Analyze a System: Framework Analysis

This framework analysis tool breaks down the core elements of a system that are critical for understanding how said system functions and operates. It also identifies possible interventions for change.

This framework tool is meant to be continuously applied and revised across a systems change initiative. Use this framework at the start of an initiative or project in the structuring phase to identify the current system. Reapply the exercise as you narrow a goal and assess the feasibility of change in the thinking phase. Use it as a framework of ideal change to measure and evaluate your progress/actions.

The five Rs in this framework include:
- **Roles** – actors in your system (organizations, individuals, etc.)
- **Relationship** – connections between actors
- **Rules** – policies and practices that govern a system
- **Resources** – inputs in the system
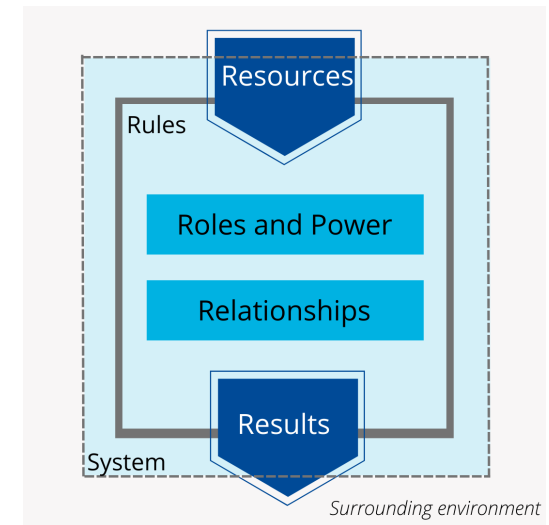- **Results** – the outcomes of the system

Figure 1. A system and the five Rs

In Figure 1, the dotted lines indicate the system perimeter and the five Rs fall within the system. This system may overlap with others (i.e., the surrounding environment).

Roles of actors and the ***relationships*** with and between them are the core of every system. It is the role that determines if an actor falls within or outside of the system. A core component of roles and relationships includes the power of actors. ***Rules*** can include policies, regulations, expectations, incentives, or even norms and mindsets. These are elements that influence the function and structure of a system.

In many ways, it may be easiest to start with ***results*** (the outcomes and possible system boundaries) over ***resources*** (inputs that convert into results). However, the challenge is moving from specific results (e.g., actions, solutions) to results of the system.

Adapted from USAID's 5Rs Framework

	Questions to Consider for the Current System	Questions to Consider for the Desired System	Evaluation Considerations
Roles (and power)	• What roles are currently present? • Are any roles missing? • How effectively are these roles being fulfilled? • How much power does each actor have?	• What roles are you seeking to add? • Has power been more distributed or shifted? • Are there barriers still in place/	• Social network analysis • User feedback or surveys • Interviews • Power mapping
Relationships (and perspectives)	• What are the types of relationships that exist? • What do we assume to be true about these relationships? • How strong are these relationships? • What relationships are missing?	• What relationships have changed? • Are there stronger relationships across the system? • Are there any relationships still missing?	• Stakeholder consultations • Stakeholder mapping
Rules	• How might rules be enforced equitably? • How much flexibility is there? • What rules are needed for the function of the system?	• What rules need to be changed? • Do these rules produce equitable outcomes?	• Stakeholder consultations • Interviews • Policy evaluation
Resources	• What are the current resources? • How can improving results help secure resources in the longer-term?	• Have resources changed? • What new resources are needed to maintain the new system/structure?	• Market studies • Economic indicators
Results	• How adaptive or resilient is the system? • What is the target result that defines the system? • How is the system currently evaluated?	• Are there new leverage points that drive more equitable change in the system? • Are there better indicators that could be used? • Has the target results shifted?	• Economic indicators • Feedback (surveys/interviews)