

# Importance of good project management practices at NGOs, according to PMI (Project Management Institute)

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*Abstract– In the intricate landscape of project management, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) undertake the noble task of addressing social challenges and improving conditions for vulnerable communities. The intrinsic connection between project management and NGOs emerges as a central axis to enhance positive impact on society. In this context, the application of best practices proposed by the Project Management Institute (PMI) in the initiation, planning, execution, monitoring and control, and closure processes becomes an essential catalyst to improve the scope and effectiveness of social projects led by NGOs. Meticulous planning in the PMI's processes lays the foundation for the sustainable success of social projects. From developing the project charter to the closure phase, each step is imbued with principles that ensure transparency, efficiency, and adaptability needed to address the complexities of social reality. By integrating project management best practices into the daily operations of NGOs, their capacity to overcome challenges, adapt to changing environments, and most crucially, ensure that every invested resource contributes significantly to the well-being of beneficiary communities is strengthened. This article aims to demonstrate the functionality of applying the project management model of the Project Management Institute (PMI) for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). It becomes crucial to describe the different management areas relevant to a non-profit organization. Furthermore, this document outlines the process and management groups that NGOs should consider.*

**Keywords** Project Management, Non-Governmental Organizations, Social Projects, Best Practices, Project Lifecycle.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are of vital importance in the social development of a country, addressing various challenges from education to health. For Quintana [1] Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a fundamental role in society from different perspectives, their existence is essential for the protection and defense of democracy. In addition, its contribution to regional processes has been key, leading social movements and achieving significant advances in rights and reduction of inequalities.

According to [2], in these terms, social organizations can be defined as the realization of a set of collective actions that are undertaken by groups of individuals who have common interests with the aim of satisfying them. Collective action is in the essence, at the origin or substrate of the social, to the extent that its result comes from the coordination of the action of an individual with others for the achievement of more immediate vital ends.

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Just as companies conform to create a project that allows them to benefit from the results, in the same way the non-profit organizations are created to create philanthropic solutions towards the most disadvantaged social communities of a country. For this, knowledge about project management and social skills are also required.

The effective management of social projects is revealed as an essential pillar to ensure that these organizations reach their goals and maximize their impact. In social action, according to the NGO platform [3] a fundamental requirement for all projects is that the objectives reflect the needs of society and interest groups, and not merely the internal needs of the institutions.

This article is immersed in the importance of implementing good project management practices, according to the guidelines of the Project Management Institute (PMI), in the specific context of Colombian NGOs. Highlighting which are the main processes executable by any NGO model to have adequate administration of social projects.

Next, some documentary references related to the PMI and the management of NGOs will be observed, so that they allow sketches of knowledge and to be able to move to the point of the finding and the discussions in which the process groups and the areas are described of more important management for a company without mood of profit in social projects.

It should be noted that this article is a modest review of the issue of social project management, since the issue is understood as a technical duality and organized social work. In that order of ideas there will be a conclusion that is nothing more than a summary about what is observed with certain observations and recommendations for the user's usefulness and its applicability in community processes.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section makes a general description of the most relevant guides, standards or standards in Project Management according to the PMI. Also, the general panorama of NGOs is shown in relation to the management of projects of the social field in Colombia.

The implementation of good practices in project management contributes significantly to their success. The project stakeholders, the promotion of teamwork, the

simplification of the control and monitoring processes, as well as the generation of savings both in time and costs. Project management presents a series of challenges that require those in charge of them, as well as their work team, use appropriate methodologies for this purpose [4].

Among other functions in a project, the project director is key to establishing and maintaining a safe, respectful and without prejudice environment, which allows the project team to communicate openly. One way to achieve this is modeling the desired behaviors, such as: transparency, integrity, respect, positive discourse, support, courage, celebration of success, [5]. It should be noted that it is the project director who has the responsibility of determining which methods are most appropriate depending on the specific situation he faces. The project manager is responsible for the successful delivery of the project [6].

The PMI Standards Committee [7] defines the areas of knowledge of the Project Management in terms of its management processes. Which have been divided into nine areas or subsystems of knowledge and management. These areas are: integration, scope, deadlines, costs, quality, human resources, communications, risks and supply.

These good practices have emerged as part of business evolution and globalization of project management, incorporating international guidelines and standards based on expert experience, with the aim of improving the chances of success in compliance with the objectives of a project.

Among the most recognized standards in project management are:

- PMBOK 6TA EDITION (2017).
- Guide - PMI (Project Management Institute).
- Prince2 2009 Edition (2009) - OGC (Office of Government Commerce).
- ICB - IPMA version 3.0 (2006) of the International Project Management Association.
- P2M - PMAJ VOLUME I, Review 3 (2005) of the Project Management Association of Japan.
- ISO 21500 version 2012 (2012) of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

In what follows, we will focus on the processes groups that manage the PMBOK of the PMI.

#### *A. PMI standards for project management*

The structure of the PMI methodology is taken as reference, since, it is one of the most internationalized models and has an organization appropriate to any type of predictive project (in cascade) or adaptive. Below are the processes groups that according to the PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge), provide a structured framework for project management.

The PMBOK 6TH guide Edition [8], shows more than 49 processes of project management. However, these are classified into the following processes groups:

- Initiating: It is the group of processes necessary to define a new project.
- Planning: To determine the scope of the project, its objectives and define the necessary actions to execute it successfully.
- Execution: To execute the project according to the Project Management Plan and meet its requirements.
- Monitoring and controlling: fundamental for the monitoring, analysis and control of progress in the execution of the project.
- Closing: to finish a project.

A project can be perceived as an interrelated process system, in the project life cycle. The project management, from this perspective, is the discipline that makes these processes and the system more efficient, effective, and harmonic, [9]. In a social project, the initiating phase is clearly defined by the vision of the project, involving interested parties, especially the beneficiary community. Detailed planning establishes concrete objectives and actions, guaranteeing the efficient allocation of resources and the alignment of the project with local needs. During execution, specific actions are implemented, prioritizing community participation and transparency. Each project is unique, and the project approach must use the existing capabilities in the best possible way, but project managers must explore what can be done in that project to adapt to the specific context in the best possible way [10].

Monitoring and control evaluate progress not only in financial terms, but also in social indicators, allowing adaptations to maximize the impact. Finally, the closure not only concludes the activities, but also integrally evaluates the achievement of social objectives and establishes lessons learned for future projects, contributing to a cycle of continuous improvement in project management.

According to the PMBOK 6th Edition [8], a project is a set of tasks or management activities that produce one or more results based on one or more entries through the application of specific tools and techniques. For full compliance with the processes, it is necessary to have the notion of the areas of knowledge in project management, which allow adequate adaptability in each group of processes. These areas are axes on which the project director must focus to properly manage a project. These areas are:

- Integration: Understand the essential procedures to identify, develop, merge and coordinate the various project management processes.
- Scope: essential to ensure the precise realization of the work necessary for the successful execution of the projects, limited only to the essentials.

- Schedule: addresses the necessary procedures to achieve the timely conclusion of the projects.
- Costs: it includes the estimation, calculation and control of the necessary expenses for the execution of the project and the fulfillment of the established budget.
- Quality: Includes the necessary processes to guarantee the fulfillment of the quality of the project, ensuring the satisfaction of the needs and expectations of the interested parties.
- Resources: It focuses on determining, assigning, and managing the essential resources for the efficient execution of the projects.
- Communications: Its main objective is to ensure that information related to projects and services is collected and distributed properly.
- Risks: It is dedicated to managing the risks that can affect the achievement of the objectives of the projects.
- Acquisitions: addresses the acquisition of tools, services, and other elements necessary to carry out the project.
- Stakeholders: their purpose is to manage people or organizations that can influence or be affected by the projects, satisfying their needs and expectations throughout the execution of the project.

The application of good practices in project management favors them to culminate successfully, from there its advantages: it generates a standardized practice of project management in the organization, improves communications among the interested parties of the project, it favors teamwork, teamwork, teamwork, teamwork, it facilitates the control and monitoring process, and generates time and cost savings, however, it is the project director who defines which methods are the most appropriate according to the specific situation in front, [9-14].

The methodologies adapted for the third sector generally extend the traditional life cycle of the projects (initiation, planning, execution, monitoring and control and closing), considering two fundamental phases for NGOs: the collection of funds and accountability [15,16].

The PMBOK is not a methodology that a project manager could use directly to manage it; The project director must establish the methodology according to the structure and mission of the organization. The PMBOK is a general frame of reference [17].

So the PMBOK guide is understood as a reference frame, suitable for NGOs, since, it is an indispensable material for your organization and also an agile mechanism to review the main elements in the phases of your projects.

After observing the main aspects in project management that according to the PMI are coupled as good practices in the development of the project phases. Next, we will expand the context presented by NGOs regarding the implementation or knowledge of the PMI standards to apply in their processes.

## *B. Context of NGOs in project management*

The origin of NGOs is temporarily located after World War II (1939-1954), created in order to help the victims of war. Subsequently in the 60s, they extend to the Third World to help populations affected by droughts, hunger, natural disasters, and wars. At the beginning they were organizations promoted from religious institutions (especially Catholic and Protestant Church) and beneficial, financially sponsored with funds from international institutions and bilateral cooperation agency [18].

However, in the context of development actions, whether of humanitarian action (response to an emergency or disaster) of socio-economic rehabilitation, of strengthening the capacities to generate development, defense of rights, of environmental care, of social prevention, etc., what they all have in common, is the purpose of transforming a reality that is presented as insufficient or unsatisfactory and that we want to improve. In that sense, the project becomes an indispensable tool to overcome certain deficiencies of a group that wishes to be subject to change [19].

This is how NGOs become considered as non-governmental organizations (NGO) are generally considered non-profit groups, which work for the benefit of public interest [20].

On the other hand, non-profit organizations have a tremendous opportunity, apply project management methodology would allow them optimally the donation and finally, specify in the best possible way the proposed project [21,22].

In [23], the results of a survey applied to several NGOs in Colombia are presented, EE evidenced the low participation of non-governmental environmental organizations in project management, whether at the local, regional, national or international level. In this regard, of the total sample interviewed less than 10% knows international standards such as the PMBOK guide, which limits its actions to local calls.

In [24], the applying of project management in an NGO in Colombia was studied, and it was found that although the organization has some tools that facilitate project management, there is no defined route on how to manage projects in the areas of: resources, planning, management, integration and control. In the projects, lack of plans, procedures, risk analysis, budget, administrative follow-ups are evident. The daily work is done without being focused on a goal since there is no proper project management. Additionally, in many organizations there is no procedure or methodology for managing projects where the entire organization involves, from the beginning to the closing of the project, [25,26].

Consequently, it is necessary to have methodologies that contribute to the objective of contributing to a more efficient and greater impact social management, [27,28]. At present, the PMI standard is the most relevant in project management and allows significant improvements in the administration.

This standard includes knowledge, tools and techniques that are accepted as the best practices for project management. The key to the successful execution of a project lies in a high percentage of the adequate planning made, [29,30].

On the other hand, and speaking specifically from Colombia, the NGOs sector has been strengthening its reach during the last four years in direct relationship with sources of bilateral cooperation reaching 27 countries; Multilateral cooperation reaching 40 sources that include multilateral development bank, the United Nations SNU system, multidonant funds and other international organizations. Additionally, the country has intensified the relationship with the international private sector that includes international philanthropy, NGOs and multinational private companies. Likewise, in relation to the continuous improvement of the management of development cooperation, Colombia has been increasing its active participation and representation in technical spaces of deliberation on the effectiveness and measurement of development financing through international cooperation, [31].

### III. PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES APPLIED TO NGOS

Next, the classification of the most relevant processes for good practice in project management for NGOs is shown.

#### *A. Initiating Process Group*

##### **Develop the Project Charter:**

This process is essential to establish a solid base by formally authorizing the project. In the context of NGOs, this implies the clear definition of social objectives and the identification of beneficiary communities.

Keep in mind that at this point on the project the team is not yet formed. Therefore, the sponsor is the person who must sign the minutes. This can rely on who he estimates to develop it, he will usually call among others the director of the future project, [33].

##### **Stakeholder identification:**

Since NGOs work closely with local communities, the identification of all interested parties is crucial. This process involves the community from the beginning, incorporating its perspectives and needs.

In NGOs projects, the identification of interested parties goes beyond a mere administrative process; It is a cornerstone that reflects the commitment of NGOs with local communities. Given the close collaboration with these communities, it is crucial to identify all interested parties since the beginning of the project. This process implies a participatory approach, actively incorporating the community in the identification of their needs, expectations, and perspectives. The early inclusion of local voices guarantees that the project is not only perceived as an external initiative,

but as a collective effort that considers and respects cultural dynamics and local realities. In addition, this process feels the basis for effective communication and significant collaboration throughout the project, thus strengthening the legitimacy and sustainability of NGOs interventions in the community.

##### **Develop the preliminary scope statement:**

In this phase, the scope of the project begins to be defined. In the context of NGOs, this implies establishing the goals of the social project, considering the specific needs of local communities.

##### **Develop the scope statement:**

This process translates directly to define and detail the scope of the project. In NGOs, this implies the precise identification of the actions and activities necessary to address specific social problems.

At this point it is important to consider the tools that will help obtain the best results. Project directors who adopt only a small set of basic tools are likely to manage only a few small projects, regardless of the type of project or geographical location, [34].

For NGOs, this process becomes a strategic tool to align the goals of the social project with the needs of the communities. Instead of imposing external solutions, this statement of the scope becomes a collaborative road map, developed in close consultation with the beneficiary community. The detailed identification of the necessary actions allows to adapt the interventions to local realities, considering unique cultural and social factors.

In addition, this process acts as a formal and transparent commitment between the NGO and the community. It establishes clear expectations and provides a basis for the continuous evaluation of progress and results. In a context where community participation and local appropriation are fundamental, developing the statement of the scope of the project becomes a catalyst for the construction of sustainable solutions and the promotion of local empowerment. The precision in the definition of the scope not only facilitates the efficient implementation of the project, but also contributes to the creation of a positive and lasting impact on the quality of life of the communities served by the NGOs.

#### *B. Planning Process Group*

Planning processes develop the project management plan and project documents that will be used to carry it out. As more characteristics or information on the project are collected or understood, greater planning may be necessary, [35].

##### **Scope planning:**

This process implies the creation of a detailed plan that defines, verifies and controls the scope of the project. In NGOs, it is essential to ensure that social goals are aligned with community expectations.

##### **Schedule planning:**

Detailed schedule planning is essential for NGOs projects that seek to address specific social problems in defined deadlines. This helps maintain focus and urgency.

The nature of the social problems that NGOs seek to face often requires timely and coordinated interventions. In this sense, schedule planning becomes a strategic tool to ensure that scheduled actions and activities are implemented at crucial moments and that the project advances effectively. For NGOs that often work in dynamic environments and various social realities, this process becomes even more crucial. In addition, schedule planning is not only about fulfilling deadlines, but about adapting to changing dynamics and emerging needs of local communities. The flexibility in the schedule allows adjustments according to the evolution of the social, climatic, or economic situation, guaranteeing an agile and effective response.

A well-planned schedule not only serves as an internal management tool for the NGO, but also becomes a transparent medium to communicate the deadlines and expectations to all interested parties, including the beneficiary community. This helps to build mutual trust and understanding, fundamental elements for the sustainable success of social initiatives led by NGOs.

#### **Cost planning:**

This process not only implies the precise estimate of the necessary financial resources, but also addresses the ethical responsibility of managing funds transparently and efficiently, especially when NGOs depend largely on external financing.

For NGOs that often face diverse economic contexts and financial limitations, cost planning becomes a strategic tool for the efficient allocation of resources. It implies not only the identification of direct expenses related to the implementation of the project, but also the consideration of possible contingencies and the ethical management of financial resources.

Transparency in cost planning not only strengthens the credibility of the NGO before donors and sponsors, but also contributes to building trust with the beneficiary community. The clear explanation of how the funds and the justification of each budget item are essential are essential elements to demonstrate the commitment of the NGO with the effectiveness and financial responsibility. In addition, social project planning goes beyond simple financial management; It is directly linked to the NGO's ability to achieve a significant and sustainable impact on the community. The careful allocation of resources guarantees that each investment contributes directly to the established social objectives, thus maximizing the value of each weight invested and optimizing the scope of the projects.

#### **Quality planning:**

It implies identifying which quality and/or standards requirements are relevant for both the project and for the product and formalize how the project will demonstrate compliance, [36].

In social projects, quality not only refers to technical standards, but also to the real impact on people's lives. This process ensures that the results of the project meet social requirements and expectations.

#### **Human Resources Planning:**

Define how to estimate, acquire, manage and use the projects of the project team, [37]. In NGOs, where collaboration with the community is key, this process focuses on detailing the roles and responsibilities of project team members, including the active participation of the community.

#### **Communications Planning:**

Communication is an integral part of project management and is one of the main tools to achieve success in the work of project directors. Some studies argue that project managers spend more than 75% of their time communicating, [38].

Effective communication is essential in social projects. This process establishes a plan that ensures that the relevant information is shared properly with all interested parties, including the community.

Considering the strategic role that public relations have today, it is important to stop and analyze what the role they play in NGOs. If a few years ago these were typical of business organizations, the consolidation that social organizations and NGOs have increased the practice of public relations in the third sector, [39].

#### **Risk planning:**

In the context of non -governmental organizations (NGOs) risk planning emerges as a strategic component to anticipate and mitigate potential challenges that could arise during the implementation of social projects. This process becomes even more crucial given the variability in social, economic, and climatic conditions that characterizes many communities served by NGOs.

Proactive risk identification is not limited to financial or logistics aspects, in social projects, extends to ethical and social considerations. For NGOs, this planning implies an exhaustive analysis of possible obstacles that could affect the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions. This includes not only the evaluation of external risks, such as adverse climatic conditions or changes in legislation, but also the understanding of social and cultural dynamics that could influence the acceptance and impact of planned actions.

Risk management in social projects not only seeks to avoid problems, but also prepare effective responses in case they occur. This implies the creation of specific contingency plans to address different scenarios, thus guaranteeing the resilience of the project against uncertainty. In addition, transparent communication on possible risks and mitigation strategies strengthens trust with interested parties, including the beneficiary community. Ultimately, risk planning in NGOs projects is not only a precautionary measure, but a strategic tool that contributes to the construction of more robust, adaptive, and sustainable projects in changing and challenging environments.

#### **Procurement planning:**

Procurement planning becomes an essential component to ensure efficient and ethical obtaining of goods and services necessary for the execution of social projects. This process acquires particular importance in environments where NGOs work to address specific needs of vulnerable communities. For NGOs, this means not only seeking reliable suppliers and reasonable costs, but also evaluating the social and environmental impact of acquisition decisions.

Transparency in acquisition planning is crucial to build and maintain confidence, both with donors and sponsors and the beneficiary community. Explain clearly how suppliers are selected, what are the evaluation criteria and what is the justification of each acquisition contributes to demonstrating the NGO's commitment to the responsibility and effectiveness in the use of resources. Ensuring that acquired goods and services comply with ethical and quality standards contributes to the overall effectiveness of the project and reinforces the positive impact on the community.

### *C. Execution Processes Group*

#### **Direct and manage project work:**

This process implies the coordination and supervision of the execution of activities. In NGO projects, the active participation of the community emphasizes to ensure that the actions are aligned with real needs.

#### **Manage project communications:**

Given the collaborative nature of NGOs projects, the effective management of communications ensures that information is shared properly and timely with all interested parties, including the community.

#### **Manage stakeholders:**

In NGOs projects, the management of the interested parties goes beyond the directly affected parties and implies understanding and addressing the expectations of the local community effectively.

Those stakeholders refer to groups or individuals that can directly or indirectly affect or be affected by the project [40].

Project directors constantly face the pressure of addressing the challenges and various problems to meet the expectations of the interested parties [41].

Project directors constantly face the pressure of addressing the challenges and various problems to meet the expectations of the interested parties [41].

That is why the PMBOK establishes that during this process the participation, the degrees of incidence and the expectations of the actors involved must be updated. Similarly, the associated risks that can generate future resistances by stakeholders, designing contingency plans and strategies to establish communication and negotiation processes should be anticipated, [42,43].

#### **Quality control**

Quality in social projects not only refers to compliance with standards, but also its real impact on people's lives. Implement quality control processes that include community

feedback and regular audits guarantees that the project is not only efficient, but also significant and sustainable.

### *D. Group of monitoring and control processes*

#### **Monitoring of progress**

The implementation of monitoring tools allows a continuous evaluation of progress. Maintaining an agile approach and making adjustments as necessary ensures that the project adapts to changing conditions and maximizes its positive impact.

#### **Risk management**

Proactive identification and continuous risk management are critical. Evaluate and mitigate risks from the beginning guarantees that possible obstacles do not significantly affect the course of the project. Developing a risk response plan allows a quick and efficient response, [44].

### *E. Project closing process groups*

#### **Evaluation and documentation:**

When evaluating the success of the project, not only the tangible results must be measured but also the social impact and community participation. Documenting lessons learned and best practices is key to improving future initiatives.

#### **Communication and celebration:**

The effective communication of the results to all interested parties, including the community, is fundamental. Celebrating the achievements recognizes the joint effort and strengthens the connection between the NGO and the beneficiary community, [45].

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

In the dynamic network of project management, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) undertake the task of addressing social challenges and improving the conditions of vulnerable communities. The intrinsic connection between project management and NGOs is revealed as a central axis to enhance the positive impact on society. In this context, the consideration of the good practices proposed by the Project Management Institute (PMI) in the process groups is like an essential catalyst to improve the scope and effectiveness of social projects led by NGOs.

From the development of the project charter to the closing phase, each step is imbued with principles that ensure transparency, efficiency, and adaptability necessary to address the complexities of social reality.

These principles are not only strategic guides for project directors, but also a common language that unites all stakeholders in collaborative effort.

By integrating good project management practices in the daily operation of NGOs, the ability of these organizations to overcome challenges is strengthened, adapt to changing environments and, the most crucial, to ensure that all the money invested and every deployed resource contributes

significantly to the well-being of the beneficiary communities.

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