

ANNEXURE 8: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

APPENDIX B MEL MID-TERM REVIEW REPORT

CONTENTS

1. Framing this document
2. Project Theory of Change
3. Guiding questions for the Mid-term Review
4. Main accomplishments and challenge of implementation
5. Emerging findings – Systemic puzzles at multiple levels
6. Recommendations

Appendix A

MEL Mid-term Review report for the Table Mountain Water Source Area Partnership project

January 2022

MEL team¹

1. Framing this document

This document accompanies and should be read with the PowerPoint presentation on the mid-term review (MTR) for the Danish Embassy funded project: *Table Mountain Water Source Area Partnership: Protecting critical groundwater*. Both this document and the accompanying PowerPoint remain internal and confidential to the project members to and the Danish Embassy as financial donor.

The MTR took place during October and November 2021, approximately a year after the project was officially launched and six to nine months after The Implementers started their subprojects. The purpose of the MTR was to provide space to ‘check-in’ with WWF staff and The Implementers on project progress and to reflect more deeply with them and members of the Table Mountain Water Source Area (TM-WSA) Partnership on the project design, synergies and challenges with a view to adapting plans and strategy going forward. An aspect of this was to test assumptions and logic in the working Theory of Change and adapt it as necessary (for detail on the MEL approach, see Appendix A).

The MTR was an internal iterative participatory process with project members including WWF (project contractor), The Implementers and the TM-WSA Partnership. Project documents were reviewed, project implementers and WWF staff were interviewed, and mirror-back workshops held with the project management team, The Implementers and the Partnership steering committee.

As the MEL team, we have observed and articulated insights and recommendations, which we share through this document and PowerPoint in the hope that they will inform project management and strategies to strengthen governance and other processes to protect critical groundwater. In particular, we hope that WWF, the Danish Embassy and the TM-WSA Partnership will take the time to reflect on this MTR and use it to strengthen their work on groundwater, strategic water source area partnerships and projects as catalysts for systemic change.

2. Project Theory of Change

To better clarify exactly what was being monitored, evaluated and learned from and about, the project Theory of Change (ToC) was developed in the early months of project implementation, and refined as monitoring and learning was underway.

¹ Jessica Wilson and Sue Soal, with support from Jane Burt

There are three layers of project logic –

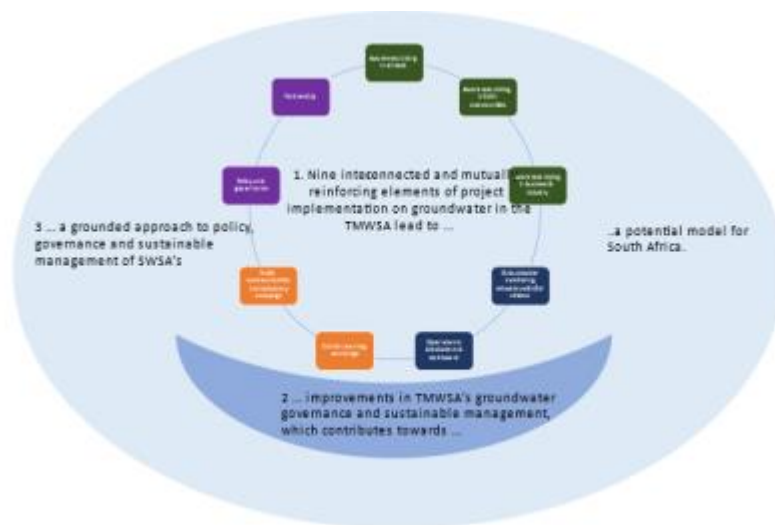
1. The first involves **nine interconnected and mutually reinforcing elements of project implementation**, all focused on groundwater monitoring, awareness raising and governance in the TM-WSA.

Three initiatives raise awareness about groundwater in schools, faith communities and business & industry (this latter intention in the original project logic was not pursued).

A fourth initiative in groundwater monitoring creates networks with and for citizen engagement in monitoring, and this feeds into the fifth – maintenance, development and extension of an open-source database and dashboard. The database is in turn supported by the sixth element of the project – the Danish learning exchange, which supports the integration of groundwater data into the City of Cape Town’s bulk water decision system.

The awareness raising intentions of the whole project are further supported by the seventh element – the public communications and advocacy campaign. An eighth element – research into the policy and governance issues within the TM-WSA provides an informed perspective from which to engage governance of the TM-WSA as well as support to the ninth element of the project – the TM-WSA partnership, a multi-stakeholder forum convened in support of strengthened governance and groundwater management of the Table Mountain Strategic Water Source Area (SWSA).

These nine interconnected and mutually reinforcing elements of project implementation are expected to contribute (or lead) to the next level, of change that, is –



2. Improvements in TM-WSA’s groundwater governance and sustainable management.

The project objective states that ‘By 2022, effective joint management systems are in place for the sustainable management and sustainable use of groundwater in the Table Mountain SWSA.’ Achievement of this objective will be indicated if ‘Monitoring of groundwater in the Table Mountain Strategic Water Source Area is well established, recorded and communicated through the effective collaboration of the Table Mountain Water Source Partnership.’

The medium-term outcome is to see ‘The expansion of groundwater monitoring, its data collection and communication are refined, allowing for effective groundwater management in the Table Mountain SWSA. The short-term outcome of the plan is to see ‘The maturing of the TM-WSA Partnership, with clear mandates and responsibilities builds the foundation on which collective groundwater management around Cape Town becomes possible.’

Indicators for the medium- and short-term outcomes are ‘Regularly convening Partnership with clear action points; steadily growing database from a growing number of monitoring areas in Cape Town.’²

Which in turn is expected to contribute towards –

3. Development of a grounded approach to policy, governance and sustainable management of SWSAs – a potential model for South Africa.

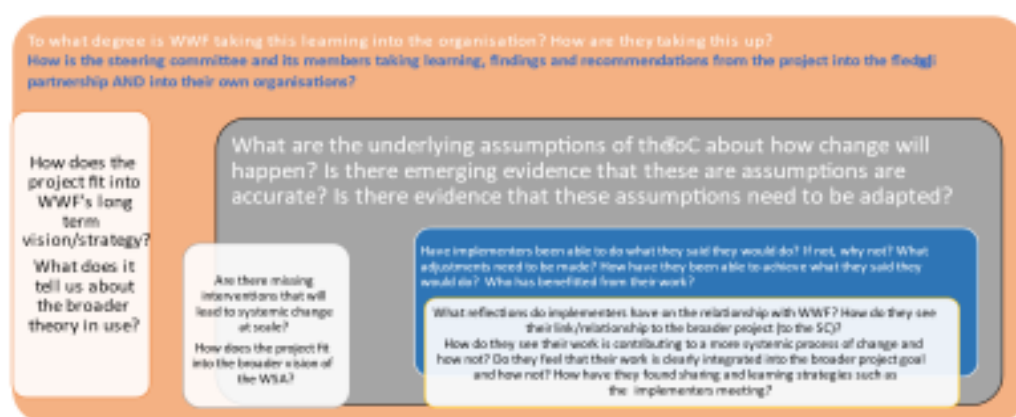
This level of the ToC makes reference to the underlying rationale for WWF’s engagement in and learning from both this project and that of projects based in other SWSAs. It also speaks to the aspiration of steering committee members to share learning and experiences with other parts of the country.

It can be noted that Level 1 of the ToC was the main focus of the MTR while Level 2 is testable at the end of the project. Level 3 is only testable beyond project timelines, and likely best considered by WWF (and the TM-WSA Partnership) as part of broader evaluation of its work in some years to come.

3. Guiding questions for the MTR

The Theory of Change formed the basis for MTR questions covering all nine project elements and all intended levels of impact. Six types of questions were asked, each enquiring into an aspect or level of the Theory of Change (see detail in graphic below) –

MTR Guiding questions



- i. Reviewing implementation – what has been done and not done; worked and not worked?
- ii. Reflecting on the links between the project parts and their contribution to overall project objectives.
- iii. Reflecting on broader processes of change and management of the water source area and the project’s contribution to these.
- iv. Using project experience to test assumptions underlying the Theory of Change.
- v. Reviewing the process of institutional change and development.
- vi. Reviewing the contribution of these processes to WWF’s wider efforts and organisational strategy.

² See project objective, outcome and indicator statements from original project plan

4. Main accomplishments and challenge of implementation

Findings were made in three areas – (i) project management and design; (ii) project implementation and (iii) the project's role as a catalyst for governance changes.

With respect to **project management and design** contributors noted the excellent project management and technical support towards implementation of project plans as being an outstanding feature of this project. Efforts to make the links between project parts and the ways in which the project 'whole' was foregrounded were especially appreciated as was the MEL process, which was going well and acknowledged as an interesting and valuable opportunity for learning.

However, the potential value of MEL as source of both functional and strategic learning might have been maximised further had both project management and MEL as continuous learning & research been made more explicit for project and partners. This may have also supported more critical interrogation of assumed connections in the ToC as some appear to be stronger than others both practically and conceptually. This is true also for the nine nested elements of implementation, all of which are interconnected but to date are not all mutually reinforcing.

It was noted, further, that it took a long time to recruit the project manager (5 months after the project officially started) and, given the project's tight time frames, itself a further constraint to effective project management and implementation, valuable time was lost. It emerged early that the project's sole focus on monitoring water volume, to the exclusion of monitoring quality, limited what could be achieved both in terms of geohydrological monitoring and public awareness raising.

Furthermore, and posing a further challenge in respect of project management and design, the Partnership was noted as an especially complex element of the project. Development and strengthening of the Partnership was a clear intended outcome of the project (see the ninth implementation element, ToC above). However, the Partnership is also intended to be both bigger than the groundwater monitoring project – engaging with other projects relevant to the TM-WSA – and also offering strategic direction and oversight on these, and this despite the responsibility and accountability for the groundwater project being very firmly located in WWF as project contractor. This gave rise to tensions and confusion at points, for example, was the partnership steering committee the *de facto* steering committee of the project, or several projects, or something altogether else, i.e.: an initiative of mutual concern offering multi-stakeholder engagement around governance of a strategic water source area?

This identity uncertainty also contributed to further challenges, for example, how best to integrate the learning and experience out of the granularity of implementers' work into the bird's eye view strategic thinking of governance spaces. Further, that there was no on-the-ground project in business, despite it having been provided for in the ToC and early strategic thinking for the project was noted as a significant lost opportunity, even while the opportunity to change gear on this topic still remained.

Finally, and connected also to the role and identity of the Partnership and its steering committee, there is the unresolved question of community, and the role of community in governance, both in principle and in intention, and also in practice. While the groundwater project conceived of itself as engaging community and even doing 'citizen science' this did not always manifest in practice, even on the ground (see below) and certainly not at the level of governance.

The second area of findings noted that **project implementation occurred in a context of Covid-19**, which was unlike anything that could have been conceived at the time of project design. All findings on implementation were made with strong reference to this reality.

The extent to which groundwater awareness is being raised through the project was celebrated and it was also noted that while the project plan made provision for awareness raising specifically in faith organisations, schools and business, supported by some public communications, the extent to which awareness was in fact raised across the range of project functioning was marked. This included amongst The Implementers themselves, in faith institutions, schools, households, in NGOs and in the City of Cape Town. It was notable how the project has supported learning about how to do groundwater awareness raising at all levels of society – from the ground to policy and governance AND from individuals through to organisations and institutions – and this stands the work in good stead for the future.

While Covid-19 was a blow, especially to the in-person work in faith organisations and schools, and in the public-facing work of the project (for example the formal partnership launch), adjustments were made and implementers managed to persist in implementing their plans, albeit with some adjustments.³ Nevertheless, there were also losses as a result of Covid-19 conditions, and implementers in faith institutions and schools especially expressed frustration and disappointment at the reduction in contact time and loss of flexibility and variety in activities, as a result of working under Covid-19 conditions.

It was noted that public communications are its own important form of groundwater awareness raising (and is increasingly mutually reinforcing with other project components). Targeted advocacy is, in some ways also awareness raising but very much connected to policy influencing, and in that sense separate from general public awareness raising as currently provided for in the ToC.

The structural reality of working in an unequal city was ever present in project implementation, with choices being made throughout as implementers weighed up considerations of access, safety and project focus (for example, the geohydrology of groundwater and the patterns of private property ownership in the City of Cape Town intersect to make Cape Town's privileged and formerly white suburbs the focus of monitoring interest, especially with respect to water quantity). This then begs the question of what is being asked of work in less resourced communities, especially as it relates to access and water quality, and whether project implementation might not have focused more on intervening at an institutional and collective / public commons level (for example, in school and church properties).

This might also have helped address the big underlying conundrum being tackled through the awareness raising aspect of the project – that groundwater is, on the whole, invisible to society and people don't know about it and, where they do, it is perceived as a private resource, to be used at will, with no understanding or regard for it as a shared and public resource. This deeply engrained

³ Green Anglicans persisted with community clean-ups which raised awareness of groundwater quality; 22 water disciples were engaged in groundwater awareness-raising activity, and groundwater was placed in Sunday School material which was sent out to all the Anglican churches in southern Africa – a mailing list of 14 000 people.

Greenpop engaged 15 schools on the topic of groundwater, of which nine submitted posters in the poster competition. Approximately 1 500–2 000 learners were reached in this undertaking. Furthermore, WWF mediated a meeting with a school's curriculum adviser on incorporating groundwater into the school curriculum.

At the time of the MTR, the project launch, and accompanying partner engagement with one other and immersion in the topic and all the dimensions sketched in the project were scheduled for 15 November 2021. This did happen and was considered a success.

invisibility and perception of groundwater remains a challenge for this project and for any other public-facing work on groundwater.

Finally, and with respect to implementation in relation to the institutional arrangements and relationships around groundwater management, accessing data (from the city, province, Department of Water and Sanitation and private companies) remained a major inhibitor of project implementation, especially with regard to making progress around shared management and governance of groundwater. Echoing the challenge to public awareness noted above, the challenge remains also to shift understanding of data from seeing it as private property to seeing it as a public good, to be shared.

The third area of findings concerns the **project as a catalyst for governance changes**. Here it was acknowledged and celebrated that the Partnership is indeed up and running and has made strides in establishing its membership, functioning and its Memorandum of Understanding which was signed by nine parties, including from two spheres of government, private sector, a foreign embassy, research and academic institutions and an NGO.

Furthermore, a chair of the steering committee from the National Department of Water and Sanitation has been appointed and the project is now formally inside of the City of Cape Town through its participation in the Partnership and steering committee and hosting of the Danish technical assistance specialist to the City of Cape Town.⁴ In this sense, the Danish learning exchange also makes groundwater more visible through technical support to decision making.

However, there were significant challenges also to the governance aspect of the project. Its sustainability remained in question, especially as ownership of the Partnership is not yet fully established. The question – ‘Who *needs* this partnership to exist and function’ – remains to be answered with conviction. This means that the ongoing resourcing of baseline monitoring and maintenance of the database work – arguably the bedrock of groundwater management and governance in Cape Town – is also still in question.

This begs the questions as to what WWF’s role is in convening partnerships for longer term impact in SWSAs – what is being learned and where is this going to? – and also the role of steering committee members in supporting uptake of insights and connections in their own institutions and organisations. Given that the Partnership does seek to work conceptually and practically beyond the bounds of individual projects, this question poses a key challenge going forward.

5. EMERGING FINDINGS – Systemic puzzles at multiple levels

- *How do we engage strategically with community?* Is the community engaged with as a valuable partner or a problem to be solved? The policy work suggests that “communities [be] considered as private sector” in the partnership structure; there are other discourses and practices on how to include communities in multi-stakeholder processes that could be explored further. What is the steering committee’s understanding of promoting community-public-private partnerships?
- *Securing sustainability of the partnership and some of the baseline projects* – these include: ongoing MEL, groundwater monitoring, maintenance and extension of the database, WWF staffing and secretariat and process facilitation of the Partnership.

Furthermore, the early learning and experience out of education and faith should ideally be

⁴ At the time of the MTR, the paperwork for the technical assistance partnership was being finalised.

extended and amplified if these are to become more impactful than isolated pilot projects can be; and the question of how to engage the key constituency of business in groundwater monitoring and awareness remains a crucial gap to be addressed. Finally, and more broadly there are the questions of how WWF, Implementers and the steering committee design to build on what is catalysed and ensure the resources are there to do so.

- ‘*So what?*’ Flowing from the two issues above and as a question in its own right, is how the learning from individual project elements (the nine) can be institutionalised into practice at different levels?
- The MTR has found that *awareness* is happening in unexpected and complex ways. This raises an interesting question for how we conceive of change projects (expressed in Theories of Change with their accompanying assumptions), and what that entails for such projects, both conceptually and practically. This project is showing that awareness is being raised in unanticipated and unprogrammed places and ways. What does that tell the project team, the steering committee and others who seek to do this work about how to pursue it? What contribution might it make to the growing field of shifting public norms as a contribution to supporting policy implementation?
- Emerging out of all the points above is the question: *Who does the strategic leveraging work?* Is this consciously planned for and implemented, and by whom? Who has their finger on this pulse? Where does the mandate come from? While this project is a result of the very intentional intervention of both WWF and the Danish Embassy, what becomes of the strategic thinking that it requires as these initiators move on, as they will and should?
- *Inclusivity* – while the above point on community speaks to inclusivity more broadly, there is also the question of inclusivity within the existing project and processes, especially how to build a more integrated partnership this is genuinely bottom up, for example cross-pollination between implementers and steering committee and inclusive of the views and experiences of Cape Town residents that The Implementers are engaging with.
- *Is the context of ‘working in an unequal city’ acknowledged sufficiently in the project and, by extension, the Partnership?* from feet on the street to policy thinking and governance practice. This requires specific skills, a diversity of approaches and an understanding of intersectionality to meet the challenges of gender, power, race, language and income disparity.

6. Recommendations

For the remainder of the project:

- Articulate separate public communication and advocacy strategies to share and advance the projects work
- Include a period of consolidation, reflection and writing after April 2022 (when most Implementers’ projects have ended) and consider, inter alia:
 - *Amplification*: how can community-based work be taken further, beyond the life of the project, including into curricula and faith groups

- Working with *context*: Address the question: What does it mean to work in an unequal city, including what is WWF's role?
- *Share learning*: Build appropriate communication spaces into the timeframe of the project. Share within WWF, nationally, and at World Water Week in Stockholm in August.

For WWF:

- Convene internal conversation on WWF's role and intentions with respect to groundwater policy and the TM-WSA Partnership, based on learning to date. This should include how WWF intends to engage with the City of Cape Town on OneWorld's recommendations.
- Plan a process for taking up learning from this project within WWF's freshwater team, other Strategic Water Source Area partnerships, and across WWF's other programme areas.

For the TM-WSA Partnership:

- Define and create an independent secretariat function and appoint a secretariat. This role is currently played by WWF who could continue with a clear mandate from the steering committee; this is recommended, at least for the immediate term. Alternatively, (and in the longer term) another member could take the role, or an independent body appointed.
- Appoint an independent facilitator to provide process and learning support to the Partnership. This should augment the project management role that is provided by the secretariat. Process support will facilitate the inclusion of missing stakeholders (such as community voice), provide continuity to the Partnership, hold a space for diverse voices, and ensure that the Partnership remains relevant to all key stakeholders.
- Fundraise so that the Partnership is financially sustainable, and at a minimum can support a secretariat and/or project manager, Partnership meetings, process work and learning, maintaining and updating the database, and continued monitoring of household groundwater in the study sites. Explore options for financial support with members of the Partnership.
- Convene a Partnership meeting to discuss roles and responsibilities of partners and the Partnership as a whole, in light of policy recommendations and discussions to date. This should include a facilitated discussion on how to bring community voices into the Partnership.
- Pursue cross-pollination and integration (of Implementers and Partners) in order to develop a deeper, integrated partnership.
- Consider doing a mapping exercise of stakeholders and groundwater projects / processes within Cape Town as a baseline for deepening the Partnership and its impact.

For the Royal Danish Embassy:

- Provide more flexible time frames for SDG grants. Two years is a very short time to implement a complex multi-organisational project that includes both implementation and governance components. At a minimum provision should be made for a pre-implementation phase that includes recruitment of key staff, contracting of implementing organisations and project design. Ideally a follow-up phase should be considered to research impact that falls beyond the project timeframe.

Extract from “MONITORING EVALUATION & LEARNING (MEL) SUPPORT TO TABLE MOUNTAIN
WATER SOURCE AREA PARTNERSHIP: PROTECTING CRITICAL GROUNDWATER”

4 May 2021

MEL approach

Project monitoring, evaluation and learning will be undertaken using three overlapping approaches – real-time evaluation, adaptive learning, and integration into other MEL frameworks including WWF’s and that of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Real time

MEL will be undertaken using a Real Time Evaluation (RTE)⁵ MEL approach. This has systematic and systemic dimensions that address both accountability and learning, and support greater project effectiveness, in ‘real time.’

“A real-time evaluation is an independent, external evaluation process that runs in parallel to a programme, while this is being implemented, and regularly makes evaluation findings available for the ongoing implementation and course correction of the programme to promote that goals are reached. RTEs have the potential to provide learning and adaptation as the programme is being implemented.”⁶

Real-time evaluation has five possible dimensions, all of which are relevant in this project:⁷

1. **Enables real-time, or more current, data collection** – “... data collection is undertaken during implementation ... to document implementation more comprehensively and accurately than would otherwise be the case. This data can be used immediately and in the future for other interventions.”
2. **Real-time and/or rapid reporting** – “... rapid feedback of findings is provided as part of a field visit or engagement, which is useful when there is scope to make changes in response to real-time data”.
3. **Done at multiple points throughout implementation** – “RTE is done at a number of points throughout implementation. The timing can be regular – for example, monthly or quarterly – or linked to particular decisions or activities, such as planning events.”
4. **Supports different types of learning** – “RTE explicitly addresses all three types of learning – single-loop (identifying discrepancies), double-loop (supporting revisiting of assumptions and the implications for making changes to the Theory of Change and implementation activities), and triple-loop (reviewing what evidence is being used and how to support decision making)”.

⁵ This is in line with the Danida Evaluation Guidelines (January 2018) which lists “Real-Time Evaluations of programmes, which are undertaken while the programme is being implemented” as one of three types of evaluation that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs works with.

⁶ Danida: Evaluation Policy for Danish Development Cooperation, Feb 2016

⁷ From Patricia Rogers, Better Evaluation, ‘Why we do we need more real time evaluation?’
<https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/blog/why-do-we-need-more-real-time-evaluation>

5. Engaging different users together in dialogue for sense-making and action planning – “RTE explicitly involves bringing a range of stakeholders together to make sense of the data and jointly develop recommendations for action, bringing greater expertise to bear, and also developing greater ownership of and commitment to the findings and recommendations.”

Characterised by adaptive learning

The project will involve all three types of learning referred to in the section above on real-time evaluation. Single-loop learning, or accountability and management against objectives, will be provided for through the creation of and regular monitoring against a set of commonly agreed on indicators. Triple-loop learning will be relevant especially for WWF and at the partnership level in their efforts to formulate a generalised approach to SWSA governance and management.

However, project MEL will emphasise ‘double-loop,’ or *adaptive* learning, i.e. using the outcomes of single-loop learning/ monitoring to reflect on and possibly adapt goals and objectives, as the project unfolds.

An adaptive approach has been found to improve the effectiveness of governance projects and programmes, given that it enables project responsiveness to reality on the ground.⁸ Features of an adaptive learning approach include –

- emphasising the ‘L’ (learning) in monitoring, evaluation, and learning
- operationalising flexibility in projects and funding models
- reducing the prevalence of technical requests for proposals that limit local ownership and restrict space for learning and adaptation
- ensuring that internal management practices encourage stability and continuity in partners’ project management.

Ultimately the project Theory of Change might be adapted as this ‘double-loop’ learning progresses.

Aligning and engaging with other MEL frameworks

The MEL framework will be co-developed by the MEL practitioners, WWF staff and the project Implementers team. It will align with:

- requirements of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as set out in Danida’s evaluation guidelines of January 2018. As the framework develops, the project management team will be supported to engage with the Danish Embassy to ensure that its terms and the material it generates supports these reporting requirements.
- the emerging MEL framework for WWF’s work on partnerships in SWSAs, in collaboration with WWF’s water and agriculture programmes for example we use the indicators in the SWSA strategy as the basis for this project.
- outcomes of WWF’s strategic review.
- existing MEL approaches of project implementers.

Who MEL will involve

An emphasis on learning and adaptation, and a commitment to developing an approach to SWSA governance and management requires that all project contributors – including implementers,

⁸ Moses, M. and Soal, S. (2017) Supporting local learning and adaptation: Understanding the effectiveness of adaptive processes, Making All Voices Count Policy Brief, Brighton: IDS
<https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/13432>

managers, partnership members and donors – be actively engaged in both learning and adaptation, albeit with different levels of intensity and on different issues. The MEL processes will engage three different groups of people –

- WWF programme manager and project manager overseeing the Table Mountain SWSA Partnership and this project, as well as other nominated WWF staff, to ensure ongoing alignment with WWF strategy and MEL systems, and to feed learning from this project into broader WWF processes of strategy development, especially for SWSA partnerships.
- Inter-disciplinary multi-institutional teams contracted to support / implement each of the project outputs. They (or representatives from each team) will meet every 2 months as The Implementers team (formerly Operational Management Committee (OMC)). In these meetings, implementers will share experience and learning from their own areas of responsibility and through this, collective learning will be generated, and adjustments for the coming period made.
- Table Mountain WSA Partnership, the “TM-WSA Partnership,” which will act as a steering committee for this project and extend beyond the life of the project. The Partnership is a strategic mechanism, beyond the boundaries of a traditional ‘steering committee’. Its engagement with the project MEL will focus largely on its own development as a strategic mechanism and lessons learned towards effective water management and governance of SWSAs.

MEL process and methods

Project MEL will involve five features, each of which seeks to give expression to a real-time, adaptive and living MEL approach. In this way, the MEL support will seek to support implementers, managers and steering committee members to track the project’s outcomes as they emerge and to keep pace, conceptually, with this. These five features are –

i. Developing a Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It maps out the missing middle between what the programme does (the activities and interventions) and how these lead to the programme goals. The goals or outcomes of the programme should align with the ToC.

The Theory of Change will be developed and tested in iterations as the project progresses, through reflection with The Implementer’s team, WWF project management team and the steering committee. And it is expected that this will be adjusted as implementation takes its course.

ii. The ‘spine map’ – mapping and monitoring the process as it unfolds

The MEL team will support the emerging implementation team to develop a ‘spine map’ (the backbone of the project) of the project-in-action. This will be a growing account, in diagram form, of the interconnected processes and work-streams that go into making up the project as they emerge in practice. These will not be a replication of the project plan but a mapping, in real time, of the role-players as they emerge/are contracted, as it becomes clear what distinctive emphases and styles each will bring to the project and as they find their way with regard to communication, collaboration and integration of functions. In this sense, the spine map will be an aid to team-development and project coherence.

In time, and as the team forms, contracts are finalised and work begins, so the spine map will be referred to and developed further. It will offer a living account of the operating structure, the actual time frames of early project implementation and the basis from which team learning and

adjustments will take place. In other words, from the start and as work proceeds, this diagram will offer a representation to all team members of their part in the greater whole of the project.

Furthermore, and as the MEL activities take hold, it will also offer the project 'baseline' against which the "Theory of Change is then tested against the actual process." (see ToC above)

By the project end, the spine map will reflect a dynamic and real-time account of the full project process as it has developed, including relationships and how they functioned in project execution/delivery; actual timelines; roles played; gaps in project conception and execution; and unanticipated gains and learning. In other words, and by project end, the spine map will have become absorbed into other planned MEL activities and offer one outcome of the MEL activities.

iii. Accompanied project implementation

The MEL process will support the nine individual project 'parts' of the overall project⁹ to –

- find synergy between the project parts and their own organisational objectives and to revisit this as the overall project proceeds
- clarify how the project parts contribute to the overall project ToC
- find connections across the different parts of the work and identify and work with contradictions as they arise
- develop a living understanding amongst The Implementers of the project parts and how these all interconnect, informing one another and possibly affecting one another

It will furthermore support project managers to integrate MEL functioning and the outcomes of that functioning into –

- project management, including upward and downward accountability and support to The Implementers in their work
- development of the partnership
- integration of project methods and outcomes into WWF functioning, strategy and policy, including contribution to monitoring against the WWF SWSA strategy.

iv. Facilitated learning spaces

The project's governance, management and communication structures and forums for the project, could also serve as accountability and learning spaces where data is gathered and reflected on, working with both the systematic and systemic dimensions of MEL, while simultaneously supporting project effectiveness. These spaces include:

1. The Implementers Team (formerly operational management committee OMC), which will meet every 2 months.

The MEL function offers an integrated organisational 'backspace' to enable the subteams to work together as a unified whole. The MEL team will work directly with this group, integrating into its ordinary management functioning.

Field-data and management information, progress monitoring, case studies, stories of change and reflection reports will be useful ways to generate discussion, integration and learning in this space.

⁹ Awareness raising in 1. schools, 2. amongst faith communities and 3. in business & industry, 4. development of Groundwater Monitoring Networks with citizens and for citizens, 5. development of a database and dashboard, 6. Public communication and advocacy, 7. the Danish learning exchange, 8. strategy for policy and governance and 9. development of the Partnership.

In addition, the mid-term evaluation and terminal evaluation will allow for further team learning. The MEL team will work with the project manager / WWF team to design and facilitate these meetings.

2. The TM-WSA Partnership, who meet as a project steering committee quarterly. This provides an important space to co-create the mandate and strategy for the TM-WSA Partnership, receive reports and accounts of project progress and adaptation and to reflect on governance and stakeholder partnerships as a mechanism for sustainable management of SWSAs.
3. Internal WWF processes that share and reflect on accountability and learning across the different programmes, particularly in relation to freshwater and agriculture work in SWSAs
4. Public engagement, which will happen twice a year and provides a space for both project accountability and input on citizen-monitoring and good governance.

v. Collaborative documentation

Because the project MEL seeks to integrate into existing project management for both WWF and, as best possible, implementers, the documentation of the MEL tools, processes and outcomes is collaborative. In addition to ensuring that documentation is relevant to the needs and experiences of The Implementers, this reduces duplication of reporting and enhances and supports learning of project implementers and beyond.

Principles underpinning this commitment include –

- Co-development of the instruments and tools that are ultimately used in the MEL processes, including key questions for stories of change as a key monitoring tool for tracking project outcomes
- Seeking alignment between project reporting and monitoring and that of individual implementers own accountability commitments and those of the Danish Embassy
- Using implementation tracking as the basic monitoring data
- Joint sense-making through reflection
- Iterative development of reports through drafts and feedback/input
- Co-development and articulation of learning outcomes, ensuring the voices and experiences of The Implementers carry into the lessons of the project, including to steering committee and WWFs further policy and governance work.

MEL phases (October 2020 – July 2022)

The dates, description and documentation are indicative and will be fine-tuned as the process unfolds.

1. Pre-inception October 2020 – March 2021
2. Inception March/April 2021
3. First half of project implementation May – September 2021
4. Mid-term review September/ October
5. Second half implementation October – April 2021
6. Final evaluation