Guidelines for APFNet Project Monitoring and Evaluation

I. Introduction

In view of the APFNet Guidelines for Project Identification, Implementation and Management (PIIM, 2013), APFNet-funded projects, either *on-going or completed*, require *systematical and objective* monitoring and evaluations to

- *check if progress of project implementation is on track towards achieving the goal(s) and objectives of projects; and*
- *provide recommendations to ensure better planning, implementation and management of APFNet projects.*

Normally, APFNet project monitoring and evaluation is classified into internal and external monitoring and evaluation. The internal monitoring and evaluation shall be organized by the project Executing Agency (EA), while the external monitoring and evaluation will be organized by APFNet (or may be delegated to third party or independent evaluators) during and after project implementation.

> *<u>Mid-term evaluation</u> is usually conducted at the mid-term of a project implementation, to assess project progress to date, figure out problems/challenges and corrective actions and give recommendations to the remaining project activities to ensure the goal(s) and objectives of the projects achieved;*
> *<u>Terminal evaluation</u> is performed upon completion of a project implementation, assessing whether the goal(s) and objectives are met effectively and whether extension is needed and how the achievements can be sustained.*

The Guidelines focus on priorities and procedures for external evaluation of APFNet-funded projects, including mid-term evaluation and terminal evaluation, and are intended to support evaluators, EA(s) and other stakeholders to undertake result-based evaluations, bearing the principles of being objective, independent, user-friendly, participative and credible

when planning, conducting evaluation missions and reporting and sharing evaluation results. In other words, the evaluators are supposed to make objective and independent evaluations by adopting participatory approaches to produce credible evaluation results backed up with evidences for its potential users. The Guidelines may also serve as reference when the project EA plans and conduct internal monitoring and evaluation.

II. Evaluation Scope and Criteria

Project monitoring and evaluation usually looks at project planning, implementation and management comprehensively. With the purpose of enabling evaluators, the EA and other stakeholders fully aware of what to evaluate and how to collaborate, this session delineates key aspects of evaluation that deserve due attention.

For on-going projects, mid-term evaluation mainly investigate progress (project status to date and likeliness to achieve project objectives and future impacts), making recommendations and identifying initial lessons learned, while terminal missions check the project at a whole. Specifically, following criteria should be considered:

1. Relevance of Project Design

The conceptual design of a project is usually regarded 'good' when pre-project feasibility study occurs or technical consultancy has been provided in the phase of project planning and development before the project implementation is initiated. However, the reality is that project design is not always 'applicable' when PESC[1] context of the project changes or technical consultancy is insufficient. This justifies evaluating project design to check if it has been logically reasonable and practically operational against actual planning and implementation of project activities, particularly

- the linkage between project design and annual planning, to make sure project activities, outputs and objectives are closely inter-related;
- If indicators set to measure (monitor and evaluate) the achievement of outputs and objectives (and even goal(s) in the long run) have been

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[1] PESC=Political, economic, social and cultural

reasonable.

Besides, the flexibility of original overall design to adapt to changes /redesign in the project lifetime (risk management) in response is another aspect to look at when evaluating the project design stuff.

2. Efficiency

- Financial management(how well the financial resources have been planned and controlled, if actual expenditure is in line with approved budgeted, under transparent monitoring and audit, etc.);
- Cost-effectiveness (how efficiently resources such as financial inputs, expertise and skills, human resources, time etc. are converted to results. For example, project staff and consultant employment and their performance, procurement of equipment and how the purchase directly contributes to the achievement of project objectives);
- Monitoring and evaluation, documentation and reporting;
- Performance of project management/implementation bodies(PSC, EA, etc);
- Stakeholder participation/public awareness.

3. Effectiveness

APFNet project evaluation is a result-oriented process and the result means 'how well the goal, objective and outputs are achieved'. The result measurement enables the evaluators to conclude whether planned goal or expected outputs have been achieved and if not, to what degree.

To make the result easily measurable, 'with/without, before-after' approach shall be adopted to allow the comparison between baseline data and data collected after project implementation, between situation in intervened area and non-intervened area.

- Achievement, relevance and appropriateness of activities(implementation status of the planned activities, their relevance to support the achievement of the project objectives, outputs and desired outcomes);

- Achievement, quality and relevance of outputs and objectives.

4. Impacts

The impact includes positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. Project may produce impact in all-around social, economic, environmental, cultural aspects, and these aspects might be embodied in:

- Beneficiaries/stakeholders have gained expected economic benefits and improved the capacity to sustainably manage forests attributed from opportunities for being trained/involved in the projects;
- Ecological function of forests have been enhanced and public awareness towards environmental conservation have been raised;
- Forest management models/practices have been explored, realizing forest multi-functions and relatively equitable benefit-sharing.

5. Sustainability and duplicability

Evaluation on sustainability is to examine:

- Whether the positive impacts after project termination will continue;
- Whether the impact has a potential to be applied to a larger area with similar PESC situation;
- Whether project activities can self-sustain without other funding resources or is able to seek other funding resources for follow-ups.

Duplicability is to examine the potential of project outputs (especially best models and best practices) to be scaled up to a larger audience whatever at provincial, regional or international level.

III. Evaluation Execution

This session provides guidance on evaluation procedures step by step, which should be collaboratively planned by evaluator(s) and EA, and approved by APFNet before missions are executed.

Normally external evaluator(s) will be invited by APFNet, and

recommendations from EA are also welcomed. The evaluator(s) identified will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation during the project implementation, including both mid-term and terminal evaluations, as well as project check mission if necessary.

1. Evaluation Plan formulation

The external evaluator(s) will work with EA to formulate an evaluation plan (template please see Annex A), which will incorporate tasks and responsibilities (among the evaluation team), methodologies to collect data (desk review, documents to be reviewed, meetings and interviews, field site check, questionnaire, etc), and identify a mission itinerary that may include project field visits, meetings and interviews with key project staff and partners, and other events (like a project workshop) that may contribute to the evaluation.

EA will be responsible for providing with relevant documents and reports to the evaluator(s), scheduling meetings and interviews, arranging local travel to project sites, access to project facilities (archives) and accommodations during the mission.

2. Mission execution

The evaluation should feature collaborative nature and the greatest possible participative involvement of stakeholders. The external evaluator(s) is (are) supposed to gain as much information as possible for the analysis using different methods which may include participation in project-related activities, desk review, consultation and interview, case study, field/site visits, project office check, survey and questionnaires but need to be tailored to specific projects.

3. Evaluation output production

An evaluation report (suggested template see Annex B) will be the main output of the mission to present findings, conclusion and recommendations for better project planning and implementation. The evaluator(s) is/are expected to draft the report after intensive analysis on collected data.

During the drafting process, the evaluator(s) should keep contact with APFNet and EA for clarifications and comments. In principle, the report and other evaluation outputs should be finalized within one month after the field mission.

4. Result sharing

Evaluation outputs are supposed to be widely shared among project stakeholders or any output users identified while developing the evaluation plan. If recommendations raised may bring the project back on track or changes towards achieving project goal in a better way, APFNet should coordinate EA to follow up these recommendations and make according adjustments.

Annex A Template of Project Evaluation Plan (see the attached sample)

1. Background introduction
   --Project background (context, goal, objectives, and outputs)
   --Evaluation Purpose & objectives
2. Evaluation Methods
3. Evaluation team and evaluators' tasks
   -Composition, roles & responsibilities
4. Evaluation scope, criteria and indicators
5. Expected outputs
6. Format of evaluation report

Annex a. List of documents to be reviewed

Annex b. Budget for evaluation

Annex c. Tentative mission itinerary

Annex B Evaluation Report format

Cover

Content

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

Brief the background, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

1. Introduction

-Introduce the evaluation background with project objectives/goals to be achieved (during the reporting period) and status of activity implementation;

-Introduce the purpose/objectives of the evaluation.

2. Evaluation Design and implementation

-Evaluation scope;

-Evaluation methods shall be explained in detail why these methods are chosen and how they help collection of information for evaluation analysis.

-Stakeholders involved.

3. Analysis and findings

Summarize major findings in project design, overall implementation and management, impacts, sustainability with description of source of information and give a critical analysis of the potential impact of these findings on future implementation.

4. Evaluation results and conclusions

Draw a conclusion on whether the project is implemented in a good/bad manner based on major findings, and specify to what degree project objectives have been achieved with list of outputs as supporting materials.

Evaluation result should be presented in numeral ratings and descriptive words as highly satisfactory/satisfactory/moderate/highly unsatisfactory (see Annex 3).

5. Recommendations and lessons learnt

Give applicable suggestions in each step of the project lifecycle and itemize lessons learnt to improve current or future programs development.

Please add all the documents concerned in the list of annexes that should include but not limited to:

Annex 1 Evaluation agenda

Annex 2 Project progress table

Annex 3 Project overall rating table

Annex 4 Reference documents

Annex 5 Questionnaires for data collection

Annex 6 Lists of Interviewees

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Annex 2 Project Progress Table for evaluator (against project logical framework)

Project Objective/Outputs/Activities (in line with PD)	Indicators (in line with PD)	Baseline of activities	Progress made (%completion of activities and degree of output/objective achievement)	Evaluator's rating[2]	Evaluator's comments
Objective 1					
Output 1: Community nursery established	One nursery sizing 10*8 will be established in each site		Two nurseries and affiliated facilities were established, and more seedlings were produced than expected	Highly satisfactory	
Activity 1.1					
Activity 1.2					
Objective 2					
Output2					
Activity 2.1					
Activity 2.2					

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[2] The rating criteria will be the same with Annex 3 Project Overall rating table that ranks from highly satisfactory, satisfactory, moderate, unsatisfactory, highly unsatisfactory and D/I

Annex 3: Project Overall Rating Table

To support more systematic recording of evaluation findings, APFNet evaluation will use a rating table with score to record project performance and the table should be attached to the evaluation report. The scoring criterion is as follows:

- o **Highly satisfactory/4:**   The project embodies the description of strong performance provided below to a *very good* extent.
- o **Satisfactory /3:**   The project embodies the description of strong performance provided below to a *good* extent.
- o **Moderate/2:**   The project embodies the description of strong performance provided below to a *fair* extent.
- o **Unsatisfactory/1:** The project embodies the description of strong performance provided below to a *poor* extent.
- o **Highly unsatisfactory/0:** The criterion was *not assessed*.
- o **D/I:** The criterion was considered but *data were insufficient* to assign a rating or score.

The external evaluator(s) also are to provide a brief justification for the rating with score assigned. Identify most notable strengths to build upon as well as highest priority issues or obstacles to overcome. (Note that this table should not be a comprehensive summary of findings and recommendations, but an overview only. A more comprehensive presentation should be captured in the evaluation report.)

Criterion	Description of Strong Performance	Description of poor performance	Evaluator(s)' rating	Evaluator's Brief Justification
Relevance of Project Design				
Efficiency				
Effectiveness				
Impacts				
Sustainability and duplicability				
Overall Score				