

## A Review of Monitoring and Evaluation Approaches for Ecosystem-Based Adaptation

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This paper explores how various organizations and practitioners have approached the design and use of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools to record results and assess ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) projects and programs. The information presented here is based on a desk review of documentation on frameworks and approaches to EbA, discussions among members of the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG), and interviews with practitioners currently developing EbA projects and programs. The guidance documents and reports on emerging lessons for EbA that are included in this review have mostly only indirectly addressed the issue of M&E, in part because most of the tools and resources available are intended as planning tools for integrating climate change projections into existing or new projects, rather than M&E tools per se. We reviewed guidelines and reports from several institutions and organizations that are attempting to measure EbA effectiveness to: 1) identify

criteria and indicators for effectiveness; 2) identify the challenges and opportunities posed by M&E of EbA; and 3) identify the optimal M&E tools or approaches that a practitioner might utilize to track and record results to periodically assess implementation effectiveness. We also provide a list of the factors that a practitioner may need to consider in designing effective M&E for any EbA approach.

In terms of criteria for success, our

review shows that EbA projects are classified as successful according to these guidelines and reports if they: i) improve local livelihoods (CARE / IIED, CBD, UNEP, WCS, WB); ii) improve awareness or understanding of and

engagement on ecosystems or ecosystem-services and climate change (CATIE and partners, TNC, UNEP, WCS); and/or iii) enhance the ability of natural systems to resist incremental and/or sudden climatic shifts (all). The role of ownership of, and participation in, adaptation activities, and awareness of climate change among stake-



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holder groups, are prominent components of all guidelines and reports, for building local and institutional capacity around climate change and EbA. Half of the guidelines and reports (CATIE, GISP, TNC, WCS) interpret the effectiveness of chosen adaptation strategies at least partially through the lens of resilience, and half (CARE/IIED, CATIE, CBD, WCS)—not mutually exclusive from the first half—interpret effectiveness through the lens of vulnerability.



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We identified that some of the barriers associated with M&E of the effectiveness of EbA strategies relate to setting appropriate and realistic objectives in the context of often unpredictable climatic changes and climate variability, uncertain distributions of potential losses, and unknown trade-offs between one adaptation strategy and another over long periods of time. In addition, because changes in ecosystems are inherently complex and long-term (restoration of some ecosystems may deliver no practical adaptation benefit for many years), determining “effectiveness” criteria for a particular EbA project is a key example of the challenges faced by practitioners more broadly in identifying and measuring the successes of adaptation globally. However, we identified several M&E tools or approaches that a practitioner might utilize to track and record

results to periodically assess implementation effectiveness. We present two case studies from ABCG members that are actively developing M&E strategies for ongoing EbA projects, including the challenges they face in terms of both process and intentions.

In light of the challenges and approaches to designing effective M&E for EbA strategies, we also list some of the factors a practitioner may need to consider that are applicable to M&E of other adaptation approaches: 1) Consider the quality and characteristics of the planning context as input to a robust baseline; 2) Ensure that each indicator addresses a specific driver of climate-relevant vulnerability; 3) Consider local capacity as the key to monitoring short-, intermediate- and long-term effects; 4) Monitor the context of surrounding activities; 5) Formulate monitoring systems that recognize EbA approaches can be both a process and an action; 6) Use a multitude of types of information; 7) Outline what evaluative questions the project’s M&E system will be able to answer.

## AFRICA BIODIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE GROUP

To read the full report and learn more about ABCG, please visit:  
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