

Evaluations and reviews are invariably a condition of donor funding. They should be carried out periodically in any MPA to determine whether the objectives are being met. This sheet provides guidance on carrying them out appropriately so that they contribute to improved management of the MPA.

The terms ‘evaluation’ and ‘review’ are often used in similar ways. However, a review generally means an assessment of a piece of work at one point in time in order to check that it is going in the right direction. Donors often require a mid-term review part way through a project. An evaluation is generally an assessment of the impact of a piece of work and of the extent to which stated objectives are being met. Evaluations are thus often required at the end of projects or defined phases within a project. As with assessments of the management success of MPAs (see sheet G10), evaluations and reviews should be seen as a learning process, aimed at increasing project or programme effectiveness.

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

Donors often have specific TOR for evaluations and reviews, but may request assistance in preparing these, or ask for comments and approval. Preferably all partners should see the TOR and be allowed to comment before they are finalised. The TOR are often couched in terms of questions, along the following lines:

Effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness

What outputs were achieved and were the activities in accordance with the Project Document and work plans? To what extent did the outputs contribute to the overall objectives? Were technical and financial resources, skills, institutional arrangements, organisation and strategies available adequate? Were the resources used optimally, and funds spent in accordance with work plans and using correct procedures? Were any unforeseen problems dealt with appropriately? Were the capacities of the project partners adequate and did they all work well together? Was there a process for self-monitoring and assessment, e.g. through team meetings, reporting and reflection?



Impact

This section is primarily for evaluations. Were the intended impacts realised, and were there any unintended positive or negative impacts? Did the project bring about desired changes in the behaviour of people and institutions? Have these changes resulted in an improvement in the lives of people and a more efficient use of resources upon which they depend? What might have been the likely situation without the project? Note that evaluation of the impact of the project may be difficult if the objectives were neither clear nor measurable and if there were no monitoring programmes.

Relevance in relation to the needs of the stakeholders and environment

What was the context within which the project was designed and did it address most pertinent issues? Did the project address identified needs, issues and challenges facing people and the environment? What have been the roles of the donor, project partners, and project staff and were they appropriate?

Long term sustainability

Were all key stakeholders sufficiently involved? Were their expectations met and were they satisfied with their level of participation? Do partners have the capacity to continue to implement all initiated activities, and can they raise adequate material and financial resources? To what extent were external factors that influence sustainability (e.g. political support, availability of funding, technical capacity, economic development activities) addressed? What else is required to ensure continued sustainability and positive impact?

Identification of lessons learnt

What lessons were learnt about project structure, including management (e.g. human resources, financial), decision making, monitoring, reporting and assessment? What lessons were learnt regarding the strategic approach of the project, e.g. stakeholder involvement, partnerships, and operational strategies used in implementation? What lessons were learnt regarding the initial assumptions and hypothesis made during project design?

The TOR should specify the information that the consultants need to gather and how they may obtain it, how the results should be presented, arrangements for feedback and consultation with project partners, and logistical arrangements with a time scale. Sometimes the evaluation or review team are asked to develop the methodology themselves.

CARRYING OUT AN EVALUATION

The timing of evaluations and reviews is generally laid out in project documents. Evaluations and reviews are usually carried out by a team (minimum of two people) that includes individuals external to the programme. Such people often provide useful insights to on-site staff who may be too close to problems, reluctant to acknowledge them, or too pre-occupied with day-to-day issues and activities. External teams can also bring in experiences from other areas to provide fresh perspectives on how to overcome obstacles. Teams should however also include someone very familiar with the project or programme, and certainly a member who is national to the country involved. The composition of the evaluation team should be such that it reflects a balance of views, and in its work it must consider the views of all stakeholders.

Preferably a participatory approach is used, with widespread consultation among partners, stakeholders and project beneficiaries. Most evaluations and reviews will involve:

- A review of the Project Document, work plans and progress reports, and other relevant documentation;
- Consultation with project partners and staff;
- A field or site visit;
- Presentation of preliminary results to all those involved, often to the Advisory Committee or Board.

KEY POINTS FOR THE MPA

- Ensure that all MPA staff are aware of the requirements for the evaluations and reviews that may have to be undertaken for projects and donors that are supporting the MPA.
- Try and encourage MPA staff to see these events as a learning opportunity rather than a job threat.
- Start preparations for evaluations and reviews in good time, and ensure that all those involved are aware of what is involved and are available; sometimes self-assessments with different stakeholder groups, in advance of the visit from the external team, can be very useful.
- Ensure that the team has all the relevant documentation and information; make sure the results of monitoring programmes are accessible and in a usable format.
- Make sure that recommendations from reviews and evaluations are followed up, and use the lessons learnt to improve MPA management in general.

Sources of further information

Gosling, L. & Edwards, M. 1995. *Toolkits: a practical guide to assessment, monitoring, review and evaluation*. Development manual 5. Save the Children. London, UK. 254pp.

UNDP/GEF *Information Kit on Monitoring and Evaluation*: www.undp.org

Guidelines for managing evaluations in IUCN. Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. www.iucn.org/themes/eval/index.html

CASE STUDY

Lessons learnt from evaluations of a coastal management programme in Tanzania

Since it started in 1994, the Tanga Coastal Zone Conservation and Development Programme (funded by Development Cooperation Ireland and with technical assistance from IUCN) has had to adapt to many changes, including the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) which decentralised decision making powers from the Region to Districts. An adaptive management approach was therefore adopted, which required a good understanding of the impacts of the Programme itself and of the political, social and economic context.

Much of the information required to support planning and decision-making came from the mid-term reviews and final evaluations undertaken during each of the three phases of the Programme. These were not only invaluable in guiding planning and improving management, but were also extremely useful in generating shared understanding amongst the Programme partners, motivating stakeholder groups and enhancing public and political support.

Examples of information and recommendations generated include:

Achievements - Confirmation that the Programme had helped to change the behaviour of key stakeholders, which in turn contributed to positive impacts on the environment (e.g. improved coral cover).

Strengths and weaknesses - Observations that while the Programme was successfully increasing support and capacity for collaborative coastal management, efforts to introduce alternative income generating activities were not so successful. It was thus recommended that the Programme should focus on fisheries issues.

Relevance - Given decentralisation, the evaluations recommended increased capacity building at District level, reaffirmed that the approach of participatory management and involvement of stakeholders was appropriate, and recommended greater focus on developing mechanisms to ensure long term sustainability.

The Programme also learnt crucial lessons about conducting evaluations efficiently so that they generate useful and accurate information. For example:

- Sufficient resources (people, time, money) must be available, to guarantee the quality and usefulness of the final product;
- TOR need to be clear and comprehensive;
- The evaluation team should have good technical knowledge of the programme area as well as good evaluation skills;
- The team must be given time to understand a programme and develop their methodology with the evaluation managers before the evaluation starts;
- All partners must understand their roles and responsibilities in an evaluation.