IUCN Project Guidelines and Standards

Module 4
Project Implementation and Monitoring

Version 2.2 – 2016

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Summary of supporting tools for Project Implementation and Monitoring

All PGS tools can be downloaded from the Union Portal (click here)[1]

Tool	Step and Section of the PGS Module for reference
Annual Work Plan	4.1.4 Development of the work plan
Supervision Mission Report Template	4.2.2 Supervision missions
Project Monitoring Plan and Results Template - Update	4.2.3 Monitoring for projects outputs, results and impacts
Progress Monitoring Report	4.2.3 Monitoring for projects outputs, results and impacts

Note: not all steps in implementation and monitoring are supported by a tool. See the table at the end of Module 1 for an overview of the mandatory tools and processes.

4. Implementation and Monitoring

This section of the Project Guidelines and Standards outlines the processes, tools and guidance related to project implementation and monitoring, covering everything that happens during the life of the project from the time that the project contract[2] is signed through its implementation and monitoring (Figure 1).

This assumes that all aspects of the project (including means and results, and budgets) have been planned and approved internally and by the donor and that risks have been assessed and mitigation measures are in place and that the project contract has been signed with the donor.

Implementation refers to a cycle of steps taken to deliver activities and outputs, while managing finances and for risk.

Monitoring is a management tool for improving project and programme performance, both to improve organizational delivery and control for risk. Monitoring is the continuous collection and analysis of information used by management and partners to assess performance (progress on implementation of activities, delivery of outputs, achievement of results and impacts and use of resources). Monitoring is an essential pre-requisite for results-based management, evaluation and learning. The logframe and the monitoring plan are the basis for project implementation and monitoring.

[1] Full URL of the Union Portal page for the PGS Tools: https://portals.iucn.org/union/node/5095
[2] See Contracts Review and Sign Off procedures and templates on the Union Portal

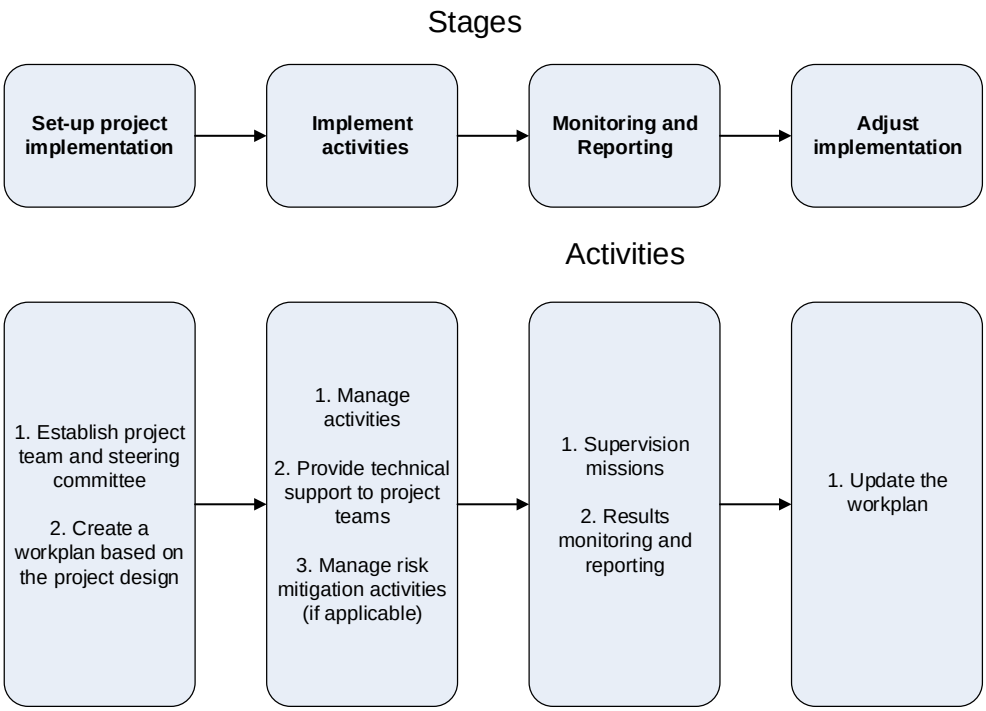

Figure 1 Project Implementation and Monitoring

The steps in project implementation include:

- Setting up the project for implementation, including the establishment of a project team and the creation of an annual work plan.
- Implementation of activities, which includes managing the activities themselves, providing technical inputs to the project and if applicable, managing risks under an Environmental and Social Management Plan.
- Monitoring and Reporting, including the deployment of supervision missions as well as technical reporting covering the delivery of outputs, results and impacts. Monitoring activities (e.g. survey, assessments, remote sensing, etc., are important monitoring activities that will be implemented).
- Updating the annual work plan based on the results of monitoring and other management decision making.

IUCN undertakes monitoring at three levels:

- **Project**: to assess progress in implementation of the project in terms of activities and outputs and if required, the Environmental and Social Management Plan; delivery of results and impacts; and use of resources;
- **Portfolio**: to assess the overall health of a group of projects in both financial terms and progress on implementation; controlling for risk;
- **Programme**: to gather evidence of delivery of results and impacts as defined in the IUCN Programme 2013-16.

This section primarily covers tools for project monitoring; topics of portfolio and programme monitoring will be covered in other guidance documents.

4.1 Project Implementation

Project implementation covers three of the four steps outlined in Figure 1:

- Setting up the project implementation
- Development of the work plan
- Implementation of activities
- Updating the work plan

4.1.1 Setting up project implementation

Normally, project teams are formed during the development of the project proposal, however, as the start date for implementation approaches, it is important to have a number of aspects sorted out to ensure a smooth start to project implementation.

The project team should be finalized with a project manager, a Chief Technical Advisor (if appropriate), field staff and all other senior technical advisors, including highly qualified gender staff or advisors.[3] It is important for all positions to be supported with a clear Terms of Reference outlining roles and responsibilities for managing and implementing the project. Normally a project is attached to one IUCN Programme (Regional or Global Thematic). In some cases, responsibility for the project is shared, or technical expertise is sourced from another Programme. In these cases, a clear internal agreement that outlines roles and responsibilities for implementation is essential, including the deployment of budgetary resources. Experts from the IUCN Commissions or consultants may also be engaged to support implementation and each must be included with a specific contract and Terms of Reference.

Most IUCN projects are implemented in partnership with other organizations. During the planning phase (conceptualization and development) IUCN works with partners to plan the project. Often these partners include IUCN Members. Each partnership must be supported through a specific contractual agreement that includes provision for financial management and fiduciary oversight in addition to clear roles and responsibilities for implementation.

Where partners or other sub-contractors (e.g. consultants) are required for the implementation of the project that were not specifically named in the project proposal, each of these will need to be selected in line with IUCN's Procurement Policy.[4] In many cases[5], this will mean either a formal competitive process, or a formal request for exception from competition. In all cases, the proposed contracts will need to be reviewed and approved, and formal due diligence on the proposed sub-contractor may be required. These processes need to be initiated some time before the start of each contract and therefore must be planned.

[3] All senior technical staff, including gender advisors, should be hired in a competitive setting based on advanced training (degrees or certificates) and minimum 10 years' experience overall and in applying the technical discipline.
[4] See IUCN Procurement Policy on the Union Portal
[5] All cases above the threshold for competition: CHF 25,000, but lower local/regional/programme thresholds may apply.

Each Terms of Reference, internal agreement and partner contract must be kept in the project's filing system, available for management and audit oversight. Examples of each type of agreement are available on request.

4.1.2 Reviewing Project Design

After all institutional arrangements have been set in place, the project team should review the original project document, including the logframe and the results framework because:

- The situation may have changed if there is a time delay between completion of the project design and actual start-up of the project;
- The individuals responsible for implementation may not have been fully involved in project design and development;
- The start and end dates of the project are not realistic due to delays between project development and approval or between project approval and the receipt of donor funds.

The project team should return to the original project documents produced in the concept and development stages and ensure that the project results/objectives and strategy are well understood and still valid, and that the agreed dates and duration are realistic. To perform this exercise it is advisable that the project team meets with partners and stakeholders to review these elements. These discussions should also lay out how the results framework/logframe will be operationalized, who is responsible and accountable for what project component and what will be the main communication channels.

Any changes required in respect to the results framework or in the agreed start and end dates have to be approved by the donor. Project partners and stakeholders should be consulted and/or informed about major changes in the design or timeframe for project implementation. All changes to the original approved project design must be documented, justified and approved as necessary. Records should be kept for accountability purposes. Changes or revisions to the originally approved project document or project budget are usually processed as budget revisions.

Finally, the project team will need to ensure that partners and project stakeholders are kept informed and fully involved during implementation. To establish relationships and open communication channels, some projects have communication plans to increase awareness, generate support and communicate results. If the project does not contemplate a communication plan these consideration still need to be acknowledge as part of the overall implementation strategy.

4.1.3 Agreement with Donors

The project team also needs to familiarize themselves with the agreement between IUCN and the donor so that specific requirements can be taken into account during project implementation. These concern mainly reporting obligations and conditions for the end dates and closure of the projects.

Moreover, most donors have their own monitoring and reporting tools which need to be submitted by the project team on a schedule agreed with the donor. Donors' tools and requirements have pre-eminence over IUCN tools during the implementation and monitoring

stage. To avoid duplication, submissions to donors can be used to report on the implementation of activities and the delivery of outputs and results to IUCN.

4.1.4 Development of the work plan

The work plan is the most important element in project implementation. It serves to effectively organize the work of the team and for monitoring and reporting purposes. It is normal to prepare an annual work plan, updating this plan once every quarter or six months as necessary. The annual work plan is approved by the relevant programme manager (Programme Director or Head or Regional Technical Coordinator). Bringing the project team together to reflect on progress and reflect on next steps is a good way of keeping the project team focused.

A work plan is usually planned using a matrix that translates longer term outputs and results into manageable activities and sub-activities. Tool 4.1 provides an example of how to do this planning exercise. Other planning tools such as Gantt Charts are popular and there is also specialized project management software such as Microsoft Project.

Using an annual planning tool is relatively straightforward. Planning will need to be done for each project result. Start with one result and identify its expected outputs and activities that will need to be implemented over the year, as defined in Tool 3.1 Project Logical Framework. For each activity, the responsible parties should also be defined. If a Gantt Chart (a chart that illustrates a project schedule) is being used, it is possible to identify when during the year activities are expected to occur.

In some cases, the planning of subsequent activities is dependent on the results of activities that will be implemented. For example, often activities are planned only after consultation workshops have already occurred with stakeholders. If this is the case, the activity of the consultation workshop can already be planned, but the subsequent activity will need to be updated in the plan once the exact activity is clear.

4.1.5 Implementation of Activities

The day to day and month to month implementation of a project involves the implementation of activities and expenditure of budget. The steps in implementing activities is highly specific to the activity in question, and for IUCN staff will involve management of logistics, coordination of partners and their work and provision of technical inputs.

Expenditures made in the field through projects will be reported on monthly and entered into the accounts of the programme. Specific guidance on project finance, including budgets, expenditure and reporting is covered in the Project Budget Manual.

IUCN staff provides technical inputs to the implementation of projects. The provision of technical inputs is planned at the time of project conceptualization and design and is an important part of any project budget. In essence, IUCN staff sells their time to the project and receive income in return. Technical inputs can also be received from partners and consultants under contract to the project.

All projects are expected to have communications and monitoring activities, which must be in the project plan and budget and implemented during the life of the project. Communications activities can include (but are not limited to) the creation of communications products (website, films, brochures, etc.), and communication activities (press releases, events, etc.). Monitoring activities can include (but are not limited to) assessments, surveys, remote sensing, etc.

4.1.6 Updating the work plan

Writing a work plan can be a speculative exercise, subject to the rate of implementation and factors outside of the control of the project. Some activities and outputs are achieved quickly and easily while others encounter delays. Updating the work plan will allow the project team to make adjustments while keeping the overall project plan in view.

The project team should:

- Update the work plan at least every six months using the Tool Annual Work Plan and Progress Monitoring and submit it with the Project Monitoring Plan and Results Template and the Progress Monitoring Report (see below Section 4.2).
- For each activity of the work plan indicate an estimate progress of completion (in percentage) at the middle and at the end of the year.
- Use the results of supervision missions and monitoring to make adjustments to the work plan.

4. 2 Project monitoring

Project monitoring tracks and reports on progress in implementing the project during its life. Projects are typically planned on annual cycles and are adjusted every six months based on monitoring data collected either by the project team or through a supervision mission. This section describes the project monitoring process, including supervision missions.

Project monitoring entails:

- Collecting data on the implementation of activities and outputs, according to the annual work plan (see the Annual Work Plan Template);
- Collecting data on the delivery of outputs and results according to the indicators identified in the Tool Project Monitoring Plan and Results Template;
- Collecting data to monitor implementation of the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) and effectiveness of mitigation measures[6]
- Reviewing the financial situation of the project.

Most projects of a significant size are monitored through supervision missions (CHF 500K+) and for all Global Environmental Facility funded projects, supervision missions are mandatory.

Project monitoring has its specific roles and responsibilities and approval processes, captured in the IUCN Roles and Responsibilities along the Project Cycle.

[6] See ESMS Guidance Note on Developing and Monitoring an ESMP which includes the templates for ESMP monitoring: https://portals.iucn.org/union/cont/documents/686/11388

The workflow and approval processes are outlined in the next section on project monitoring.

4.2.1 Monitoring progress of implementation

Projects should be monitored by the project teams (members of supervisory missions may also find these tools useful). Based on the project logical framework in the project document, project teams typically undertake annual planning exercises to define activities and outputs that are expected to occur during the annual implementation called the annual work plan.

The project annual work plan should be updated with monitoring data once every six months by the project team and monitoring through a supervisory mission using the same time frame. In total, the annual work plan should be monitored and updated at least twice a year.

4.2.2 Supervision missions

IUCN uses supervision missions with overall and specific objectives of all major field projects (and all GEF funded projects as appropriate).

Supervision missions are normally expected to take place once per year, unless there is a reported issue with implementation or a complaint has been filed under the grievance mechanism. Reporting is provided to the responsible project manager, the relevant programme manager (Programme Director or Head or Regional Technical Coordinator) and their line managers (Global Directors, Regional Programme Coordinators and Regional Directors).

Responsible project managers are expected to respond (in writing) and implement recommendations made by the reports of supervision missions.

The primary criteria for selecting members of supervision missions will be technical (see sample criteria below). Suitable technical expertise may be sourced from the Global or Regional Programme under which the project is being implemented in normal cases. In the case of GEF funded projects, members of supervision missions must be completely independent of the programme under which the project is being implemented. In all cases, members of the supervision mission must be free of conflict of interest. Suitable expertise may be drawn from the Secretariat, Member organizations or IUCN Commissions.

Sample Terms of Reference for a Supervision Mission

The supervision mission of [PROJECT NAME] will occur between [DATE] and [DATE] addressing the following overall and specific objectives. Methods, qualifications of the members of the supervision mission team and reporting requirements are outlined below.

Overall objectives

- To verify that all aspects of the project are on track, according to agreed plans and schedules
- To verify the data collected through monitoring for reporting purposes
- To review the effectiveness of project and financial management
- To make recommendations aimed at improving project implementation

Specific objectives

Check on changes in the project context

- To identify issues that might pose risks to project implementation, including environmental or social risk that would require mitigation measures

Verifying that the project is on track:

- To verify that the project team has produced an annual work plan with clear milestones and deliverables
- To verify that the mitigation measures as specified in the ESMP are being adequately implemented, and to check whether any new environmental or social risk might have come up that would require risk management.

Verifying monitoring and reporting:

- To assess the suitability of monitoring indicators, methods for data collection and quality of reporting;
- To verify that data being reported is correct;

Reviewing effectiveness of project and financial management

- To verify that the management and governance of the project is effective;
- To verify that the partnership arrangements are suitable and effective;
- To verify that the ESMP is effective in mitigating social and environmental risks
- To verify that the budget expenditure is on track and appropriate (i.e. free of fraud, reconciling money received and disbursed, review of invoices and other payment requests, review of record keeping on procurement and other aspects)

Making recommendations:

- To make recommendations on improving technical aspects of the project's implementation, project and financial management, risk management and monitoring and reporting.

Audience and intended use

The primary audience of the supervision mission are (a) the project manager and team, including implementation partners (b) the donor(s) and (c) the project manager's supervisory structure, including programme and directors (regional or global).

The project manager will be expected to produce a management response to each and every recommendation of the supervision mission, the implementation of which will be reviewed at subsequent supervision missions, and may be reviewed if there is an evaluation.

Methods

Supervision missions will use mixed methods, including:

- Review of documentation, including project planning documents, technical outputs and monitoring reports;
- Review of documentation related to the management of the project and its financial management;
- Interviews with project staff and implementing partners;
- Interviews with stakeholders (women and men, ethnic groups), beneficiaries and with affected groups (if relevant);
- Field observation and interpretation of physical and/or biological change

Qualifications of members of supervision mission teams

The primary criteria for selecting members of supervision missions are technical, but also must include capacity to undertake a management and financial review. Normally, the supervision mission will require the expertise of a biologist and a social scientist, provided one or both have extensive experience in managing and reviewing field projects from the management and financial perspectives.

Technical qualifications:

- The senior expert must have demonstrated expertise in the thematic area or biome of the project under implementation;
- The senior expert (see footnote 1) must have demonstrated expertise and experience in sociological, gender or anthropological aspects related to stakeholder participation;

Management and financial qualifications

- The expert must have demonstrated experience in both managing and reviewing all aspects of project implementation;
- The expert must have demonstrated experience in reviewing financial aspects (including controls) of the project.

Use the Supervision Mission Report Template to report on a supervision mission.

4.2.3 Monitoring for project outputs, results and impacts

Project-level monitoring will be required for all projects. As part of IUCN's commitment to Results Based Management, monitoring and reporting tools have been developed to measure progress in the delivery of outputs and results, and ultimately impact.

Project teams are responsible for putting in place a Project Monitoring Plan with a set of output, result and impact indicators that includes:

- **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttributable, **R**elevant, **T**ime-bound indicators: one or more per result and impact;
- **Baseline and Target measurements**: for each result and impact indicator reflecting the measure at the start of the project and what it aims to achieve;
- **Methods, resources and assigned responsibilities for monitoring**: to ensure that data will be collected;
- **Capacity for measuring biological and social results and impacts**: to ensure that the data collected is scientifically valid and reliable, in that the measurement reflects what is being measured and can be applied consistently over time.

IUCN has created a Project Monitoring Plan and Results Template that will be completed every six months. This template includes the monitoring of Impact, Results and Outputs at the project level. Donor-funded projects will also need to consider their specific tools and schedules for data collection and reporting.

The Project Monitoring Plan and Results Template is accompanied by a Progress Monitoring Report, which assesses progress in the delivery of outputs and outcomes, project expenditure and partners' implementation. Some of the indicators might be used as evidence for verifying effectiveness of ESMP (e.g. livelihood indicators of affected groups or indicators measuring changes in dependency on natural resources).

Both the Project Monitoring Plan and Results Template - and the Progress Monitoring Report are approved by the relevant programme manager. Workflow and approvals for supervisory missions, monitoring progress of implementation and monitoring for project results and impacts are further explained in the section after financial monitoring.

4.2.4 Project financial monitoring

Financial Monitoring at the project level focuses in assessing project income and expenditure compared to budget.[7] This topic is covered in the IUCN Project Budgeting Guidelines.

4.2.5 Workflows and approvals for project monitoring

[7] Further information on project income and expenditure is included in IUCN's Budget Procedure.

Project monitoring follows a set schedule throughout the year in order to monitor progress, control for risk and ensure that data related to results and impacts are captured.

Figure 2 outlines the steps, as well as who is responsible for doing the work and approving the reports.

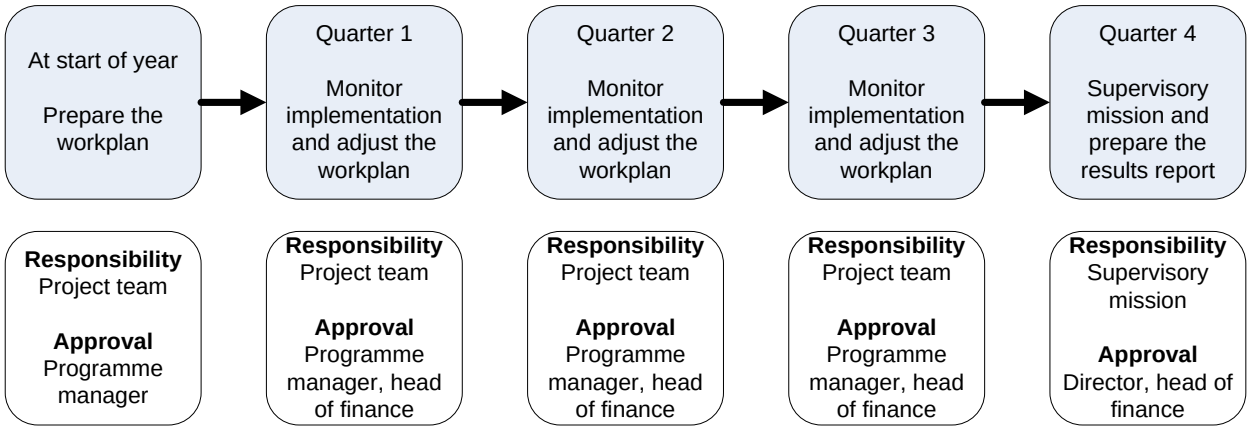

Figure 2 Workflow and approvals for project monitoring

4.2.6 Programme Monitoring

All projects are expected to contribute data to report on the global indicators of the upcoming IUCN Programme 2017-2020. Further guidance will be issued on how this information is going to be collected once the Programme is agreed and approved by the World Conservation Congress in 2017.

This concludes Module 4 on Project Implementation and Monitoring.
All the PGS tools can be downloaded from https://portals.iucn.org/union/node/5095