



Webinar #5: Critical Paths in the Evaluation of Adaptation Projects and Programmes

The fifth Adaptation Fund (AF) webinar for the Fund's accredited National Implementing Entities (NIEs) was held on December 7th, 2017. The webinar, organized as part of the Readiness Programme for Climate Finance, tackled the evaluation of Adaptation Fund projects with a specific focus on mid-term evaluation (MTE) and final/terminal evaluation (TE).

The webinar was kick-started with an introduction by Mr. Farayi Madziwa from the Adaptation Fund Board secretariat (the secretariat) followed by a presentation on monitoring and evaluation at the portfolio level by Ms. Martina Dorigo and a presentation on the knowledge management benefits of lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation as they relate to the AF Knowledge Management Strategy by Ms. Cristina Dengel from the secretariat.

Following a brief Q&A section after the presentation by the secretariat, the webinar also included presentations by representatives from NIEs on the respective entity's experiences with mid-term reviews and final evaluations of projects. A representative from Unidad para el Cambio Rural (UCAR), Argentina presented on mid-term reviews and a representative from Centre de Suivi Ecologique (CSE), Senegal on final evaluations. The floor was open to questions and discussion after each presentation by the NIEs on the experiences with mid-term and final evaluations.

The webinar ended with closing remarks by a representative from the secretariat on lessons learned by AF from mid-term evaluations and final evaluations.

I. Presentation on Adaptation Fund mid-term and final evaluation guidelines

The representative from the projects team presented how the Adaptation Fund got organized to track its progress and support projects and programmes in tracking their progress.

It was explained that the AF Results Based Management (RBM) approach operates at three main levels:

1. The Adaptation Fund Board (the Board) level, being fully accountable to the parties to the Kyoto Protocol
2. At the Portfolio or Fund level, where monitoring is carried out by the secretariat under the direction of the Board and;
3. Project and programme level where monitoring is carried out by implementing entities

The presentation focused on the Monitoring and Evaluation conducted at project and programme level conducted by implementing entities (IEs). The following Adaptation Fund policies and

guidance related to the Results Based Management (RBM) framework, Evaluation Function, mid-term evaluations and final evaluations were presented:

Objectives of evaluation for Adaptation Fund projects and programmes

- Accountability for the achievement of AF objectives by assessing the results of projects and programmes, processes and effectiveness.
- To track learning and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among different stakeholders.
- To improve on-going and future initiatives.

Functions of the Technical Evaluation Reference Group (TERG), in light of its evaluation function of the Adaptation Fund:

1. Evaluative Function, to evaluate the effectiveness of AF projects and programmes.
2. Advisory Function, to set minimum evaluation standards.
3. Oversight Function, to provide quality control of minimum evaluation requirements and also to track implementation of Board Decisions related evaluation recommendations.

The responsibilities of implementing entities with respect to evaluations

- Project and programme proposals at design stage need to have solid monitoring and evaluation plans and project indicators.
- Any project or programme must align the project framework with at least one outcome and output of the fund and; directly contribute to the overall objective.
- IE should conduct Mid-term and Final evaluations.
- Evaluations of AF projects should be made public on the implementing entity's website which will foster best practices and lessons learned with other entities.
- Sharing evaluations helps subsequent projects to take into account lessons learned from previous projects.

During project implementation

- Besides the IEs sending project performance reports (PPRs) on a yearly basis, if a project is four years and more in duration, the IE must submit a mid-term report, prepared by an independent evaluator, selected by the IE.
- On core indicators, all projects will provide data on core indicator 1- Number of Direct Beneficiaries. The remaining four will apply if they are relevant to the project.
- The evaluator must be independent from the project management team.
- Every evaluation must subscribe to standard principles such as impartiality, transparency, disclosure to the public and be participatory.

General guidelines for Mid-Term Evaluations and Terminal Evaluation reports

- Should inform the period during which the evaluation was conducted
- People involved in this evaluation
- Description on methodology
- Terms of reference (TOR) that will outline the scope of the evaluation
- Provide information on key questions that were asked
- Contain updated data, including any modifications in project cycle or milestones.

Mid-term Evaluations (MTE)

MTE's purpose is to provide an independent, external view of the progress achieved by the project at that point and; provide feedback to the IE.

MTE assesses three categories of project progress:

1. Progress towards results - progress towards targets set at the design stage and progress towards outcomes and objectives. This is important to assess if the assumption made at the preparatory and if the current condition has changed.
2. Adaptive management- MTE assess the adaptive management, which includes the financial management, monitoring system and risk management strategy.
3. Quality control - MTE assess management arrangements where the evaluation will look at the quality of the execution by the executing entity as well as the quality of the overall implementation of the project.

Furthermore, MTE should be prepared no later than six months after the midpoint of the project. MTE can include recommendations to change outcome and outputs, such changes should be communicated to the secretariat.

Additionally, MTE should include conclusions, lessons learned and recommendation and official project management response regarding the evaluation conclusions and recommendations. The management shall provide a response on how IE will adopt some of the recommendation of the evaluation and what strategies would employed to achieve this.

Final Evaluations (FE)

Final evaluations should be prepared by an independent evaluator who is familiar with AF procedures and must be submitted within nine months of completion of project. IE will apply its own evaluation norms. Final evaluations:

- Aim to promote accountability and transparency within the Fund
- Aim at organizing and synthesizing experiences that may guide the selection and design of future adaptation fund interventions.
- Aim at providing feedback into the decision-making processes and want to assess the relevance and effectiveness of AF interventions

As far as possible the following evaluation criteria should apply:

- Relevance –of the project to national adaptation plans and priorities
- Effectiveness – assessing the extent to which the intended outcome was achieved.
- Efficiency – how economically the resources provided by the AF have been converted into results (were alternatives being considered).
- Impact – which measures the positive and negative effects of the intervention
- Sustainability – the likelihood of continued benefits after the project is completed.

Final evaluations should assess the following criteria:

1. The achievement of project outcomes
2. Achievements related to concrete adaptation measures (a rating should be provided as well from a scale of Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory based on a multidimensional analysis)
3. Likelihood of sustainability of outcomes after project completion
4. A rating of the probability of the project achieving long term impacts
5. Assessment of overall monitoring and evaluation system – M&E plans, indicators, baseline and alignment with National and implementing entity M&E Frameworks

Final Evaluation should also include conclusion, lessons learned and recommendations along with an official Project Management response regarding the recommendations provided.

II. Presentation on Knowledge Management Benefits of Evaluations

The main objective is to generate useful lessons that can be applied to improve programming of project level output, outcomes and impacts.

Key elements of lessons learned

- Should be knowledge gained by experience
- Derived from a specific and well-defined situation
- Ideally, they should be significant to have relevance to a wider context (social, economic and political)
- Need to be generalized and replicable
- Should highlight positive aspects as well as negative impacts in the case of malfunctioning practices

Challenge

- In many cases, they are poorly formulated, insignificant or unreplaceable resulting in lessons learned being ignored.

The process of Knowledge Management (KM) in Evaluations has three main stages:

1. *Identifying lessons learned*

- Highlight insights gained through the life of the intervention on successful experiences from impacts and outcomes on project sustainability. They can relate to administrative aspects of the program or technical context of the intervention.
- Present strengths and weaknesses and provide decision makers with relevant information on how to avoid common mistakes in the future and promote a more enabling environment.
- Explain why something did or did not work by establishing clear causal factors and effects and, whether the lesson signals a decision to repeated or avoided.
For example, in the case of AF projects, it could be that a certain adaptation intervention is successful to an inclusive consultative process with local community leaders, as well as local and national governments.

- Explain how well, an intervention contributes to the broader goals of the project/programme which is an indicator of success.
- Site how targeted populations are affected, ideally with a focus on vulnerable populations, women and children.

2. *Flagging emerging good practices*

Lessons learned may become an emerging good practice when

- It additionally shows proven results or benefits that is determined to be replicated or up scaled by the evaluator.
- Represents successful strategies or interventions that have performed well.
- Demonstrates evidence of sustainable benefits for process that should be replicated.
- Demonstrates clear benefits of the targeted intervention on the benefits with an emphasis on vulnerable population, women and children.

3. *Disseminating and sharing lessons learned*

- Lessons need to be shared on a public forum such as the website or publications of the implementing entity.
- Should be directly communicated to relevant stakeholders in the field or during conferences, workshops, training sessions or seminars.
- Project Manager should disseminate lessons to relevant stakeholders during formal and informal meetings.

Q&A

Question: Is there a template that M&E should be folded against or modeled against?

Response: Slide 13 of the presentation provides some useful links – Such as guideline for project and programme final evaluation. A sample template is also provided at the end of this document to give general guidance on how to do the evaluation.

Question: Are there currently Adaptation Fund guidelines for both MTE and FE?

Response: This is only for Final Evaluations but MTE Guidelines will be coming up in the future.

III. Presentation on mid-term evaluation - *Unidad para el Cambio Rural (UCAR)*

Project: Enhancing the Adaptive Capacity and Increasing Resilience of Small-scale Agriculture Producers of the Northeast of Argentina

The representative from UCAR highlighted the following aspects of the evaluation

1) *Timeline and goals*

- i. Evaluation started in 2016 and took more or less 4 months. Done are 3 years of the implementation of the project.
- ii. Main goals were to analyze the progress and implementation of the project; factors contributing to the achievements, obstacles and challenges affecting the implementation, identify good practices and lessons learned; alignment with regional priorities and goals as defined in the results framework.

2) *Institutional arrangements for the evaluation*

- i. Involved the three executing agencies: Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery; National Institute of Agriculture Technology; and; National Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development.
- ii. Other ministries also involved in the project such as the Ministry of production and National Institution of Industrial technology.

3) *Project has three main components*

- i. To enhance the resilience of small-scale agricultural producers from the Northeast in light of climate change and variability.
- ii. To strengthen hydro-meteorological and agro-production monitoring systems to improve the institutional capacity of assessing, and planning for, climate change impacts in the agricultural subsistence systems.
- iii. To enhance institutional capacity, both at national and provincial/local level, for decision-making and management of the implementation of adaptation measures and actions to address climate change and variability in northern Argentina.

4) *Steps in MTE process*

- i. Evaluation unit first defined the TOR for the Monitoring and Evaluation and then, hired an external consultant to carry out the evaluation. This was followed by development of the methodology and selection of the approach, which combined quantitative and qualitative information. UCARs role was to make sure all relevant stakeholders very interviewed. Provided the consultant with all relevant documents.
- ii. Second stage was the Data gathering process. UCAR provided consultants with all relevant documents, progress reports, financial data and information on the project indicators. It coordinated with the executing entity (EE) with respect to the logistics to make sure interviews were all done and the possibility of on sight visits.
- iii. Third Stage was the data analysis and writing of the report. A consultant did this. UCAR provided feedback on the draft report and final versions.
- iv. Final step was results dissemination. UCAR made sure that all relevant stakeholders could learn from lessons learned and the main findings. It organized a managerial report to share their impression of the mid-term report. Organized an internal workshop where all executing entities were brought together to share the main findings of the MTE report. A discussion and exchange of ideas was fostered on their impression of the findings and recommendations. Also, organized a participatory workshop where all main stakeholders from different ministries and technicians from the field were invited to discuss lessons learned/recommendations through round tables discussions.
Findings of the evaluation – Ratings: Relevance (High), Effectiveness (Moderate), Efficiency (Moderate), Sustainability (High).

5) *Factors impacting the achievements*

- i. Administrative costs for the different institutions were high because each had their own procedures. Adjustments had to be made in terms of procedures and financial management.
- ii. Selection of executing entities was found to be an advantage in terms of the sustainability of the project. This is because these were old entities that have been in the field for over 50 years. They had ample experience before the project was implemented and will continue to exist even after the project ends. A challenge was that this affected the state of the progress because the executing entities continued doing what they had been doing and had to adapt to the activities of the project.
- iii. Special efforts were made for local capacity development such as training for technicians- this was found to be a multiplying factor for scaling up the different outcomes and; also for construction of technology. For example, the small holders were learning to build their own rainwater harvesting system. This fostered the ownership and also will ensure the continuity of activities once the project has ended.
- iv. Finally a key factor was the public-private synergy in the public sector and the private sector. In the development of the insurance pilot programme for agriculture, activities are expected to be sustained after the project ends.

6) Impact of MTE

- i. Fostered a learning process among the different stakeholders, executors, technicians, and managers. It led to an exchange of ideas about how to improve, what worked, what didn't work and how to continue.
- ii. Also contributed to the visibility of the project itself, activities were being implemented and the general knowledge on adaptation to climate change. A lot of people came to the workshops where information was disseminated.
- iii. Helped UCAR update some indicators that were not thought of at the beginning in terms of diversification of expected income. For example:
- iv. Also focused on some activities that were originally planned but not prioritized.
- v. Helped make revisions and review plans of what had been done in the field.

7) Lessons

- i. Learned the importance of the external perspective. There are advantages that an external perspective can bring to the project beyond what the IE already knows as conclusions are based on analyzed evidence.
- ii. Also, evaluators work together with staff to better understand the complexity. Feedback between internal consultants and staff from the project and external consultants/experts.
- iii. Important to think about the utility of the report- who you want to share the lessons learned with and find different communication strategies and tools to share lessons, managerial reports and, summary reports on main findings.

- iv. Important to follow up on the plans and recommendations that were identified in the evaluation. Understand the importance of improving what is done every day.

Q&A

Question: What was the process of selecting the evaluator? How did you do it? Was it done in Argentina or an international consultant?

Response: It was a consultant from Argentina, the M&E unit works with different projects in different kinds of evaluations so they have a database of different evaluators. Some were invited and interviewed with the project management team and decided on the best candidate.

Question: How did you manage the insurance within the project and how you insured that the results of the evaluation were adequately considered? Please provide details of insurance pilot programme developed between public and private sector.

Response: It is a pilot experience. In Argentina, there is no insurance for agriculture or smallholder farmers and the idea of the project was to develop this pilot programme.

To develop this programme, there were many negotiations between the public sector i.e. the Agriculture risk office and different insurance companies that had never put in place an insurance of such a nature for small holders.

After a lot of negotiation, they started the insurance, it is the 2nd year it is working and doing an evaluation now and study on the experience to share how the whole process is done and findings. It is the hope it will continue in the year 2-3 years privately but need public support for some years because it is not market insurance now.

IV. Presentation on final evaluations - *Centre de Suivi Ecologique (CSE)*

Project: Adaptation to Coastal Erosion in Vulnerable Areas

The representative from CSE highlighted the following aspects of the evaluation: The Log frame of CSE, M&E activities, Mid-term and final evaluation and, lessons learned.

- 1) CSE was accredited in 2010. CSE developed a monitoring and evaluation manual, set an M&E framework under supervision of project management, and internally packaged knowledge for sharing with the wider audience. 1st Adaptation project for coastal erosion for CSE as an NIE. The initial duration was 2 years but was extended. The mid-term evaluation measured the level of execution of planned activities.
- 2) For the final evaluation, CSE organized field visits with M&E team and meetings with stakeholders. These were the recommendations made in the Mid-term report. The objective of the final evaluation was to measure project intervention; to achieve the goal of reducing vulnerability to climate change in coastal areas and to ensure project benefits are shared by beneficiaries.
 - a. The process of final evaluation– organizational aspect was the same as for MTE.
 - b. The technical aspect of FE compared planned results with actual results of the project. Prepared a document to share with the Adaptation Fund Board. There was one change in the objective of the project. Found there was change between what was in the initial document and what was done.
 - c. Faced some challenges with one executing agency –It was very difficult to have documentation records as they had a limited capacity.

- d. Important to ensure the involvement on local communities in the design.
- 3) Implementation of the evaluation
 - a. Funding proposals need to be realistic when preparing the logical framework and defining indicators. Indicators must be implemented therefore should be realistic.
 - b. Useful to have the involvement of communities in monitoring and evaluation activities as interviewees.
- 4) Lessons
 - a) Good to document the implementation of project by the NIE because NIEs have various reporting requirements by the AF so good to keep a record.
 - b) NIEs need to report on changes, logical framework and indicators need to be updated formally if any indicators need to be changed during the course of implementation of the project.
 - c) Put in place a system to work after the project ends to sustain positive impacts. For example, in the case of coastal zone, a system in place for maintenance of infrastructure such as dikes. To include financing for ensuring sustainability
 - d) NIEs need to keep in mind that it is important to put in place a system for impact evaluation of project a few years after the project has ended- M&E system for impact assessment.

Q&A

Question: In terms of data collection can you share how you went about the process of collecting data? Please elaborate on how you worked with the executing entities and how you addressed any missing information and gaps in the process?

Response CSE: The challenge with collecting data during the terminal evaluation report was the staff turnover and no archiving system for documents. Needed to fund them to collect data and it was very difficult. The staff of the EE didn't document data and the new staff of the EE didn't have documents related to the project. Finally, we were able to collect some documents but others were not available during the period of the evaluation. The local communities with support of staff from entities that had M&E capacities were collecting data.

Response CSE: Is very important for IE during project implementation to get copies of all possible documents and it is important to file and backup. CSE has now included a provision in the agreement with the executing entities requesting them to make copies and share with CSE of any changes in the agency such as those related to changes in staff /focal points etc.

Question: To Soledad can you elaborate more on what the timeframe was of the evaluation once the consultant was contracted for MTE and where the budget came from - the NIE fee or EE fee?

Response UCAR: Took 4 months from the time the consultant was hired to the time the money was paid from NIE.

Comment by CSE: By end of first project by CSE, the NIE has been approached by civil society organization with whom CSE collaborated with and wanted CSE to undertake an impact assessment in terms of adaptation. CSE tried to do the exercise but realized that it is very difficult right after completion of the project to measure impacts. The lesson learned was that for any future project, CSE will integrate components for project M&E to evaluate longer term impacts i.e. 2-3 years after implementation.

Question: Where does the money come from to continue impact evaluations after project completion?

Response: This should be integrated in the budget during project development to allow IE to keep monitoring impacts 2-3 years after project completion.

Comment from NIE: The mechanisms for local communications for public education and awareness must be in place and on-going to benefit the entire country; sharing the challenges, inputs from local stakeholders from the AF – all coming together to bring solutions.

Question: What are the toolkits for sharing lessons or how did CSE do this?

Response: CSE presented results of final evaluation before the Steering committee; but also, developed an information note to minister that summarized the activities and findings of the evaluation.

Question: Is there a regular template for project monitoring which the NIE can use for project monitoring visits?

UCAR Response: At UCAR, there is a results matrix template to collect data and centralize data from the executing entity every three months. Select which indicators need to be reported and develop different collection reports. For evaluation UCAR had experience from other mid-term evaluations

CSE Response: In Project Performance Report, there is one sheet on indicators; this was updated recently- the Results Tracker.

Secretariat: The secretariat doesn't provide templates as this depends on the processes in place in implementing entities. Often the M&E units of IEs have their own templates that they use to monitor data. They refer to M&E standards at their corporate level.

Conclusion

Observations and lessons from MTE and FE by the Adaptation Fund Board secretariat

The secretariat took note with appreciation that many of the observations from the presentations by UCAR and CSE had also reflected the observations from portfolio monitoring missions carried out by the secretariat in different regions. The secretariat shared the following:

- ✓ MTEs can provide a good base for making any required changes in the project / programme log frame. Sometimes this is a necessary practice to better reflect the reality on the ground.
- ✓ From here stems the importance of having robust baseline data. Project baselines are site specific and limited to the duration of the project. However, project baselines will later be used in monitoring and evaluation processes to measure any change the adaptation intervention.
- ✓ If baseline data is inaccurate it can reflect in unsatisfactory achievement of target outputs leading to a bad rating in the final evaluation.
- ✓ It is important to recognize that the project life is limited and there is a need to set realistic targets. For example, objectives, such as revision of public policies might take longer time frames as the country could be in a changing political environment. Achievement of such results can be affected by exogenous factors which can be factored into the risk management framework by considering all possible risks to the project at the design stage.
- ✓ MTEs can set recommendations to improve M&E plans and include better indicators to better track the impact of the intervention. It is important to set realistic indicators. For example, forward looking indicators such as “life loss reduction” in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects cannot always be accurately measured.
- ✓ IEs should be aware of the policy on material change for changes in output indicators and budget allocations.
- ✓ MTEs can provide a tool to improve planned strategies, ensure long-term sustainability, knowledge management activities, information dissemination and effective stakeholder engagement.
- ✓ It is important to allocate a Knowledge Management component in the budget, which can also be standalone component in the project document.
- ✓ FE can produce lessons learned that can be used by the same IE for future project but also other IEs to improve interventions.
- ✓ Keeping in mind challenges such as language barriers, barriers in data collection etc., IEs could use evaluations as a treasure chest of knowledge to improve interventions.

ANNEX 1: List of Participants

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