MONITORING & EVALUATION POLICY

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
General Secretary
The Earth Society

The Earth

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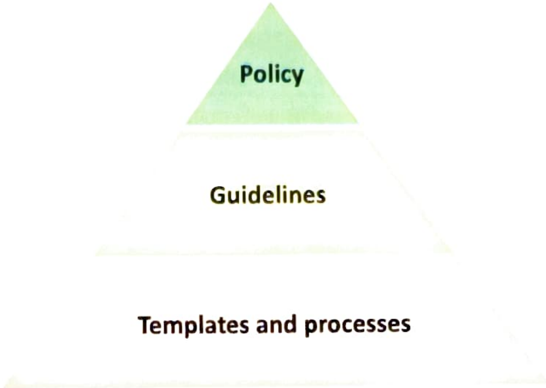
1. Purpose of this policy

This document describes the general policy of The Earth Society regarding result-oriented monitoring & evaluation (M&E). While The Earth Society has quite a few experiences in M&E, this is the consolidated general policy document drawn up for M&E.

This policy document constitutes the highest level of the normative framework of The Earth Society M&E system. It sets out the general principles and rules regarding M&E.



In addition to this general policy, The Earth Society will develop more practical M&E guidelines that adhere to this M&E policy. These guidelines are stand-alone documents for specific users: The Earth Society and the projects and programmes supported by The Earth Society.

A number of processes, templates and tools will be developed on the basis of the policy and guidelines.

The M&E policy and the various M&E guidelines of The Earth Society adhere to the definitions, norms and standards of the OECD/DAC.

2. Introduction

Programme and project management at The Earth Society follows results-based management (RBM) approaches. This focuses on achieving realistic expected results; monitoring progress toward their achievement; evaluating outcomes; integrating lessons learned into management decisions and reporting on performance.

Monitoring and evaluation are integral components of RBM and function as distinct mechanisms for oversight and accountability. Performance monitoring measures progress towards achieving results planned for in programmes and projects; while evaluation assesses the worth of an intervention. Evaluations draw on data generated through monitoring during the programme or project cycle. Examples include baseline data, information on the subprogramme or project implementation process, and measurements of results. Different aspects of monitoring and evaluation, including related responsibilities, are compared in Table 1.

The knowledge generated by monitoring and evaluation provides the basis for decision making. This can mean decision making in the short term – making adjustments to implementation plans - or in longer term development strategies. Lessons learnt and recommendations need to be captured by The Earth Society knowledge management system with a view to (a) defining and redefining the desired development results to be achieved by the organization and (b) strengthening the methods, processes or modalities through which such results are to be achieved. To be used in managing for development results, knowledge gained from monitoring and evaluation must be made available and disseminated within the organization.

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (R
Chairman
The Earth

Mohamm
Secretary
The Earth Society

Table 1: Comparison between monitoring and evaluation at The Earth Society

	MONITORING	EVALUATION
Purpose	• Determine if programmes or projects are progressing according to plan	• External accountability to member States and donors • Internal accountability • Organizational learning
Responsibility	• Programme or project managers	• Evaluation Unit, Strategy and Programme Management Division; Project or Programme managers
Use of findings	• Take corrective action to ensure that subprogramme and project objectives are met • Ensure accountability to State and donors	• Incorporate lessons learned in the strategic planning and decision-making process of The Earth Society • Ensure accountability to State, donors and development partners
Focus	• Expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement • Outcomes/Outputs/activities	• Objectives (programme) • Outputs/Outcomes (project) • Results (themes)
Deliverables	• Updated information in MIS and Drive • Output, work month reports, accomplishment accounts, Programme Performance Report • Progress and terminal reports	• Evaluation reports with findings, lessons learned and recommendations
Dissemination	• Division, project stakeholders and, at important milestones, member States	• The Earth Society Board, donors and other stakeholders • Intranet; Internet

3. Monitoring Guidelines

3.1 Definition

Monitoring is defined as" a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds" (OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Manual, 2014). It is part of the Board's obligation to achieve high quality results in a timely and cost-effective manner, to fully implement and deliver on all mandates approved by the authorities.

3.2 Use of Monitoring

Monitoring is an *ongoing* management function that answers the question "Are things going according to plan?". It focuses on the substantive implementation and financial progress of the programmes and projects of The Earth Society, with an emphasis on outputs and expected accomplishments, while the interim and end-of-cycle reporting focuses on outcomes or objective. Monitoring is therefore a key element in the results-based management chain.

Results from monitoring are used by The Earth Society to:

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
General Secretary
The Earth Society

- Improve programme and project management, by identifying bottlenecks and taking corrective action(s), as required, to ensure that objectives are met within a given budget and timeframe by comparing actual progress against initial plans;
- Support organizational learning, inform decision-making and strengthen future strategic and programme planning by documenting and sharing findings and lessons learned internally and externally;
- Hold The Earth Society accountable to State and donors by providing evidences of the efficient and effective use of funds and staff resources.

3.3 Importance of staff participation

Active staff involvement in planning and monitoring will enhance ownership of the process and thus facilitate the achievement of results. Staff participation also encourages the sharing of experiences, which strengthens organizational learning. Heads of division and subregional office should ensure active staff involvement at all stages of the programme cycle, but particularly during the preparation of the following:

- **Annual work plan**: As staff members are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of outputs, they are best placed to determine how much time is needed for each activity, and to set realistic deadlines. As such, the annual work plan preparation can be used as a basis for the e-performance document plan for individual staff members.
- **Accomplishment accounts**: Staff members can provide an update on the delivery of outputs, achievements against preset indicators, constraints encountered and how these are managed, and lessons learned and suggestions for follow-up and improvement. This feedback should strengthen the overall delivery of the programme of work while contributing to the development of capacity for all staff members. It can also be used to update the annual work plan and for the review of staff performance in e-performance document.
- **Programme performance report** (PPR): Staff members can provide similar inputs as during the preparation of accomplishment accounts. However, the PPR is even more important in that it effectively reflects on the entire programme cycle and is used to inform the planning process for future strategic frameworks. In addition, the programme performance report is shared with stakeholders. The PPR is thus also a time for reflecting jointly on lessons learned, including from evaluations conducted during the biennium.
- **Project monitoring**: Staff members are responsible for monitoring the progress of projects on a day-to-day basis. This could include, for example, tracking the preparation of workshops, funds committed and spent, and the delivery of outputs by consultants and project partners. In addition, they ensure that progress of projects is monitored based on the project document and monitoring and reporting milestones are undertaken effectively and in a timely manner.

3.4 Project Monitoring

The basis for project monitoring is provided by the project document. In addition, there are also specific monitoring and reporting milestones, the purpose of which is to keep project officers, management, partners and other stakeholders informed about the project's progress.

On a day-to-day basis, project officers are responsible for monitoring the progress of projects. This could include, for example, tracking the preparation of workshops, funds committed and spent, and the delivery of outputs by consultants and project partners. Through monitoring, project management obtains information that can help it decide what action to take to ensure that a project is implemented according to plan.

Project document

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Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
General Secretary
The Earth Society

The project document forms the basis for the implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the project and is prepared using a standard template3. In support of monitoring work, the document provides a results framework, a monitoring and evaluation plan, a reporting arrangement, a work and monitoring plan and a budget, with narratives.

- **A results framework** is contained in the project document and explains how the project's outcomes can be achieved as a result of the outputs delivered, and how the activities will lead to the achievement of the outputs. It is prepared in a matrix format and includes the project outcome, outputs and activities, as well as the indicators used to measure them and the means of verification. The results framework is normally not revised during the project cycle unless there is a change to the project outcomes and/or outputs. In this case, the responsible substantive division/office requests a project document revision using a standard template.
- **A monitoring and evaluation plan** describes the process of assessing and reporting progress towards achieving project outputs and outcomes. The plan plays a crucial role in keeping projects on track, creates the basis for reassessing priorities and generates an evidence base for current and future projects. Project officers are responsible for setting up a system for the measurement of indicators, including identifying the types of data to be collected, sources of data, methods of data collection, timing and frequency, responsibility and budget. They should assess the effectiveness of capacity building workshops, seminar and knowledge products produced by the project through feedback questionnaires and focus group interviews.
- **The plan** also indicates whether an evaluation is planned and budgeted. Evaluation is compulsory for projects with a budget of $100,000 and over. The Earth Society requires that 2 to 4 per cent of the total project budget, or a minimum of $10,000, be allocated to conducting an independent evaluation of the project.
- **A work and monitoring plan** is similar to the annual work plan but its focus is project- specific. It serves as a management tool for project officers, while providing section chiefs and division directors with a transparent overview of important activities and timelines. The work and monitoring plan is contained in the project document. It shows the activities to be carried out over the entire project period, the timeframe for each activity, responsible officer/division and key monitoring and evaluation activities, including project inception meeting, annual progress report, mid-term review and post-project evaluation. The project officer updates the work and monitoring plan on a regular basis and in conjunction with the preparation of the project progress report.
- A **budget** shows the budget breakdown by budget class and year of implementation. It also provides a detailed budget narrative explaining the purpose and details of each budget item. It is used by project officers to plan and manage the project finances and it provides heads of divisions/offices and donors with a transparent overview of budgeted project costs.

3.5 Project progress report

All projects require annual project progress reports. Progress reports should include a financial statement for the reporting period. The purpose of these reports is to internally monitor and review if the delivery of outputs of a given project is within planned timelines and the budget, and to record lessons learned. They are used for both internal and external reporting purposes, in line with the relevant project trust fund agreements. Project management can then decide if corrective actions are needed and can update the project work and monitoring plan accordingly.

Project officers prepare the project progress report using a standard template based on the logical framework of the project. Each narrative progress report is an expansion of the previous report, covering the progress in delivering the project outputs from the project inception to date.

3.6 Project terminal report

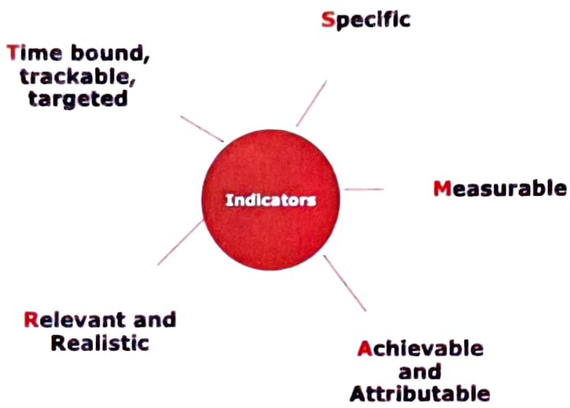
At the end of the project, a narrative terminal report and financial statement of the project are made available to the donors. The terminal report contains an assessment of the achievement of the project

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
General Secretary
The Earth Society

results and presents recommended follow-up actions and lessons learned under the project. It forms a key tool for monitoring subprogramme performance, as achievements and lessons contained in terminal reports are integrated into programme performance reports, through the subprogramme accomplishment accounts. The terminal report should be submitted to Executive Board within six weeks of project completion. The final financial statement is usually issued after the closure of the grant linked to the project.

3.7 Monitoring Criteria: SMART Indicators



SMART indicators are widely used in monitoring and evaluation to ensure that indicators are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. The acronym SMART stands for the following criteria:

- **Specific:** Indicators should be clear and specific, defining what will be measured and providing clarity on the aspect of the project or program being assessed. It should avoid vague or ambiguous language. i.e. Increase the percentage of students who achieve a passing grade of 70% or above in mathematics by the end of the academic year.
- **Measurable:** Indicators should be quantifiable or qualifiable, allowing for the collection of data to assess progress or achievement. They should have a clear measurement unit or scale. i.e. Reduce the average customer wait time at the service desk to less than 5 minutes.
- **Achievable:** Indicators should be attainable and realistic within the project or program's resources, capacity, and timeframe. They should consider the feasibility of data collection and the availability of necessary information. i.e. Increase employee satisfaction score by 10% within six months through targeted improvement initiatives.
- **Relevant:** Indicators should directly relate to the objectives and goals of the project or program. They should align with the desired outcomes and provide meaningful information for decision-making and learning. i.e. Decrease the number of workplace accidents by 20% by implementing safety training programs and improving safety protocols.
- **Time-bound:** Indicators should have a specific timeframe or target date for achievement. This helps in tracking progress, assessing performance, and determining the effectiveness of interventions within a defined period. i.e. Increase monthly sales revenue by 15% within the next quarter.

Incorporation of these SMART criterias into the selection and design of indicators, enhances the effectiveness of monitoring efforts and facilitates accurate assessment of progress and impact.

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
General Secretary
The Earth Society

4. EVALUATION GUIDELINE

4.1 Definition and purpose of evaluation

Evaluation at The Earth Society is defined as a systematic and an impartial assessment of a project, programme, regional office, policy, strategy, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results at the outcome level by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability, and gender and human rights mainstreaming.

The purposes of evaluation are to promote accountability and learning, and support results- based management. Evaluation aims to understand why and to what extent intended and unintended results were achieved; and to analyze the implications of the results. Evaluation can inform planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting and can contribute to evidence-based policymaking, development effectiveness and organizational effectiveness.

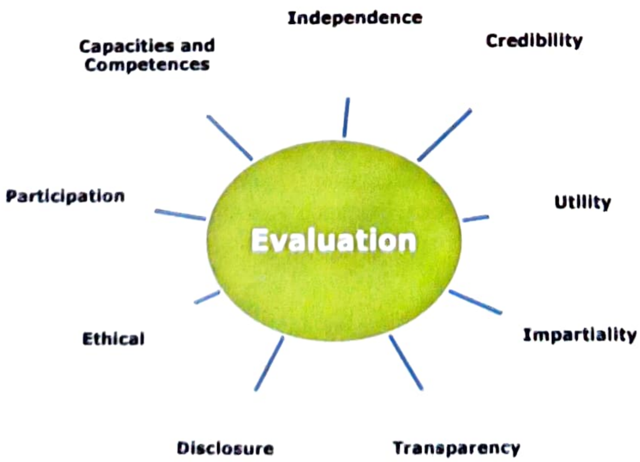
4.2 Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria are standards or benchmarks used to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and impact of a project, program, or policy. These criteria help determine the success or failure of an intervention and provide a basis for making informed decisions and recommendations. While specific evaluation criteria may vary depending on the context and purpose of the evaluation, the following are commonly used criteria:

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time.
- **Effectiveness:** The extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved
- **Efficiency:** The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost effectiveness or efficacy
- **Results/Impacts:** The positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes to and effects produced by a development intervention
- **Sustainability:** The likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable

4.3 M&E Principles

To ensure the quality and credibility of M&E, there are some key principles that would guide the M&E practice in The Earth Society.



The Earth
The Earth
Bandhara ... Dhaka-1213

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
General Secretary
The Earth Society

These principles provide a framework for effective M&E practices, enabling organizations and stakeholders to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and sustainability of their interventions and make informed decisions for improvement. These principles are:

- **Independence**: M&E should be conducted by an independent entity that is free from bias and influence from the program or project managers or implementers.
- **Credibility:** M&E should be based on reliable and valid data sources, methods and tools, and should follow the standards and norms of the relevant sector or discipline.
- **Utility:** M&E should provide useful and timely information that can inform decision-making, learning and improvement at different levels of the program or project cycle.
- **Impartiality:** M&E should present a balanced and objective assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the program or project, without favoring any particular stakeholder or perspective.
- **Transparency:** M&E should be conducted in a transparent manner, with clear roles and responsibilities, processes and procedures, and should share the findings and recommendations with all relevant stakeholders.
- **Disclosure:** M&E should disclose any limitations, assumptions, risks or uncertainties that may affect the validity or reliability of the data or analysis, and should acknowledge any conflicts of interest or ethical issues that may arise during the M&E process.
- **Ethical:** M&E should respect the rights, dignity and privacy of the people involved in or affected by the program or project, and should adhere to the ethical principles and codes of conduct of the relevant sector or discipline.
- **Participation:** M&E should involve the participation of the stakeholders, especially the beneficiaries, in the design, implementation and use of the M&E system, and should seek their feedback and views on the program or project performance and impact.
- **Capacities and Competence:** M&E should be conducted by qualified and experienced staff or consultants who have the relevant skills, knowledge and expertise to carry out the M&E tasks effectively and efficiently.

5. Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Plans

After a project or programme agreement is signed, the donor/funder and The Earth Society must finalize an M&E Plan that provides a detailed framework for monitoring and evaluating the project.

5.1 Purpose of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

The M&E Plan is a tool to manage the process of monitoring, evaluating and reporting progress toward the achievement of program results.

a. The monitoring component of the M&E Plan identifies indicators, establishes performance milestones and targets, and details the data collection and reporting plan to track progress against targets on a regular basis.

b. The evaluation component identifies and describes the types of evaluations that will be conducted, the key evaluation questions and methodologies, and the data collection strategies that will be employed.

The M&E Plan is used in conjunction with other tools such as work plans, procurement plans, and financial plans. The M&E plan also serves as a communications tool, so that The Earth Society staff and other stakeholders clearly understand the objectives and targets that The Earth Society is responsible for achieving.

5.2 Required elements of the M&E Plan

The M&E Plan must contain the elements like, M&E Plan, Indicator Documentation Table, Table of Indicator Baselines and Targets and Modifications to the M&E Plan must use The Earth Society's

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
General Secretary
The Earth Society

standard templates. In general:

a. The M&E Plan must include context for the program, including:

1. Clearly defined program logic
2. Literature review of evidence on proposed intervention(s)
3. Initial cost-benefit analysis, which analyzes the economic rationale for The Earth Society investments, and beneficiary analysis, which analyzes the distribution of program benefits, to the extent applicable

b. The M&E Plan must include all indicators that must be reported to The Earth Society on a regular basis, including those indicators that reflect the key parameters and targets underpinning the Economic Rate of Return (ERR).

c. If The Earth Society or its partners identify gaps in data availability and data quality during program development that limit the ability to measure results, best efforts to fill these gaps should be covered in the planning of monitoring and evaluation activities and their associated costs for the program implementation period and beyond. These efforts should be documented in the M&E Plan.

d. The M&E Plan must include an evaluation plan at the project or program level. However, the evaluation plan can be developed in stages for each project (or other level as appropriate) as the projects are designed and implemented. The content of the evaluation section of the M&E Plan will vary depending on the status of the more comprehensive M&E Plan.

e. The evaluation section of the plan must include:

1. The proposed methodology (impact or performance) for evaluating each project/activity/sub-activity, as appropriate. If the program will be evaluated using only self-evaluation or will not be evaluated, a justification for this decision must be included.
2. The estimated The Earth Society and partner/donor budgets for each evaluation activity, with a corresponding procurement plan for contracting an independent evaluator, as well as proposed timelines for data collection and analysis to assist MCC and MCA's management.

f. The M&E Plan must include the full budget for project/porgramme related M&E activities (including post project M&E) and identify which of those activities will be funded by the partner/donor and which will be funded directly by The Earth Society, both during and post completion of the project and programme.

5.3 Responsibility for Developing the M&E Plan

Primary responsibility for developing the M&E Plan lies with the **The Earth Society's** M&E Director with support and input from **The Earth Society's** M&E Lead.

The Earth Society and The Earth Society Project/Activity Leads are expected to guide the selection of the indicators at the process and output levels that are particularly useful for management and oversight of activities and projects.

The Earth Society leadership, management and other support programmes within The Earth Society, as well as external stakeholders, if applicable, must assist with the development of the M&E Plan.

The Earth Society M&E Lead is responsible for developing the Evaluation Plan, which is a section of the overall M&E Plan.

5.4 Criteria for Selecting Indicators

Indicators are used to measure progress toward the expected results throughout the implementation period. Different types of indicators are needed at different points in time to trace the progress of the intervention against the program logic. Indicators in the compact and M&E Plan should strive to meet the following criteria:

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
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a. **Direct:** An indicator should measure as closely as possible the result it is intended to measure.

b. **Unambiguous:** The definition of the indicators should be operationally precise and there should be no ambiguity about what is being measured or how to interpret the results.

c. **Adequate:** Taken as a group, indicators should sufficiently measure the result in question. Developers of the M&E Plan should strive for the minimum number of indicators sufficient to measure the result.

d. **Practical:** Data for an indicator should be realistically obtainable in a timely way and at a reasonable cost.

e. **Useful:** Indicators selected for inclusion in the M&E Plan must be useful for The Earth Society management and oversight of the program. Where appropriate, The Earth Society's Common Indicators must be included in the M&E Plan to allow The Earth Society to aggregate results across projects and programms.

5.5 Data Quality Standards

The data used to measure those indicators should meet the following standards:

a. **Validity:** Data are valid to the extent that they clearly, directly and adequately represent the result to be measured. Measurement errors, unrepresentative sampling and simple transcription errors may adversely affect data validity. Data should be periodically tested to ensure that no error creates significant bias.

b. **Reliability**: Data should reflect stable and consistent data collection processes and analysis methods over time. Project managers and M&E staff should be confident that progress toward performance targets reflects real changes rather than variations in data collection methods.

c. **Timeliness**: Data should be available with enough frequency and should be sufficiently current to inform management decision-making. Effective management decisions depend upon regular collection of up-to-date performance information.

d. **Precision:** Data should be sufficiently accurate to present a fair picture of performance and enable project managers to make confident decisions. The expected change being measured should be greater than the margin of error. Measurement error results primarily from weakness in design of a data collection instrument, inadequate controls for bias in responses or reporting, or inadequately trained or supervised enumerators.

e. **Consistency:** Data should be consistent with the documented definition of the indicators, and the methodology of data collection for common indicators should match the *Guidance on Common Indicators* to ensure consistency across projects.

f. **Objectivity:** Data that are collected, analyzed, and reported should have mechanisms in place to reduce the possibility that data are subject to erroneous or intentional alteration. The data collector should follow agreed-upon data collection and quality control procedures to ensure consistency, reliability, objectivity, and accuracy of data.

5.6 Monitoring vs. Evaluation Indicators

The set of indicators includes both monitoring and evaluation indicators.

a. **Monitoring:** These indicators will focus on providing timely data during compact implementation that can inform programmatic decisions. Data should be reported on at least an annual basis and should generally be administrative in nature such that it reflects the full scope of project implementation. Date indicators that will only be reported once are appropriate for this category as long as they are expected to be achieved within the compact implementation period. The data that is reported by these indicators should be easily interpreted and should not be based on sampling. The majority of these indicators will be at the process and output level, though any outcomes that meet the criteria should be included.

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
General Secretary
The Earth Society

b. **Evaluation:** These indicators will focus on assessing the achievement of high-level results. Any indicators for which progress will not be measurable during the project implementation period and/or that require sample-based surveys for measurement will fall under the Evaluation category. These indicators will be assessed and reported by the independent evaluations, due to the complexity of collecting and interpreting the data. They should be noted in the Evaluation sections of the M&E Plan in the form of an evaluation question. The expectation is that these indicators will be at the outcome level only.

6. Training

The Earth Society invests in the training of agency staff in monitoring and evaluation methods though internal training activities or, when appropriate, through external opportunities. The Earth Society develops training curricula and evaluation tools that have wide application across The Earth Society's portfolio, as well as specifically with practice groups, country areas and other knowledge networks. The Earth Society training activities also include discussions regarding the sectorial and operational lessons generated through the evaluation of MCC projects, as well as lessons generated through the evaluations of other development agencies. In carrying out these activities, The Earth Society emphasizes collaboration between technical and operational units across The Earth Society.

7. Effectiveness

This policy will become effective on the date it is approved and supersedes all previous versions. All compacts and threshold programs signed before the effective date will not be subject to the M&E Plan and requirements in this policy.

8. Amendments To This Policy

This policy may be amended by The Earth Society from time to time. Such amendments will apply to the project or programme with prior notice.

9. Conclusion

The Earth Society ability to fulfill commitments to transparency, accountability, and learning depends on embedding evaluation practices throughout the organization. No single policy can anticipate and provide detailed guidance for the diverse set of The Earth Society Programs and contexts, and The Earth Society relies on several other guidance documents to ensure that rigorous practices are applied as a standard across the agency. However, this policy seeks to establish the roles and responsibilities, and the key expectations regarding the design, conduct, dissemination, and use of monitoring and evaluation.

Major General A K M Muzahid Uddin (Rtd)
Chairman
The Earth

Mohammad Mamun Mia
General Secretary
The Earth Society