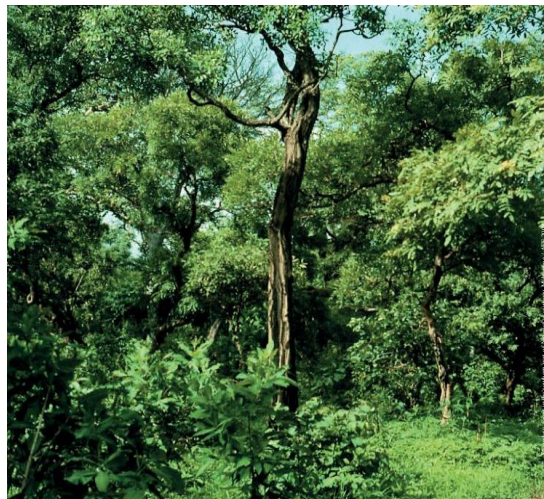




# African Forest Forum

A platform for stakeholders in African forestry



**Planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting  
and learning process at AFF**

2017



## **About AFF**

Established in 2007 as a non-political, non-governmental, objective, independent and not for profit international organisation, the African Forest Forum (AFF) is an association of individuals with a commitment to the sustainable management, wise use and conservation of Africa's forest and tree resources for the socio-economic well-being of its peoples and for the stability and improvement of its environment.

AFF exists to voice the concerns of African forestry stakeholders, and to use science, indigenous knowledge, and experience to advocate for the increasing relevance of forests and trees outside forests to peoples' livelihoods, national economies and the stability of the environment.

In this regard, AFF provides independent analysis and advice to national, regional and international institutions and actors on how economic, food security and environmental issues can be addressed through the sustainable management of forests and trees outside forests. Operationally, AFF mobilises resources to address forestry and related issues that cut across countries and different African sub-regions with a view of enhancing the relevance and contribution of forests and trees outside forests to the livelihoods of the people of Africa and stability of their environment.

## **Vision**

The leading forum that unites all stakeholders in African forestry

## **Mission**

To contribute to the improvement of the livelihoods of the people of Africa and the environment they live in through the sustainable management and use of tree and forest resources on the African continent.

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# **Planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning process at AFF**

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## 1. PREAMBLE

This document presents the process involved in planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of projects within the African forest Forum (AFF) according to the Results Based Management (RBM) approach. The RBM approach was endorsed by the 8th Meeting of the Governing Council of AFF as a key project management approach. It is an approach that focusses on continuous improvement of performance and results using monitoring and evaluation data, under the principles of accountability, ownership and inclusiveness. RBM is a suitable approach to demonstrate and improve efficiency and results from AFF projects. A training and reference manual has been developed to guide the project managers and staff at the AFF Secretariat on use of RBM in the project management process.

## 2. PROJECT PLANNING PROCESS

When a good project idea is mooted, the concept is shared amongst relevant stakeholders who contentiously agree on its viability as a project. Project planning is done through the logical framework analysis (LFA). LFA includes the problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, content analysis and objective analysis. Details on how to conduct LFA analysis are in the AFF RBM Training and Reference Manual. Stakeholders from various forestry related institutions are involved in the initial strategic planning meeting for project development. The LFA analysis is conducted during this meeting where they discuss the main issues for intervention, possible alternatives to solve the issues, the most feasible alternatives that can be undertaken and AFF's comparative advantage to intervene through the project. Extensive literature search is also conducted to validate the issues and solutions proposed at the stakeholders' meeting.

A smaller team at the AFF Secretariat then prepares project proposals for funding based on the recommendations of the stakeholders strategic planning meetings. The project document could result into one or more proposals for funding. The main planning tools that must be included in the project document include the log frame, the project implementation plan, activities schedule, risk identification and mitigation plan and activity based budget. The theory of change chart may also be included to elaborate the results chain for projects with multiple components.

Annual plan of work and budget (POWB) is prepared every year to guide on activities of focus for each year, the implementation schedule and the budget. The POWB is approved by the AFF Governing Council, and other relevant stakeholders like donors, before implementation. Every beginning of year AFF holds an annual planning staff retreat for its staff to develop an implementation schedule and assign responsibilities to each staff member for the activities in the annual POWB. During the retreat, key institutional partners and representatives that would participate in implementation of the activities are identified. Contribution of all staff members to the activities is established, which also forms part of the individual staff work plans.

### 3. MONITORING OF PROJECTS

Monitoring of activities at AFF is coordinated by the PMER specialist, who continually collects data on progress from all staff at the Secretariat. The project planning tools included in the proposal, act as a guide for implementation of activities, their monitoring and evaluation. A results tracking matrix is prepared showing all the indicators to be monitored and their status at the start of the project (baseline). Indicators are included for all levels of results: outcomes, outputs, processes and inputs. The indicators are clarified to make them SMART and also desegregated (mainly according to gender).

The criteria of monitoring and evaluation includes the following:

#### *Monitoring*

- Efficiency - if the inputs being used are less than or equal to what was budgeted (in POWB).
- Productivity - ratio of output to input based on costs (may be used interchangeably with productivity).
- Quality - the standard of a product or service produced compared with internationally accepted standards or with those of peer organizations, like citation index for published work.
- Effectiveness – the rate of completion of outputs against the annual work plan (in POWB).
- Customer satisfaction – If the target beneficiaries are satisfied with knowledge and services.
- Risks - If any of the risks envisaged in planning has occurred and if mitigation was successful.
- Assumptions – If the assumption made in the log frame are true during implementation

#### *Evaluation (or outcome assessment)*

- Accessibility – if the target beneficiaries are accessing the project outputs easily and in a timely manner
- Relevance – if the project outputs meet the needs of the target beneficiary
- Usability – if the target beneficiaries are able to understand and properly use the products and services generated
- Satisfaction – if the target beneficiaries are satisfied with the quality of the output
- Outcomes – if the target beneficiary has produced a new or improved on an existing product, service or system as a result of using the project outputs
- Contribution to development goals – if the outcomes generated contribute to SDGs and other international development goals and standards.

Progress reports on project activities are initially shared within the Secretariat through staff meetings. All staff report on the progress of the activities in their dockets in line with their work plans. Staff meetings also provide opportunities for the issues affecting progress of activities to be identified and addressed. Also, mission reports on staff travel, workshop reports, evaluation reports, communication reports and minutes of other meetings within the secretariat are prepared and shared among staff through email, and are also shared and discussed at staff meetings. Comments and updates are provided by staff to enrich such reports. These reports inform on the status of implementation of activities against the targets set in the project document, and also informs on the outputs that have been produced. Financial expenditure reports are prepared every quarter against the annual budget. Annual staff evaluation is conducted for each individual staff member by the respective supervisors to check on achievements against the work plan.

All this information is captured appropriately in project monitoring sheets. The most suitable and cost effective criteria will be selected from the list above, that will offer holistic report on the progress and outcomes of activities for any given project. Monitoring reports are prepared every quarter and shared within the Secretariat.

## 4. PROJECT EVALUATION

Once the outputs have been disseminated to the project beneficiaries, evaluations are conducted to provide information on whether these outputs are being used to realize the expected outcomes of the project. The theory of change guides on the actions needed to achieve the project outcomes.

Questionnaires are developed and customized to capture relevant information from the target beneficiaries that will demonstrate progress towards outcomes. All questionnaires are shared within the Secretariat for review and approval before they are administered. They are administered in both English and French where necessary.

For workshop participants, the workshop evaluation questionnaire is administered at the end of the workshop mainly to assess the relevance of the workshop to the participants, to document key lessons learnt, the actions proposed by participants to apply skills gained from the workshop, and suggestions for improvement of future workshops. Post workshop evaluations are conducted after six months and later one year after the workshop to assess the progress towards project outcomes along the established theory of change. During the subsequent follow ups after the workshop, feedback may be sought through online surveys, email communication, telephone and skype interviews to maximize on the response rate.

For information disseminated on the website or through info mail and social media, a survey is conducted every year to assess the level of accessing and using the products and services from AFF through the various channels. The survey is administered to AFF members online through survey monkey.

A report on the survey findings is shared within the Secretariat, and also incorporated into other reports for external stakeholders and audiences. Testimonials are documented from target beneficiaries on a continuous basis to establish the impact that AFF has had on the users and their institutions. A testimonial should capture accurate sentiments from the beneficiaries.

## 5. REPORTING

Progress reports to donors are prepared and submitted according to the contractual agreement between AFF and the donor. For most projects it is done on a bi annual and annual basis by project managers. Workshop reports, evaluation reports, mission reports, financial reports and reports from communication and knowledge management are available through a shared portal at the Secretariat for information and use.

Mission reports also provide an indication of the reaction of the target users to the information and services from AFF. This is especially true of the technical support by AFF to African delegates, RECs and other groups in international and regional processes. These reports are prepared by the relevant staff in such missions and are shared within the Secretariat first, for review and thereafter with other stakeholders.

Reporting to members and other stakeholders on the work and achievements of AFF is done through the website, newsletters, print and social media and other channels by the Communication Specialist.

The following points should be considered during preparation of the project reports:

- Reporting should be based on the indicators and targets contained in the project proposal to demonstrate results.
- As much as possible, the results should be quantified in terms of number of people, proportions of target users, scope of coverage and gender. In the absence of a mechanism to quantify, a comparison can be made for the achievements against the baseline or against the targets
- The narrative report should include, as much as possible, the reaction of target users towards the project outputs
- Quotes, testimonials and photos from beneficiaries to support the narrative report.
- The role of partners will be highlighted in the project reports and their actual contributions to be well defined in order to appreciate their role in the results achieved.



## 6. LEARNING FROM MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The main component of an RBM system is learning for improvement. The Secretariat is expected to effectively apply information from monitoring and evaluation for improvement in performance, decision making and learning new strategies for implementation. A manual for training and reference on RBM is in place to enhance understanding of results based management among Secretariat staff and its application within the projects.

Monitoring reports contain information on efficiency and effectiveness of implementation, issues detected during monitoring, risks and assumptions, monitoring and feedback from beneficiaries, all of which are critical for improvement of implementation of project activities.

These reports provide an opportunity for learning for project managers and for staff within the Secretariat. The knowledge gained from monitoring and evaluation also informs ongoing and future planning and programming. Lessons from evaluations of programmes, projects and initiatives and management responses should be available when new outcomes are being formulated or projects or programmes are identified, designed and appraised.

Information on best practices and successes from other organizations will also be incorporated into the learning system. Proper documentation of implementation process will ensure a good learning process. The AFF learning process will require commitment to the following:

- Rapid feedback to inform any changes in strategy
- Collective decisions that lead to change
- Lessons to improve future performance
- Flexibility to use new knowledge and opportunities
- Opening space for change

A learning session is conducted at least once a year to assess the performance of AFF activities and also compliance with RBM. An action plan will be developed from the recommendations made at each learning session and this will be incorporated into the PMER work plan.

Beyond the AFF Secretariat, knowledge from monitoring and evaluation contributes to a better understanding of effectiveness of the projects among the forestry stakeholders. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations from M&E will be widely shared and made available to potential users. In consultation with the Communication Specialist, lessons and knowledge from M&E will be packaged in a form that meets the needs of the AFF members and disseminated widely.



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