Mid-term evaluation of the Coastal Fisheries Initiative Global Partnership Project

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Annex 4. Theory of change and programme wide reporting and learning system

1.	This annex is intended to supplement the discussion of the theory of change (TOC) and results frameworks in section 4 of this report.

2.	The programme TOC as set out in Annex 7 of the GPP project document was intended as a framework to promote programme wide sharing of experience and learning in relation to the application of more holistic and integrated approaches to promoting sustainable coastal fisheries, broadly represented by the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries management. To date this has been unsuccessful. Discussions at the global workshops have not helped, with concerns about extra reporting burdens and confusion over the purpose of such reporting. The current situation may be summarized as follows:

  i.	**The GCU currently does not report against the programme results framework or the TOC** (only against the GPP results frame). This is a serious programmatic omission and a missed opportunity to compare and contrast activity and progress across the programme and contribute to programme learning.

  ii.	This is not a closely linked and coherent programme comprising fisheries improvement projects across the globe using common approaches and tools, and making interventions at similar points in the "three tiers" of the programme TOC. Some child projects have not started; some are struggling to characterise the current status; some are seeking to strengthen enabling conditions; some are building capacity; some are influencing behaviour (given previously established enabling conditions); some are reinforcing existing institutions, associated rules and protocols and measuring change. Any assessment/monitoring/learning system must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate this diversity

  iii.	All child projects are already reporting against their own results framework, and these are largely compatible with both the CFI framework and the Programme TOC. Child projects are in the main being implemented by highly competent professionals who are familiar with and closely involved with addressing pressing needs in fisheries management and value chain development. It is essential that they are not burdened with yet more reporting frameworks with limited relevance to their needs or experience – however elegant and logically consistent they may be. Programme level indicators should be derivative of and informed by the nature and understanding of local projects, and these should in turn contribute to programme level reporting – not vice versa. Reporting for both M&E and programme/global learning should be simple and motivational, and serve as much to stimulate progress as to measure it.

3.	The function of the TOC as "a programme-level framework for the analysis of emerging challenges and learning across the various initiatives making up the CFI" and a key mechanism for delivery of both the GPP and the CFI has not been realized, and is unlikely to be realised without significant simplification and rationalisation. But the need for such a mechanism is beyond doubt and lies at the heart of the rationale for the GPP.

4.	Key features of a programme level M&E and learning system:

  i.	should build on as far as possible, and be compatible with the Programme and Child project results frameworks and the TOC;

  ii.	should be informed by the child project results frameworks on the one hand, and contribute to systematic reporting against the CFI results framework;

    iii.   should promote and facilitate a common approach (the EAF) as far as is compatible with widely differing situations and entry points;

    iv.   should allow flexibility in reporting progress in very different contexts;

    v.   should support understanding of progress and achievement (constraints, opportunities, processes) across a range of fisheries in widely different contexts and at different stages of development;

    vi.   should not be onerous, frustrating and partially irrelevant for the child project managers;

    vii.   should generate analysis and understanding of progress and achievement rather than target accounting; and

    viii.   should serve as a basis and stimulus for programme wide exchange and learning.

5.   There appear to be three elements to a possible way forward:

    i.   Analysis and synthesis, by GCU, of child projects reporting against project results frameworks.

    ii.   Facilitating development of target fishery theories of change.

    iii.   Programme wide reporting against a framework based on a simplified CFI results framework and selected TOC indicators.

Analysis and synthesis of child projects reporting against project results frameworks

6.   This is the simplest approach and should in any case be undertaken by the GCU as a routine part of its work. While we understand there may be some partnership issues constraining access by GCU to all reports; equally it must be made clear to GEF that lack of access to these reports fundamentally compromises the capacity of GCU to perform its programme level M&E responsibilities.,

7.   The GCU would summarize, on an annual basis (background material for global workshops) the programme results, using the CFI results framework and drawing on each project's reporting against its own results frameworks. These frameworks are broadly compatible, and comprehensive reporting of programme wide activities against CFI indicators would allow for some basic analysis and comparisons of approaches, achievements and constraints in different contexts.

8.   An alternative would be to require the child projects to report directly against those sections of the CFI framework that are relevant to them, reducing the burden on GCU and freeing up time for more analytic and comparative work at global level. The incentive for child projects to do this may be weak.

9.   While we regard this as an essential minimum, the CFI results frame has some weaknesses and is less than ideal for stimulating reporting of experience and learning in applying an EAFM.

10.   In all cases compiled annual results would be made available to the programme steering committee for review and where appropriate response.

Facilitating development of target fishery theory of change

11.   While some child projects have developed their own theory of change, this has not been done at the most informative level – i.e. the target fishery and/or ecosystem.

12.   Most child projects have now confirmed their target fisheries/value chains/ecosystems and stakeholder/beneficiary groups. This would therefore be an excellent time to encourage, and where appropriate facilitate local implementation teams to develop their own theory of change relating to project activities and interventions for each target fishery or "site"– with a view to refining, connecting, reinforcing or prioritising these interventions – and where possible relating them to programme level activities such as the Global Challenge Fund, the FPAT and learning exchange and knowledge dissemination. It should also be possible to relate these to the main components of the CFI results frame.

13.   Ideally this process would be attended and supported by the global coordinator (or another member of GCU[1]) but with a local facilitator (such as national project officer). The programme wide set of "ecosystem" TOC should stimulate programme level communication, summarizing the approaches being taken and intervention logic in the different child projects, and their relationship to the EAF and SSF.

14.   This activity would reinforce a common programme approach and mutual learning. It would also reinforce the status of the EAF and SSF as globally agreed and practical approaches to improve fisheries management. The existing TOC and results framework has probably had the opposite effect, with participants struggling to see the relevance of the frameworks to their particular conditions, and consultants spending large amounts of time and money seeking to reconcile the different formulations.

Reporting framework based on a simplified CFI results framework and selected theory of change indicators

15.   The existing programme level results framework, upon which agreement for a CFI programmatic approach and funding was reached, serves as a reasonable starting point for an implementable programme level progress reporting framework and stimulus to programme level learning/exchange, despite some logical weaknesses. Using this to supplement existing project results framework (indicator based) reporting will reinforce programme continuity and avoids the temptation to "shift the goalposts" or conduct endless workshops to redefine programme TOC and indicators that suit everyone in a highly diverse programme. Previous attempts to do this have failed.

16.   Although the CFI results frame appears to be very different from the TOC and its set of indicators, this is not the case. The structure and language are different, but many elements are common to both. With the addition of one or two TOC indicators to the CFI we can encompass the slightly broader scope and emphasis of the TOC.

17.   Despite being at programme level, the CFI results framework focuses mainly on institutions/enabling conditions and tools (TOC tiers 1 and 2); it does not include higher level outcome indicators relating to the "triple bottom line" – ie social, economic and environmental benefits, or to the third and 4th tiers in the TOC. If FPAI had been applied at outset it may have been possible to report impact and trace impacts to particular programme activities. In most cases this will not be possible, although a repeat of the FPI assessment in Peru might provide such evidence. It is unlikely that this would be cost effective within the programme timeframe, and it will in any case be difficult to disaggregate programme impacts from other influences and changes.

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[1] See note above – being explored.

18. The identification of enabling conditions (or constraints) is fundamental to EAFM, and the TOC provides a suite of indicators to assess (rank) them. In terms of relevance to individual fisheries many are weak and/or time consuming to rate, and/or irrelevant to practical situations. By way of example…*"Fishers, fish workers and fisheries related businesses support CFI goals and practices"* would be very difficult to score and generate information of little value, whereas *"support for a fisheries management plan"* or support for an MPA designation will be key issues for anyone facilitating these initiatives.

19. In other words the identification and assessment of enabling conditions should be a key part of the preliminary governance/baseline/situation analysis required for most projects and is essential for cross programme learning. The corresponding programme level indicator would be: *social, economic, institutional and environmental conditions that constrain or support improved fisheries identified*. This has been added to the framework. In addition, some of the other TOC indicators have been added to the framework where they appear to support programme vision, philosophy and approach. If desired, additional indicators corresponding roughly to those in the TOC set could be adapted and applied by individual projects where they feel these are important and relevant for reporting on their project.

20. Some additional changes to the hybrid (CFI results framework-TOC) framework have been made, to improve logical coherence and avoid unnecessary detail and repetition, while retaining all elements of the originals:

    i. The original programme results framework includes unnecessary pseudo-targets (denoted as XXX) likely to incentivize quantity rather than quality of outputs and outcomes in programme delivery. Quantitative targets are more likely to be effective at project level where they can be agreed on a more informed and practical basis. These have been removed.
    ii. Co-management, tenure and access rights are outcomes/indicators/targets under both components 1 and 2. This derives from the understanding that improved management can arise from market incentives or from higher level policies and institutions, but is nonetheless repetitive and confusing, and has been rationalized in this formulation.
    iii. There is a lack of specificity regarding some key elements recognized as being crucial to effective sustainable fisheries management systems. The more important ones are now included as part of or in support of existing indicators or elements.
    iv. The CFI results framework and the TOC are both unnecessarily wordy and repetitive. Text has been edited heavily while seeking to retain all significant elements.

21. This should be regarded as a ***reporting framework* rather than M&E** to avoid confusion with the *project level M&E* which would require more quantitative and less qualitative assessment against project milestones and indicators. However, these more rigorous and quantitative results should be used to support reporting against each of the higher-level indicators listed here.

22. This framework also provides a basis for programme wide learning and exchange, since the reporting process would involve qualitative description of achievements, failures, constraints etc against each of the indicators, many of which will be common across some or all child projects. In simple terms it may be regarded as a framework for reporting on "how we have applied the EAF", or how we applied a holistic, integrated approach in our child project. This in turn would serve as the basis for an annual report prepared by the GCU and to support the global conferences, offering an overview of progress in applying EAF principles across the programme.

23. It is important that this draft framework be shared with child projects for comment and adapted within reason to promote ownership. It is important however not to allow "indicator proliferation"

or indeed indicator loss. Some would argue that this framework is inadequate to measure progress implementing EAF. This may be true, and ideally EAF processes and indicators as set down in the EAF guidance should have been used as the basis for the programme wide results framework. But *it is too late to completely reinvent the programme logic*, and the following framework allows plenty of flexibility in reporting whatever child projects believe has been a key part of their approach and achievement.

Revised programme level reporting framework

Sustainability incentives in the value chain

Outcome 1: The efficiency and transparency in the fisheries value chain improved through appropriate incentive structures and contribute to sustainable resource utilization and equitable social and economic development

Progress reporting issues
1. Value chain baseline: social, economic and institutional conditions in the value chain that constrain or support improved fisheries identified
2. Fishery Improvement Projects developed and implemented
3. Increased recognition, role and influence of women in the value chain
4. Recognition/certification/traceability schemes developed
5. Innovative PPPs generating social (gender, equity, decent work) economic and environmental benefits promoted/supported
6. Reduced post-harvest losses
7. Reduced fuelwood consumption (e.g. per unit product or per unit value added; e,g, CO2/kg of fish product
8. Reduced impact on habitat (e.g. quality and extent of mangrove and other impacted habitat; MPAs)
9. Livelihood enhancement & diversification strategies to support fishers, fishworkers & fisheries-related business & groups are in place

Institutional Structures and Processes

Outcome 2: Policies, legislation and institutions have been improved at local, national and regional levels allowing for enhanced resource management through integrated and holistic approaches that allow for effective incentive structures that lead to more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable coastal fisheries

Progress reporting issues
1. Governance baseline: social, economic, institutional and environmental conditions that constrain or support improved fisheries identified
2. Policy, legislation and institutions refer to EAFM, CCRF, SSFG and support co-management and revised tenure and access rights where appropriate
3. CFI partners leverage political will among collaborating governments and institutions in support of CFI actions.
4. Co-management institutions established and influencing management (ie active and influential participation of fishery stakeholders in fisheries management)
5. Improved co-management plans and management systems for target fisheries address resource status and health monitoring, resource access (tenure/access rights) and fishing pressure (harvest control rules)[2]
6. MPAs have functioning multi-use legally recognized co-management plans
7. RFBs/Regional Seas conventions participate in CFI and adopt CFI best practices in policy frameworks
8. Capacity of fishers, fish workers, local and national government to implement EAFM and triple bottom line assessments strengthened

Best practices, collaboration and performance assessment

Outcome 3: The understanding and application of integrated, participatory and collaborative approaches has been enhanced among local and global partners who utilize agreed tools for measuring coastal fisheries performance and progress towards environmental social and economic sustainability

Progress reporting issues
1. Child projects and GCU report annually against this framework
2. Best practices shared through IW-learn and other mechanisms
3. Mechanisms to collaborate with & inform other projects/programs in the region are present
4. CFI best practices reflected in relevant fisheries policies and strategies in CFI countries
5. All fisheries value chains supported by CFI are assessed by agreed performance evaluation system and information is available on key environmental economic and social aspects
6. National and/or regional project proposals by GEF agencies, other partners and governments are based on CFI best practices and include strong collaboration between different GEF agencies and partners
7. Regular collaboration & dialogue between CFI agencies, partner institutions & fisheries stakeholders
8. Linkages & cooperation with regional & global fisheries management projects, programs & mechanisms active

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[2] Harvest control rules (HCR) might include effort control, capacity control, gear control, spatial control.

24.   Outcome 3.5 may be problematic and is discussed in detail elsewhere in this report.

25.   It is understood that this is less sophisticated than the reporting framework associated with the TOC, and this perhaps represents some loss of potential programme quality. But agreement on, formal reporting on, and quality analysis and synthesis of the TOC indicators is highly unlikely to be achieved at this stage in the programme and would be far less conducive to the programmatic "story telling" related to different aspects of EAFM implementation across diverse fisheries that this framework seeks to promote.

Reporting process and responsibilities

26.   Annual reports against the framework would be prepared by each child project coordinator supported national project officers and related to a specific fishery or value chain. Some indicator sections may be irrelevant to some fisheries and will simply be left blank. The reports would be synthesised by the GCU global coordinator (resourcing for which is discussed elsewhere in this report) into a single report designed to compare and contrast, highlight achievements, constraints, and draw out lessons learned in applying EAFM and the key elements of best practice relating to different indicators. This will require significant technical and writing skills but will fulfil the need for both programme level M&E, a critical practical appraisal of EAFM approaches, and serve as the basis for best practice. It is in essence a less ambitious version of the TOC/programme learning and exchange system, that is however more closely with the programme results framework.

27.   This process will supplement and draw on the standard child project results frame reporting.

The ideal process

28.   The above is intended to address the shortcoming in the programme at the present time but is less than ideal. A more rational, adaptive and participatory approach is described under "lessons learned" in the main report.

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