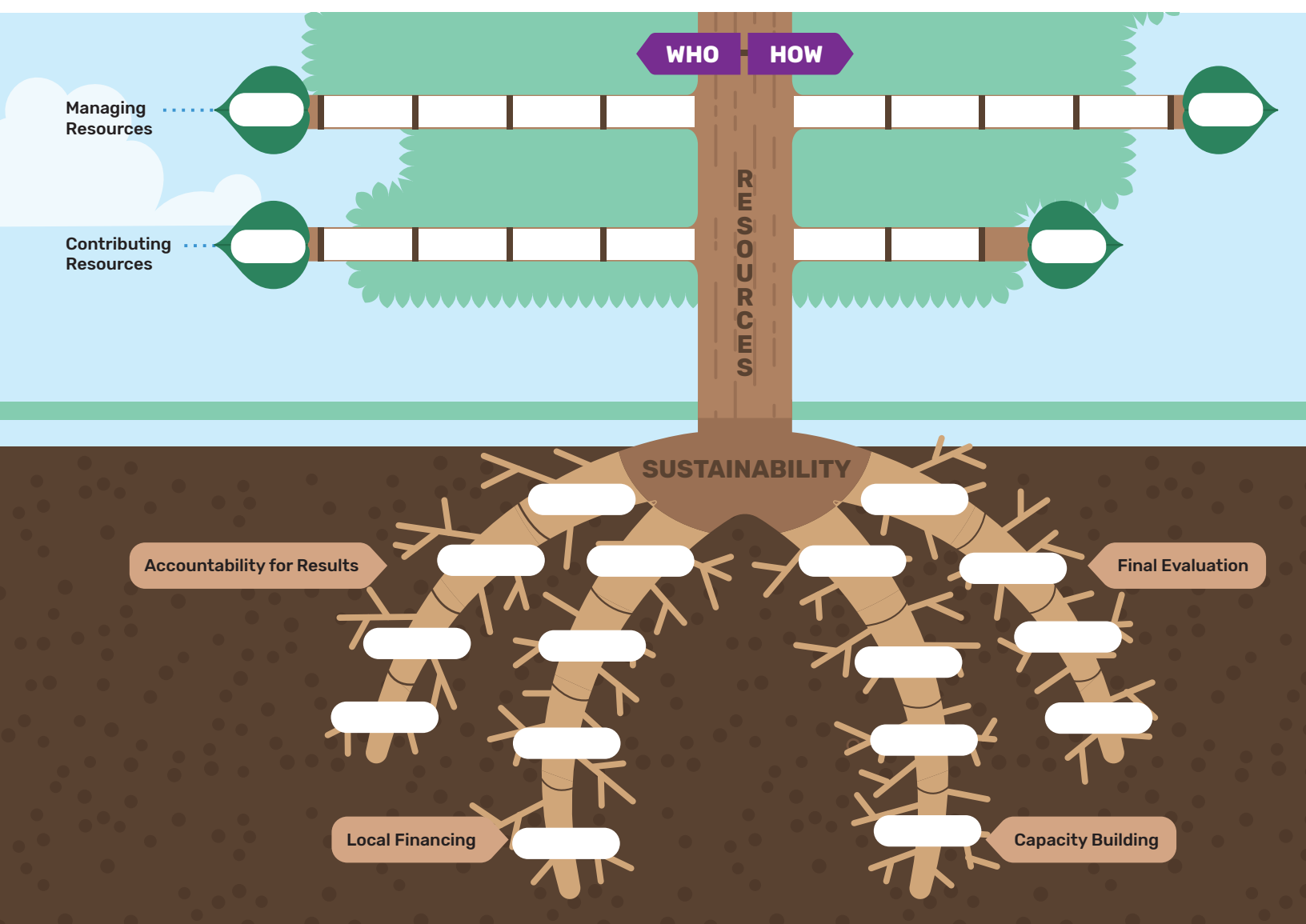
IV. Example of Applying the LEAF

The following case study, conducted during February and March 2016, showcases a project where the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) — through its Local Solutions initiative — worked with local stakeholders and systems to strengthen their capacity to deliver high-quality basic services.
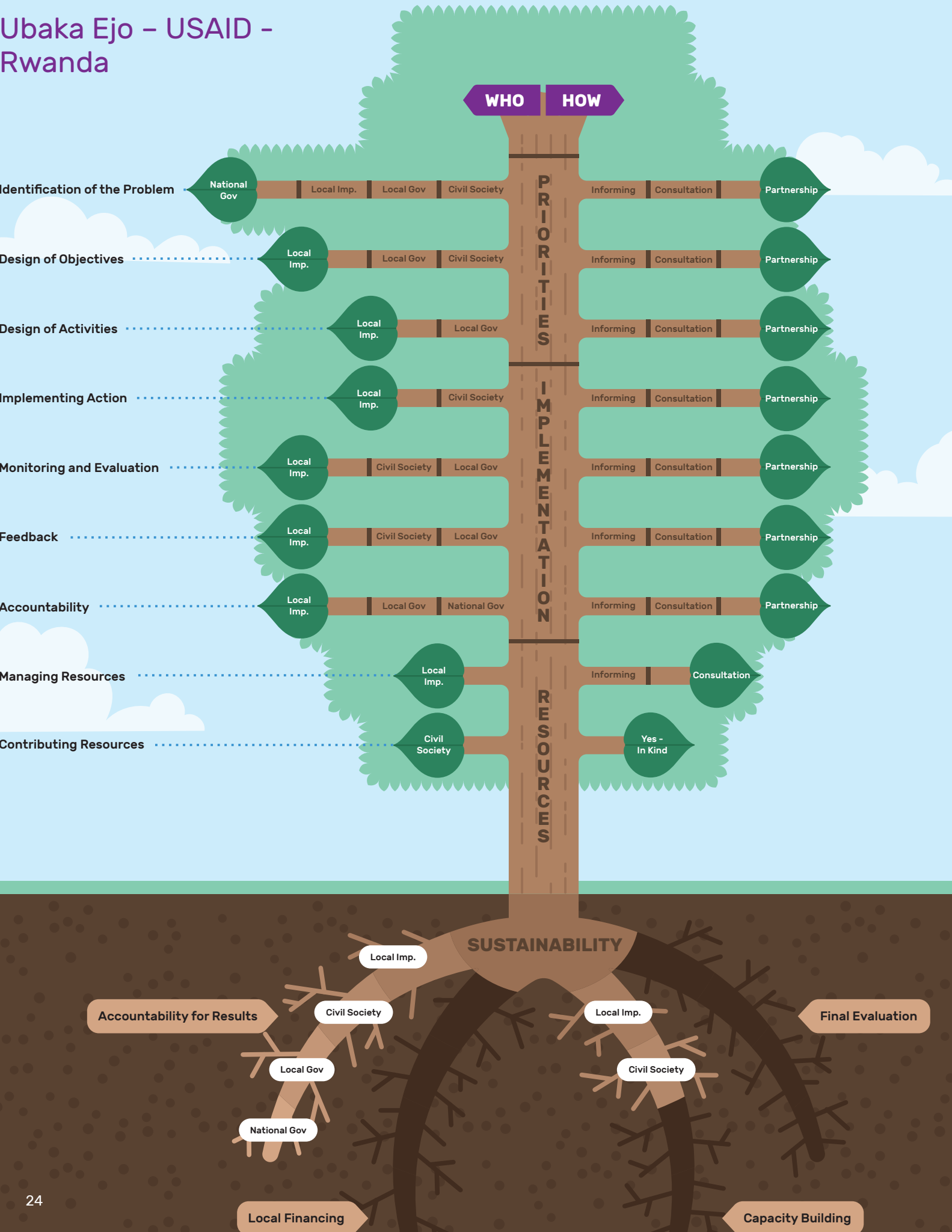
Ubaka Ejo – USAID - Rwanda

During the 2000s, Rwanda boasted an average 8 percent annual economic growth rate, and the World Bank has noted its "remarkable development success[es] over the last decade which include high growth, rapid poverty reduction and, since 2005, reduced inequality."[5] Between 2001 and 2011, the poverty rate dropped from 59 percent to 45 percent, while the distribution of family income inequality measured by the Gini coefficient also decreased.[6]

But in spite of the recent progress, Rwanda continues to struggle with poverty. Ubaka Ejo – which means 'Build the Future' in Kinyarwanda – is an example of how USAID employed an ownership approach by empowering a Rwandan NGO with deep roots in local communities to improve household resilience through economic strengthening and HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention.

Ubaka Ejo is an example of USAID's intent to foster ownership —a goal of the Local Solutions initiative. USAID Rwanda officials acknowledge that this global initiative provided them with strong encouragement to provide direct funding to a local organization.[7] The project started in 2012, when USAID awarded $2.15 million over three years to a local NGO, African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE), with funding coming from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Following a favorable evaluation of AEE's project management, USAID provided a five-year extension.

During a previous project, when AEE was a subcontractor, the prime contractor, Global Communities (a U.S.-headquartered INGO then known as CHF) provided capacity development to AEE, including assistance on organizational governance, project management, proposal writing, other fundraising, and financial management. AEE staff credit CHF with nurturing the organization to the point where it could compete for direct funding from the U.S. government.[8] AEE also benefited from USAID's human and institutional capacity development (HICD) project in terms of strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, and developing a business plan. AEE received capacity building from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) on nutrition and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).

Ubaka Ejo – USAID - Rwanda

WHO | **HOW**

		WHO			PRIORITIES / IMPLEMENTATION / RESOURCES	HOW		

Identification of the Problem — National Gov | Local Imp. | Local Gov | Civil Society — **PRIORITIES** — Informing | Consultation | Partnership

Design of Objectives — Local Imp. | Local Gov | Civil Society — Informing | Consultation | Partnership

Design of Activities — Local Imp. | Local Gov — Informing | Consultation | Partnership

Implementing Action — Local Imp. | Civil Society — **IMPLEMENTATION** — Informing | Consultation | Partnership

Monitoring and Evaluation — Local Imp. | Civil Society | Local Gov — Informing | Consultation | Partnership

Feedback — Local Imp. | Civil Society | Local Gov — Informing | Consultation | Partnership

Accountability — Local Imp. | Local Gov | National Gov — Informing | Consultation | Partnership

Managing Resources — Local Imp. — **RESOURCES** — Informing | Consultation

Contributing Resources — Civil Society — Yes – In Kind

SUSTAINABILITY

Local Imp.

Accountability for Results — Civil Society — Local Imp. — **Final Evaluation**

Local Gov — Civil Society

National Gov

Local Financing — **Capacity Building**

Priorities

1.1 Identification of the problem

As part of USAID's worldwide Local Solutions initiative, the agency sought to have a Rwandan prime contractor when planning a follow-on project to the earlier Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Programme (CHAMP) and Higa Ubeho ('Be Determined and Live' in Kinyarwanda). Indeed, USAID staff in Kigali said that there was some pressure on them from headquarters to fund local organizations in place of INGOs and consulting firms. In anticipation of the transition, CHF had provided capacity development support to its subcontractors in such areas as organizational governance, project management, fundraising, and financial management. CHF then graded partners' capacity to manage future projects and relate to beneficiary communities, based on PEPFAR's Sustainability Index. USAID Rwanda made additional assessments to determine which local subcontractors were the best to take over. One of these, the African Evangelistic Enterprise-Rwanda (AEE), the local affiliate of a pan-African NGO, received high marks and submitted a successful application to implement Ubaka Ejo. During the life of CHAMP and Higa Ubeho, AEE had worked on implementation at the district and community levels, consulting closely with beneficiaries and local officials.

Ubaka Ejo has a somewhat different design from the previous projects and has added some activities. Specifically, it seeks to (a) improve the economic well-being of orphans and vulnerable children and their families; and (b) improve the nutritional status of women and children, especially children younger than two years old, through community-based nutrition interventions. It is closely aligned with Rwanda Vision 2020, the Rwanda government's long-term plan, and other national priority documents. Human resource development, including health, is one of the six pillars of Vision 2020. Moreover, according to USAID and PEPFAR officials in Rwanda, they work very closely with the Ministry of Health and engage in joint sectoral planning.

Overall, this indicator was assessed at the level of **Partnership** because of the close collaboration between USAID, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, and the Ministry of Health and because of CHF's nurturing of AEE as a future implementing partner. We assess the interaction with other stakeholders (beneficiaries and local officials) as being more in the **Consultation** category.

1.2 Design of objectives

AEE led the design of Ubaka Ejo. The organization has adopted the self-help approach to development pioneered by the Indian NGO Myrada. Instead of simply giving people goods or providing them with services, the emphasis is on empowering them to take care of themselves and meet their own needs, with communities participating in the design of solutions to their problems. AEE staff told us that in designing Ubaka Ejo, they drew on some of the elements of CHAMP, which CHF had taken the lead on designing. They pointed out that CHF had incorporated AEE's self-help approach to a certain degree. Ubaka Ejo pivots around this approach, with an emphasis on organizing communities into self-help groups that jointly identify needs with AEE. In this way, the project seeks to bring local knowledge and leadership capacity to bear. The self-help groups also serve as community-based micro-savings

associations. In addition, AEE consulted widely with local officials and other actors working in the same areas of intervention about the project design. Although AEE developed its successful proposal using guidelines received from USAID, its staff took pains to stress to us that USAID did not have any other input into the project's design. This indicator was assessed at the **Partnership** level because AEE led the design process under USAID guidelines.

1.3 Design of activities

Project interventions include group-based microfinance, growth monitoring of vulnerable preschool children, use of the positive deviance/hearth method to reduce child malnutrition, kitchen gardens, HIV and AIDS interventions, gender-based violence prevention and response, household economic strengthening services, youth vocational training, and promotion of handwashing and step-and-wash systems in WASH programming.

Ubaka Ejo provides information, training, and services based on standard operating procedures decided in Kigali and Washington, DC. At the same time, both AEE staff and local government officials pointed out to us that NGO activities—whether implemented by local, national, or international agencies—need to fit into government priorities from the national to the local level. At the district level, periodic Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) meetings ensure this alignment, and also serve to coordinate development activities. We noted that an AEE regional director with whom we met is also the elected chair of a district council; this further reinforces Ubaka Ejo's close association with government plans at the national and local level.

One NGO leader that collaborates with AEE on Ubaka Ejo implementation in low-income areas of Kigali Province said that there are disagreements between the two organizations on matters of women's reproductive health, with AEE following a strict policy of abstinence promotion when it comes to family planning for unmarried adolescents and young adults. In other cases, AEE promotes family planning methods permitted by Rwandan law, leaving the decision to beneficiaries. We did not find evidence of close consultation with beneficiaries on the design of activities. Overall, this indicator was assessed at the **Partnership** level because of AEE's leadership on activity design, in consultation with district and lower-level governments, within USAID guidelines.

Implementation

2.1 Implementing action

AEE decides on the broad outlines of the Ubaka Ejo project implementation. USAID Rwanda staff meet frequently with AEE, particularly to see if there are any technical issues or challenges. USAID will also raise issues with the government if AEE so desires. However, AEE headquarters staff informed us that USAID's quarterly project reviews occur in Kigali, with mission staff only visiting the field when the project introduces new components (such as recent additions in the areas of WASH and nutrition). Notably, USAID does not systematically make field visits to examine how the project engages beneficiary families and communities in implementing action.

With regard to targeting, local officials and AEE staff told us that sector (sub-district) governments select beneficiaries according to their vulnerability classification, which is based on criteria that the national government has established. AEE states that in targeting beneficiaries, it adheres closely to the guidelines developed by Rwanda's National Commission for Children. Beneficiaries confirmed that sector government offices mobilized them to participate in the project. In addition to government-led mobilization, AEE also directly engaged beneficiaries and mobilized them through other community structures.

We were not able to judge whether the classification system is accurate enough to avoid most errors of exclusion (keeping eligible people from participating) or inclusion (facilitating the enrollment of ineligible, better-off people). AEE insists that there is no exclusion and that the process is transparent and public. They also stated that they go to great lengths to ensure that the program engages the most vulnerable. Nor could we assess whether it is subject to any political or ethnic biases. US government officials in Rwanda consider the government's data to be of high quality and detail. Assuming that the system is free from these problems, it seems to offer an excellent targeting mechanism.

As an example of top-down implementation, Ubaka Ejo involves a good deal of volunteer labor by 'caregivers' (basically social work paraprofessionals), who counsel beneficiary families, as well as community health promoters. AEE trains the volunteers and provides them with educational materials and health-related equipment. Taking all this together, this indicator was assessed at the level of **Partnership** based on AEE's relationships with USAID implementing the program. The level of ownership by community members was lower and was scored at the **Informing** level.

2.2 Monitoring and evaluation

In contrast to the rather one-way transmission belt of implementing action, Ubaka Ejo features a very interactive approach to M&E. In the field, AEE does not have dedicated M&E staff; instead, all staff, regardless of their other responsibilities, are supposed to participate in M&E. AEE also requires project volunteers and self-help groups to compile progress reports on their activities. The agency maintains a database of reporting from the field, and shares this M&E data with USAID. However, a USAID Rwanda staff member told us there is some feeling that AEE's reporting is not of the same quality as the reports that INGOs provide. Based on the collaborative nature of M&E between USAID and AEE, this indicator was assessed at the level of **Partnership**.

2.3 Feedback

Despite the top-down elements that we observed with regard to implementing action, our interviews with beneficiaries and volunteers identified instances where they were able to provide AEE with feedback about the project and engage in self-advocacy via project structures and personnel:

- Members of a project savings group noted that they worked with Ubaka Ejo volunteers to get the local government to allocate them unused land that they could cultivate as a group, and to provide them with agricultural extension advice;

- Volunteer caregivers told us that beneficiaries had sought their help to get a local kindergarten and a vocational training school established; and

- Volunteer community health promoters informed AEE that they did not have adequate equipment to carry out their growth monitoring work, leading the agency to purchase additional equipment.

We conclude that within a top-down operational context, Ubaka Ejo offers some bottom-up opportunities for beneficiaries to articulate their views and aspirations. Due to this aspect of the project, this indicator was assessed at the **Partnership** level.

2.4 Accountability

As noted above, both CHF's CHAMP and Higa Ubeho and AEE's Ubaka Ejo are well-aligned with Rwanda's national development plans. Because government officials at all levels work under performance contracts, locally known as an *imihigo,* local government officials are keen to ensure that all development partners contribute to the achievement of their annual action plans. These plans are likewise aligned with national plans. At the district level, the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) – a consultative forum for district development stakeholders – provides a mechanism for ensuring that an NGO such as AEE is helping to fulfill the plan. "All INGOs report their action plans and budgets to JADF," one district level official in Bugesera, Eastern Province, told us. "We have a sort of informal *imihigo* with them." JADFs engage in formal joint program M&Es with development partners, such as AEE, and evaluate those partners quarterly. Due to the strong level of accountability to government entities, this indicator was assessed at the **Partnership** level.

Resources

3.1 Managing resources

AEE handles all financial aspects of Ubaka Ejo, and is accountable to USAID and the government of Rwanda. Both USAID and CHF expressed confidence in AEE's financial management capacity prior to the launch of the project, and the external evaluation of the first three years of implementation found that AEE had adequate capacity to manage resources. This indicator was assessed at the level of **Consultation**, since AEE has some leeway in how project funds are spent, but still has to report to the donor on its specific spending (in contrast to more flexible models, such as results-based financing).

3.2 Contribution of resources

The in-kind labor and record-keeping contributions of volunteers and beneficiaries are substantial so this indicator was assessed as **Yes – in kind**.

Sustainability

4.1 Accountability for results

Sustainability of results is a concern of all the stakeholders in Ubaka Ejo. Local government officials repeatedly discussed sustainability. They pointed to the long-term national goal of achieving self-reliance and breaking free of Rwanda's current aid dependence. Donors, too, seek sustainability. PEPFAR's Sustainability Action Agenda "focuses on ensuring that when partner countries and PEPFAR have scaled up interventions and reached epidemic control, the services, systems, financing, and policies required to maintain that control are available to PEPFAR beneficiaries and partner countries."

AEE argues that beneficiaries will sustain gains from Ubaka Ejo beyond the availability of USAID funding because the project is anchored on community-based structures, such as self-help and savings groups. Training offered to youth is for jobs that are in demand, based on the national Workforce Development Authority's market assessments, so the skills developed should facilitate the obtaining of steady employment. In addition, participants receive training in life skills and financial literacy that are intended to last them a lifetime, and AEE encourages them to form savings groups after the training ends, so that they can build their assets or start businesses. The agency follows up with beneficiaries after they exit the project to monitor the sustainability of achievements.

Beneficiaries frequently point to tangible improvements in their well-being that resulted from project interventions. For example, we met with a savings and loan group in Bugesera District that had started a small agricultural marketing enterprise and felt that the project had given them a sense of dignity that they did not previously have. They told us, "We didn't exist" before they participated in Ubaka Ejo. We also met young people in Rwamagana District who had learned skilled occupations through the project and had gone on to get steady jobs or start small businesses. A number of people who volunteered as project caregivers identified themselves as Ubaka Ejo graduates and said that the project had made a difference in their lives, so they wanted to "give back." Based on the focus on continuing the results of the project, this indicator is assessed as **Yes**.

4.2 Local financing

AEE is Rwanda's second largest national development NGO, with over 30 years of experience working on a variety of projects. Its current budget is $7 million, and it employs 262 staff members. The agency operates in 19 of Rwanda's 30 districts, and senior AEE staff repeatedly noted in our discussions with them that they have strong ties to the communities in which they work. In addition to partnerships with several international donor agencies other than USAID and with INGOs, AEE generates revenues from businesses that it owns, including guest houses, a community bank, and a publishing house. AEE will continue to operate well beyond the life of Ubaka Ejo. Likewise, project beneficiaries who have participated in savings groups confirmed to us that the project has helped them to get out – and stay out – of the most extreme poverty. Nevertheless, the Ubaka Ejo project itself relies almost exclusively on USAID funding, and therefore this indicator was assessed as **No**.

4.3 Capacity building

Local government officials repeatedly referenced the post-genocide experience of INGOs descending upon the country, only to depart abruptly once they themselves had declared 'recovery.' So they look to INGOs to build the capacity of Rwandan NGOs, which they expect, in turn, to strengthen community capacity. In this area, CHF's endeavors to strengthen AEE's capacity and AEE's efforts to build sustainable self-help groups at the community level represent a clear success story, and this indicator is marked as **Yes**.

4.4 Final evaluation

USAID initially awarded AEE three years of funding for Ubaka Ejo. Based on a favorable evaluation, USAID provided a five-year extension, through 2020. As the extension is only in its second year, we did not receive any information about a final project evaluation. So, this indicator is marked as **No**.

V. Conclusion and Additional Resources

The LEAF is a useful analytical tool, but it has limitations. It aims to capture the full array of local stakeholders involved in a project. But while particular local actors have specific roles and responsibilities in producing sustainable development outcomes, the LEAF does not assess which local actors should be involved at a particular stage of a given project. As a planning tool, it incorporates the groups identified through the stakeholder analysis conducted prior to project implementation, determining the levels of engagement of these relevant stakeholders. As a monitoring and evaluation tool, it captures who was actually involved, not who should have been involved.

As more organizations use the LEAF, practitioners seeking to adapt or advance the framework might consider addressing the following issues:

- Social inclusion: While the LEAF captures the relative influence that different categories of stakeholders (government, civil society, etc.) exercise over a project, it is not a tool to ascertain power disparities among local stakeholders. The LEAF does not capture the role and influence of excluded or marginalized groups (for example refugees, women, ethnic minorities, and isolated rural communities) vis-à-vis other local stakeholders. Gender sensitivity and indicators to assess marginalized communities' ownership of development projects are areas of potential growth for future LEAF iterations.

- While the LEAF provides a framework for planning or monitoring the quality of ownership in practice, it is not intended to compare projects against each other. Assessment results can elicit important points of conversation about differences between projects, but each project is unique and should utilize ownership practices according to the goals of the project and the local context.

- The LEAF is a qualitative planning and assessment tool — it relies on practitioners' assessments and does not dictate what the level of ownership at a particular stage should be. All assessments contain an inherent level of subjectivity depending on the assessor. The LEAF is a guide, and being a qualitative tool, assessments are highly sensitive to context. Ideally, this format provides flexibility that will lead to ownership being included to the maximum degree that is appropriate for the context and the project objectives being assessed.

Oxfam and Save the Children are committed to facilitating and supporting local ownership of the development process because we believe this will result in longer-lasting and better development outcomes. We recognize that the lack of a commonly held approach to and means of planning and assessing ownership is an obstacle to the institutionalization of ownership as an essential element of development best practice.

Encouraging ownership can be challenging, but the LEAF is intended to facilitate practitioners' ability to systematically plan to achieve and assess this development approach. As noted

above, the LEAF is one component of a broad and ongoing project on country ownership led by Save the Children and Oxfam. For more information, examples of how the LEAF has been used to assess development projects in Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan and Rwanda, and other country ownership assessment resources, please visit the Power of Ownership website at www.powerofownership.org.

The LEAF: A Snapshot	
WHO	**Which local stakeholders exercise some ownership of a development intervention phase?**
Who's included?	Project cases are assessed based on the quality of ownership by **local stakeholders**, defined as communities, organizations, or institutions that are indigenous to the partner country. This includes government at all levels, civil society, the private sector, and communities.
Who's not?	For the purposes of this framework, local stakeholders do not include international development organizations or the international private sector — even those based in the country — or other international implementers.
Who's analyzed?	For the **priorities** and **implementation** phases, the LEAF identifies the stakeholder groups that are engaged; however, it only maps the quality of ownership of the stakeholder group **with the highest level of engagement.** This group will be listed at the end of the branch farthest from the left side of the tree trunk.
	Under the **resources** section of the tree, two issues are reflected: resource management, and resource contribution. The role of local stakeholders in managing resources is mapped in the same manner as above, with the relevant local actors appearing on the left, and the extent of the most-engaged stakeholders' engagement being captured on the right. Contribution of resources is assessed against binary yes or no criteria that are reflected on the right side of the tree.
	For **sustainability** questions, which form the 'roots' of the tree, the methodology is also binary, and utilizes four yes or no questions aimed at capturing whether the project integrates key elements intended to support long-term project impacts. Unlike the branches, the roots do not have corresponding 'who' and 'how' components extending on either side of the tree. Each 'root' extends further down for each local stakeholder group that is engaged in that element, with the relevant groups noted on the roots.

The LEAF: A Snapshot	
HOW	**What is the extent – informing, consultation, partnership, or delegated power – of the most engaged local stakeholder's engagement in each project phase?**
Informing	Local stakeholders receive information regarding a project phase and may share their views, but without any effort by the donor to consider or act on these views.
Consultation	Local stakeholders share their views on a project phase with the donor, who is obligated in some way to consider and/or act on these views and to communicate back to stakeholders how this input impacted the project.
Partnership	Local stakeholders are part of a formal system in which they work with the donor to make decisions jointly for that project phase.
Delegated power	Local stakeholders take the lead in making decisions and taking action with regard to a project phase within agreed parameters.
WHAT	**In what phases of the development intervention have local stakeholders been engaged?**
Setting priorities	In this phase, local stakeholders' level of engagement in identifying the problem and designing project goals and plans is assessed.
1.1 Identification of the problem	Describes the nature of local engagement in determining the development challenges the intervention intends to address (e.g., health, governance, economic growth, etc.)
1.2 Design of objectives	Describes the nature of local engagement in determining the results the project aims to achieve in order to address a given development challenge.
1.3 Design of activities	Describes the nature of local engagement in determining the specific activities necessary to achieve the desired results.
Implementation	Local stakeholders' level of agency and decision-making power is assessed against their responsibilities in carrying out and managing the implementation of project activities.
2.1 Implementing Action	Describes the nature of local stakeholder engagement in implementing the project activities.
2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation	Describes the nature of local stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluating the results of the intervention.

The LEAF: A Snapshot	
2.3 Feedback	Describes the nature of local engagement in providing feedback and adapting the intervention during implementation (excluding formal M&E processes).
2.4 Accountability	Describes the nature of local oversight by local government authorities and those responsible for implementing the project.
Resources	Local stakeholders' level of engagement is assessed against their involvement in project budgeting decisions, financial management of project resources, and contribution of local financial or in-kind resources to the project.
3.1 Managing resources	Describes the nature of local stakeholder engagement in managing the resources used to fund the intervention and the nature of these resources.
3.2 Contributing resources	Indicates whether local stakeholders are contributing resources and the type of resources (in-kind and/or financial).
Long-term sustainability	Local stakeholders' engagement and the project are assessed against indicators deemed important for local actors to sustainably maintain project results.
4.1 Accountability of Results	Describes whether local stakeholders are committed to maintain, expand, or integrate the project results, regardless of continued donor funding.
4.2 Local financing	Describes whether the project supports a clear and actionable plan (including activities, budget and proposed results) by local stakeholders that moves the country towards sustainable financing without development assistance.
4.3 Capacity Building	Describes whether the project includes a clear and accountable plan to build or strengthen the ability of local stakeholders to maintain results.
4.4 Final evaluation	Describes whether there is a plan in place to conduct an ex-post evaluation of the intervention's impact.

End notes

1 For this report, we use the following USAID definition of local organizations: "Be organized under the laws of the recipient country; Have its principal place of business in the recipient country; Be majority owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of the recipient country or be managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of a recipient country; and not be controlled by a foreign entity or by an individual or individuals who are not citizens or permanent residents of the recipient country."
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/201saf.pdf

2 http://modernizeaid.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Metrics-for-Implementing-Country-Ownership.pdf

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 The World Bank, 'Country Overview' (last updated April, 2016), available at http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview

6 Ibid.

7 Interviews with USAID Rwanda officials, Rwanda, February 2016.

8 Interviews with AEE Rwanda officials, Rwanda, March 2016.

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