



MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING (MEAL) FRAMEWORK FOR THE NBSAP II OF UGANDA

Policy Brief 2023

Background

Uganda is one of Africa's richest species biodiverse countries, with an estimated 1,742 terrestrial vertebrate species (with more than half of Africa's birds), and at least 3,662 plant species (Plumptre et al. 2017). To preserve this rich biodiversity, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) is coordinating the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan II (NBSAPII), which is to be implemented from 2015 to 2025. In order to ensure the successful implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are needed, which is why the NBSAPII included a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework. However, a Voluntary Peer Review (VPR) of the NBSAPII recommended that the framework needed to be refined and expanded to enhance reporting, stakeholder engagement and/or participation, and accountability for the responsibilities of different actors, and the resources mobilised. This led to the development of the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Framework.

Why Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning?

For a successful programme and project implementation and thus a successful conservation of biodiversity, the mechanisms

of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning are crucial. Monitoring shows where management interventions are needed, and it also quantifies the effectiveness of the management practices in place for biodiversity conservation. Together with evaluation of the monitored data, the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation programmes can be determined, and this information can be used as basis for the planning of future interventions.

Accountability is to ensure that the programmes/projects are developing in the intended way, point to issues that might arise, and in those cases to correct any situations which are desired. Learning is overarchingly important as all the information gathered through monitoring and evaluation, as well as any cases in accountability offers learning opportunities for future decision-making. By ensuring learning throughout different programme/projects and institutions, project planning can avoid mistakes and learn from best-practices for a more efficient implementation.

The MEAL Framework

The MEAL Framework was developed to support the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) objectives in Uganda, and it coincides with the transition into the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). It integrates the goals and targets,

and strengthens the implementation support mechanisms, enabling conditions, responsibility, transparency, outreach, awareness and uptake. Each of the components of MEAL are critical and linked with one another. They each play a vital role and contribute to other components by providing input and feedback for improvement. Part of the MEAL is the connection with the NBSAP II implementation, including supporting its intermediary and final goals. Additionally, the MEAL also contains guidelines explaining and guiding the necessary steps for good monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning, such as how to collect, manage and use data or what activities to plan for effective learning.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Sections of the MEAL

1. MEAL planning tools
2. Collecting MEAL data
3. Analysing MEAL data
4. Using MEAL data
5. Accountability mechanisms and learning plan
6. Supporting actions

The MEAL data plan is focused on obtaining timely, high-quality data as the foundation for measuring progress, decision-making and learning. Major components are data quality, developing data collection tools, creating samples, using the data collection tools, and managing the data.

Evaluation is based on three schedules of evaluation:

- Annual evaluation for indicators where the cost of environmental damage without immediate mitigation action would be high, for example pollution in fragile ecosystems.

- Biennial for indicators to enhance stakeholder involvement in the direction of implementing the NBSAP II.
- Every five years for other indicators.

Data and analysis within the MEAL framework are there to guide NBSAP II entities make collaborative, timely, and informed decisions to ensure the programme/project activities deliver the intended impacts in line with the scope, time and budget. Where the feedback shows weaknesses, gaps, and tailing away from the intended programme/project results, the institutions will be able to pinpoint areas within the programme/project cycle where action can be undertaken to reinforce, and/or adjust the project or programme.

Accountability

Accountability is a key feature that makes all concerned programme/project persons accountable. It gives power to beneficiaries, development partners, clients, and other relevant stakeholders to hold implementing agencies accountable for their interventions, actions, policies, and priorities. Accountability mechanisms include complaint-handling mechanisms and feedback practices, especially to women, youth, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) and other marginalised communities. Activities of the MEAL Framework for better accountability include establishing complaints and feedback mechanisms, documentation of feedback reports, and periodic discussions with the programme/project teams. Accountability occurs throughout the process of MEAL implementation.

Objectives of MEAL

- Continuously monitor and evaluate the level of progress made by different stakeholders towards achievement of each target
- Illuminate areas of progress as well as areas of neglect to allow to adjust and strengthen the programmes of interventions as needed
- Provide a platform to identify gaps, opportunities and weaknesses
- Promote the continuous involvement and participation of stakeholders

Learning

Learning will ensure that the country programmes/projects, which are all implementing similar or interrelated types of activities, can reflect on knowledge and understanding each other's efforts and convert lessons learnt into actions needed to improve current systems and processes, and secure the success of future programmes/projects relevant to biodiversity conservation and management. Activities for better learning include the sharing of evidence and results as well as the identification of failures as learning opportunities. Lessons learned and best practices will be captured through activities such as:

- Reflection/review workshops
- Focus groups
- Lesson learning

MEAL and the NBSAP II

The MEAL Framework will support reporting for stakeholder institutions implementing components of the Uganda NBSAP II. It is there to guide NBSAP II entities to make collaborative, timely, and informed decisions to ensure the programme/project activities deliver the intended impacts in line with the scope, time and budget.

Part of the MEAL is the results framework, which

includes the interventions to be undertaken by the responsible institutions in implementation of Uganda's NBSAP II. With the contributions to eight strategic objectives, the MEAL contributes to the goal of the NBSAP II, which is to enhance biodiversity conservation, management, and utilisation and fair sharing of the benefits.

The strategic objectives are:

1. To strengthen stakeholder coordination and frameworks for biodiversity management.
2. To facilitate and enhance capacity for research, monitoring, information management and exchange on biodiversity
3. To put in place measures to reduce and manage negative impacts on biodiversity.
4. To promote the sustainable use and equitable sharing of costs and benefits of biodiversity.
5. To enhance awareness and education on biodiversity issues among the various stakeholders.
6. To harness modern biotechnology for socio-economic development with adequate safety measures for human health and the environment.

7. To promote innovative sustainable funding mechanisms to mobilise resources for implementing NBSAP II.
8. Emerging issues of oil and gas production and development, biofuels, and disaster risk management.

For the contribution to those objectives, the logical framework was established under the MEAL, which shows the goal, intermediate outcome, output and activities, and their matching indicators, means of measure and assumptions.

Biodiversity Financing and MEAL

The 7th goal of the result framework is to promote innovative sustainable funding mechanisms to mobilise resources for implementing NBSAP II. The means of measurement include Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) for biodiversity, and national income assessment for biodiversity. Outputs include the development of guidelines and action plans for financing biodiversity in Uganda. To achieve this, intermediate goals and indicators were set, such as the indicator that

financial resources for effectively implementing NBSAPII is increased by at least 10% from current level.

NEMA in collaboration with other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are implementing ongoing activities for biodiversity financing. In May 2015, the Government of Uganda through NEMA developed guidelines and action plans for financing biodiversity in Uganda. These guidelines and action plans aim at establishing appropriate guidance to enable mobilization and proper use of financial resources for financing biodiversity conservation in Uganda. In March 2019, Uganda completed the development of its National Biodiversity Finance Plan (NBFP) with the mission to mobilise adequate additional resources to meet the biodiversity funding gap as well as ensure that funds are used efficiently and effectively to address the biodiversity and ecosystem challenges in biodiversity and ecosystem conservation and management.



Further Readings

NEMA. (2023). Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Framework for the NBSAP II of Uganda.

Plumptre et al. 2017

NEMA. (2016). National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan II (2015-2025).

CBD. (2021). Voluntary Peer Review (VPR) of the Revision and Implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2025 (NBSAPII) of Uganda.

NEMA. (2019). Sixth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity for Uganda.