ACBF EVALUATION POLICY

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Acronyms

ACBF: The African Capacity Building Foundation
ACP: Agreement at Completion Point
CIDA: Canada International Development Agency
CLT: Core Learning Team
CPS: Country Program Strategy
DAC: Development Assistance Committee
DFID: Department for International Development
IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development
M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation
MfDR: Managing for Development Results
MOU: Memorandum of Understanding
NZAID: New Zealand Agency for International Development
NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations
OED: Operations Evaluation Department
OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
TOR: Terms of Reference
SMTPII: Second Strategic Medium Term Plan 2007-201
UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

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Executive Summary

1.   The ACBF Evaluation Policy articulates a broad framework for evaluation in the Foundation following the establishment of an operations monitoring and evaluation department (OED) in the Foundation in February 2008 and subsequent restructuring into Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning Department with the merging of Knowledge Management Department in 2010. The establishment of this department signals a strong commitment from the Foundation to making it an accountable and learning organization through the feedback loop from evaluations. The Foundation also adopted managing for development results (MfDR) as key management principle and called for the establishment of a results–based monitoring and evaluation system (M&E) to track the Foundation's contribution to global development effectiveness.

2.   The drafting of this policy benefited from the lessons learned from the benchmarking missions to leading international development organizations that have adopted managing for development results in line with OECD/DAC recommended international good practices.

3.   The key messages in the policy framework are;

(i)   commitment to monitoring and evaluation functions at ACBF through the establishment of a framework;

(ii)   that the purpose of evaluation at ACBF is accountability for development results and learning;

(iii)   adoption of the OECD/DAC's Network on Development Evaluations' principles and criteria that are internationally agreed to by development partners to guide evaluation in the Foundation;

(iv)   monitoring for tracking progress towards targets is primarily the responsibility of operations department, while evaluation is a shared responsibility between relevant operations departments, stakeholders, and the evaluation department depending on the nature of the evaluation;

(v)   adoption of a gradual approach towards establishing an independent evaluation office;

(vi)   the Executive Board will undertake review of evaluation reports to enhance the ability of the Board to assess adequately the overall quality and impact of ACBF's operations as well as its contributions to global development results.

(vii)   the success of the evaluation function at ACBF requires the collective responsibilities of the Management, and more importantly the program staff.

4. The Executive Board adopted the "ACBF Evaluation Policy" as the policy statement on   the   evaluation   system   of   ACBF

Preamble

Value of Evaluation
5. ACBF looks at evaluation as an effort to improve development and get results. Development is about achieving results that make a difference for the poor in their daily lives. Evaluation is a key instrument that determines what works, what doesn't and why in development intervention. The Foundation will therefore seek to achieve high standards in the evaluation of its capacity building initiatives and to ensure active follow up by management.

Commitment to results focused capacity building evaluation
6. The ACBF is fully committed to the principles of ownership and mutual accountability and results-orientation set out in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and recently reconfirmed and amplified by the Accra Agenda for Action. These principles imply that the evaluation of capacity building interventions cannot be just about assessing grant making. All ACBF's capacity building interventions' evaluations must conform to international principles of impartiality in line with the emerging best practices specific to capacity building evaluation.

7. As a start, the ACBF would adopt a gradual approach towards establishing an independent evaluation office focusing on performance accountability and learning. ACBF will focus more on evaluations that can generate lesson learning from innovative programs and partnerships to improve future interventions.

8. In order to enhance behavioral and quality control and use of all evaluations in the Foundation, the Executive Board will undertake a review of evaluation reports to enhance the ability of the Board to assess adequately the overall quality and impact of ACBF's operations as well as its contributions to global development results. *Partnerships for evaluation*
9. The ACBF will help supported partners build their capacity and skills for conducting their monitoring and evaluation, so they can play a more equal role in ACBF's own evaluations. ACBF will implement in line with Paris and Accra commitments to use country systems for evaluation whenever possible, letting partner countries and projects take the lead or participate as primary stakeholders and audiences. ACBF will also support initiatives for partner countries and projects themselves and other independent agencies to carry out their own evaluations of ACBF supported programs, as well as of their own development activities, and will seek to make use of the resulting findings and lessons.

Building a culture of learning and evaluation
10. ACBF will take a strong lead in championing and sustaining an evaluation and learning culture in which the use of evidence for learning is valued in all its supported projects.

Improving the quality of evaluations and developing skills

11. In all its evaluation work, including with partners, ACBF will seek to follow relevant international standards and guidance. The Evaluation Unit would seek to develop staff monitoring and evaluation skills by way of helping to set standards; providing support and advice; organize relevant training for developing professional competencies and skills expected of specialist evaluators and managers who are engaged in commissioning studies; and reporting on quality.

Chapter I: Introduction and Context

12.   This policy is to establish a broad framework for evaluations in the Foundation. It describes the purpose of evaluation, its scope and stakeholders, and the evaluation principles   and   policies   to   be   used   by   ACBF for its evaluation work. In developing this evaluation policy, ACBF has adopted the DAC definition of evaluation as: *An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, on-going, or completed development intervention.* In operational term at ACBF, evaluation is an assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, strategy, policy, theme, or institutional performance. The policy also covers implementation procedure and arrangements; and responsibilities.

13.   The drafting of this policy benefited from the lessons learned from the benchmarking missions to leading international development organizations that have adopted managing for development results in line with OECD/DAC recommended international best practices. The institutions include the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Department for International Development (DFID), and International Funds for Agricultural Development (IFAD) among others. The lessons learnt during the missions were complemented with the findings and recommendations from the Report of Audit of ACBF M&E system, Workshop on ACBF Results Measurement Framework, and the Second Strategic Medium Term Plan (SMTPII 2007-2011). In the preparation of this policy, the UNICEF Evaluation Policy and NZAID Evaluation Policy Statement were consulted.

14.   The Policy framework has four chapters. The first chapter dealt with the introduction and context. The second chapter contains the broad policy spelling out the purpose, uses, approach, scope, and stakeholders' role in evaluation at ACBF. The chapter also discusses the evaluation principles and criteria that touch on independence, accountability, partnership, and learning in accordance with OECD/DAC recommendations. The third chapter deals with the implementation procedures and arrangements that explain in practical terms how the policy would be implemented. Chapter four is a summary of level of responsibilities starting with the role of the Executive Secretary, and the Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning Department

Chapter II: Purpose of Evaluation and Scope

A. Evolution of the Evaluation Function at ACBF

15.   A quick review of major ACBF strategic policy documents confirms the existence of a Monitoring and Evaluation System that is geared towards accountability for resources and outputs of projects and programs[1]. Monitoring and evaluation tools were developed to monitor and assess performance of projects. The main ones include Appraisal Reports, Monitoring Mission Reports, Mid-Term Reviews and Project Completion Reports. However, evaluation as a tool for accountability and learning for performance improvement and for reporting development effectiveness has received inadequate attention over the Foundation's fledging years.

16.   For the purpose of accountability to its shareholders, and from a strategic and programmatic point of view, the assessment of the performance of the Foundation would require the development of a credible and comprehensive results-based M&E System[2]. Considering the size and the institutional growth of the Foundation, the Secretariat would adopt an incremental strategy towards the development of an M&E system.

17.   In accordance with this evaluation policy and in the spirit of incremental strategy towards the development of an independent evaluation office, M&E Unit will now operate as an ACBF organizational unit that would coordinate evaluation of the development effectiveness of ACBF interventions for accountability and organizational learning. It would nurture and foster a culture of evaluation in the Foundation and to extend the same to ACBF supported projects and programs.

B. Purpose and Role of Evaluation in ACBF

18.   ACBF sees monitoring and evaluation as an important contributor to its strategy for building capacity for poverty reduction and good governance. The ACBF Second Strategic Framework called the Second Strategic Medium Term Plan (SMTPII) for 2007-2011 aims at raising the development effectiveness of ACBF's interventions. The Plan elaborates on this, stating, "*SMTP II builds on the achievements of SMTP I and is drawn in a context, which vividly shows that in the absence of a follow-up plan, the continent risks losing the reforms and growth momentum that today characterize the new dawn in Africa. SMTP II is a necessity, if Africa is to show a respectable promise of achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. It is a quantum leap that capacity building requires on the continent in order to cut the capacity deficit, which stands between Africa and sustainable long-term growth with reduced levels of poverty…SMTP II is an investment in Africa's future. It is an opportunity for Africa to demonstrate that it can make a visible and sustainable dent on poverty.[3]*"

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[1] Concept Note on the Operationalization of the Operations Evaluation Department at ACBF

[2] Report on the Audit of the ACBF M&E System and Capacity: The Way Forward

[3] ACBF Second Strategic Medium Term Plan 2007-2011: Towards The Achievement of The Millennium Development Goals in Africa

19.   ACBF's catalytic role in capacity building for poverty reduction in Africa is also of great importance, as reflected in the emphasis the SMTPII gives to partnership, advocacy, and policy dialogue through projects and programs design and implementation; as well as learning and the dissemination of knowledge. Evaluation thus play a crucial role in the implementation of the strategy by bringing an independent perspective to the assessment of progress in relation to ACBF's strategic objectives and catalytic role, and contributing feedback for learning.

(i) Purpose of Evaluation

20.   The main purpose of the evaluation function at ACBF is to promote accountability and learning in order to improve the performance of the Foundation's operations and policies[4]. Evaluations provide a basis for accountability by assessing the impact of ACBF-supported operations and policies. They are expected to give an accurate analysis of successes and shortcomings, i.e. "to tell it the way it is". This feedback helps the Foundation make evidence–based decisions, thus, improving its performance. Accountability is thus a key step in a learning process that, if followed through in partnership with those who are being evaluated, deepens ACBF's and its partners' understanding of the causes of and solutions to capacity building deficiency on the Continent.

(ii) Use of Evaluation

21.   ACBF will use lessons from evaluations to develop better results-oriented instruments and policies to strengthen the effectiveness of African public sector and non-state actors; inform future planning in a particular sector or country context; enhance accountability and transparency in the use of public resources; and increase the effectiveness of African regional institutions in promoting regional and global integration.

ACBF's evaluation approach will reflect and be harmonized with internationally accepted evaluation norms and principles.[5] In so doing, it will adapt these norms and principles to ACBF operational practices.

C. *Evaluation Scope*

22.   Monitoring and Evaluation are often mentioned jointly as M&E. It is important to note that while monitoring and evaluation are complementary analytical functions,

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[4] ACBF Results Measurement Framework

[5] As set down in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, OECD, Paris, 1998.

they have clear distinguishable characteristics and vary in depth and purpose. Monitoring is a continuous internal process, conducted by operational staff and grantees to check on the progress of development interventions against pre-defined objectives and plan, activities and expected outputs. In ACBF, evaluation will take place when a project or program has ended or about to end. The evaluation will answer specific questions related to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, outcome, and sustainability of the completed capacity building intervention.

23.   To promote accountability and learning through monitoring and evaluations at ACBF, monitoring will be limited to regular project reviews to be conducted by operational staff and recipients. The scope of evaluations will cover Project Evaluations (End of Project Evaluations, and Outcome Evaluations), Country Program Evaluations, Thematic Evaluations, and Corporate–Level Evaluations. A brief description of each of these evaluations is provided in this section.

(i)   Project Reviews

- *Mid-Term Reviews: A*s part of monitoring, operational staff will conduct a mid-term review (MTR) for on-going projects to monitor implementation. The MTR will be undertaken at around the mid-point of the implementation of an intervention. It will measure and report on performance to date and recommend adjustments that may need to be made to ensure the successful implementation of the project or program. These adjustments may include adding to, or changing, the outputs in the project's logical framework. Amending the purpose statement in a logical framework would however require the permission of ACBF management.

- *Project Completion Report:* For every completed project, the operational staff and recipient will carry out a self-evaluation and rating of project performance known as project completion report (PCR). The PCR is part of a wider monitoring and review process, which will present an internally derived assessment as part of the data collection that may inform learning and accountability.

(ii) Project Evaluations

- *End of Project Evaluations:* End of Project Evaluations will be mandatory and conducted six months to the project completion and before embarking on a second phase of the same project or launching a similar project in the same region. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of such evaluations will be used as the basis for assessing the justification of a second phase and improving the design and implementation of subsequent intervention. M&E Unit will conduct this evaluation.

- *Outcome Evaluations:* The outcome evaluations will focus on the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. It would report on ACBF contributions to development results achieved through an

intervention and focus on the intended and unintended, positive and negative outcomes, and institutional development impact. Outcome evaluations would be conducted after the project is fully completed. M&E Unit will conduct the evaluation.

(ii) Country Program Evaluations

24.   Country Program Evaluations will examine ACBF performance in a particular country. The evaluation would report on its conformity with the relevant ACBF Country Capacity Development Assistance Strategy Paper (CADAP) and on the overall effectiveness of the specific CADAP. These evaluations are expected to provide direct and concrete building blocks for revisiting existing or formulating new country strategy and opportunities paper. In particular, country program evaluations are expected to provide information on the most essential aspects of program performance and to contribute to developing strategic and operational orientation for ACBF's future activities in individual countries. M&E Unit will conduct the evaluations

(iii) Thematic Evaluations

25.   Thematic evaluations and studies will focus on assessing the effectiveness of ACBF's processes and approaches with the aim of contributing to increasing the Foundation's knowledge on selected issues and subjects. The thematic evaluations are expected to provide concrete building blocks for revisiting existing or formulating new and more effective operational strategies and policies. This type of evaluation not only builds on the findings of project evaluations but also draw on a variety of external sources, including evaluation work done by other organizations and institutions on the same theme or issue. Example of thematic evaluations will include evaluations in selected aspects of different capacity building interventions. M&E Unit will conduct the evaluations

(iv) Corporate-Level Evaluations

26.   Corporate-level evaluations will be conducted by M&E Unit to assess the effectiveness and impact of ACBF-wide policies, strategies, instruments and approaches. Such evaluation is expected to generate insights and recommendations that can be used for the formulation of new and more effective policies and strategies.

D. Evaluation Stakeholders

27.   ACBF recognizes that evaluation has a number of important stakeholders with a range of perspectives and expectations. Stakeholders include: Board of Governors, Executive   Board,   in-country   partners,   and   other   development   partners.

Stakeholders whose performance in managing ACBF-supported intervention and /or carrying out ACBF policies, will be evaluated are:

- Stakeholders of Projects and Programs that receives grants from ACBF for capacity building in Public sector.
- Stakeholders of Projects and Programs that receives grants from ACBF for capacity building in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil-society organizations.

Chapter III. Evaluation Principles and Operational Policies

28.   Principles and criteria are needed to guide the various processes involved in reviews and evaluations: planning; commissioning; determining purpose and scope;

design; data collection; analysis; reporting; budgeting; contracting; and managing evaluation. The DAC principles for the evaluation of development assistance have been adopted as the foundation for developing this evaluation policy and guidelines.

A   Principles and Operational Policies

i. Independence

29.   The evaluation function at ACBF will operate in line with internationally accepted principles for the evaluation of development assistance. Foremost among these is the principle that the evaluation process should be impartial and independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of development assistance. Thus, the evaluation function at ACBF should be guided by impartiality, evidence-based, objectivity, relevance, and timeliness.

30.   In order to make the evaluation work impartial, and objective, there would be need for adequate budget for evaluation. In this connection, a review of development agencies' procedures by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC)[6] notes, "Access to, and control over, financial resources and evaluation programming is an important sign of independence." The evaluation budget is closely related to the work program; thus, authority to select projects, programs and policies for evaluation and formulate the work program is also a key component of credible evaluation function that would be observed at ACBF

31.   In addition, in line with procurement guidelines, authority to select evaluators and consultants, formulate and approve their terms of reference (TORs) and manage the human resources employed in evaluation is also important as these factors affect the independence of the process and the results of evaluation. So too is the authority to revise and finalize reports after discussion with the relevant partners.

The following would form the core of operational guidelines for independence.

The M&E Unit will:
(i)   Develop corporate strategies for the improvement of the evaluation function and issue and update corporate guidance on evaluation practice.

(ii) Have authority to determine the criteria of pre-qualifying evaluation consultants to be included in the database for consultants

(iii) Maintain a network of communication and exchange with evaluation staff, providing them with updates on evaluations findings, events and methodologies.

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[6] OECD/DAC, Review by DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, OECD, Paris, 1998, page 24.

(iv) Track the implementation of accepted evaluation recommendations and report annually on the status of follow-up to the Executive Board.

(v) Be responsible for formulating its annual work program and budget.

(vi) Have the authority to issue final evaluation reports after consultation with the Executive Secretary and the Executive Board.

ii. Accountability

32.   ACBF recognizes that a main purpose of evaluation is to provide a basis for accountability, including the disclosure and dissemination of information to the relevant stakeholders and the public public. Accountability in this context refers to the assessment of developmental results, the impact of development assistance and the performance of the parties involved. This is different from accountability for the use of public funds in financial and legal terms, usually the responsibility of auditors and legal specialists.

33.   ACBF considers accountability as a necessary first step in the learning process. Systematic independent evaluation of completed projects and past and ongoing policies and strategies is indispensable if ACBF is to learn from its experience, both positive and negative, and improve its future effectiveness.

34.   Accountability through evaluation analysis requires a rigorous methodology for the assessment of developmental results and impacts and the performance of the partners concerned. It also requires that successes, unexpected results, shortcomings and failures highlighted during the evaluation be disclosed to relevant stakeholders and the general public without interference from any vested interest.

35.   Moreover, the accountability of an international development organization as a whole is facilitated if the results of individual evaluations can be aggregated and consolidated at the organizational level. This allows a better analysis of the effectiveness of a given development organization and of the cross-cutting issues that impinge on its overall performance.

Accountability will be operationally guided as follow:

(i) Every year M&E Unit will evaluate on the basis of clear criteria of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact, and sustainability completed ACBF operations and ACBF policies, strategies, and processes.

(ii) Report annually to Management on evaluation quality, and evaluation needs and expenditure across ACBF.

 (iii) End of Project Evaluation will remain mandatory before a further phase of a project is embarked on or a similar project is launched in the same country or region.

(iv) ACBF management will ensure that ACBF officials and ACBF-supported projects promptly provide all documents and other information required by M&E Unit, and participate and cooperate actively in the evaluation process.

(v) The Executive Secretary will have the authority to issue final evaluation reports and disclose them to the general public after consultation with the Executive Board. The evaluation report will be disseminated widely through the print and electronic media in accordance with ACBF's disclosure policy.

 (vi) An annual report on the results and impact of ACBF operations will be presented to the Executive Board and ACBF management every year.

(vii) M&E Unit will work with a methodological framework for evaluation that helps assess and evaluate impact at project completion; produce a consolidated picture of the results, impact and performance of a cohort of projects in a given year; and synthesize learning from evaluation.

iii. Partnership

36.   Establishing a constructive partnership between ACBF and other relevant stakeholders is essential both for generating evaluation recommendations and for ensuring their uptake and ownership. Fostering such partnership takes time and effort, and depends crucially on the attitude and behaviour of those conducting the evaluation. Meaningful partnership also requires, inter alia, that evaluations are perceived by stakeholders as being useful, well informed, relevant and timely, and are clearly and concisely presented.

37.   Reviews and evaluations can be undertaken jointly and/or collaboratively with other development partners and key stakeholders using processes that are sufficiently robust to manage any potential bias or conflict of interest. Inclusive evaluation approaches including the use of participatory methods is one approach to facilitating shared use of evaluative information and knowledge by ACBF, other donors, and our in-country partners. These approaches would be encouraged, supported and used whenever feasible and appropriate. A key aim is to have a positive impact in the development of other partners' capacity for carrying out evaluative activities. This is particularly important when working within the context of multi-donor program activities using partner countries systems and plans.

38.   ACBF evaluation policies and instruments will aim at the appropriate engagement of stakeholders in the evaluation process, while safeguarding the independent function of evaluation at the Foundation. ACBF remains however, solely responsible for producing the evaluation report and its findings. In particular, the following guideline will apply:

(i) At both the beginning of the evaluation process and during fieldwork, M&E will invite all relevant stakeholders, including the operational staff of the Foundation and the

grant recipient, cooperating institutions and beneficiaries, to contribute information and insights.

(ii) At the beginning of every evaluation, M&E Unit will continue to ensure that the evaluation process is understood, is transparent to all stakeholders and includes a timetable agreed with them.

(iii) In line with international best practices in evaluation, M&E Unit will, share draft evaluation reports with all concerned for purposes of obtaining comments, in particular on possible factual errors and inaccuracies.

(iv) To firm up the partnership aspects of evaluation mentioned above, M&E Unit will form a Core Learning Team (CLT) among the main users of the evaluation.

iv. Learning

39.   Establishing effective feedback loops from evaluation to policy-makers, operational staff and the general public is essential if evaluation lessons are to be learned. The recognition of feedback that stakeholders understand and find useful is a key output of evaluation, this recognition leads ACBF to nurture partnerships with stakeholders to ensure that evaluation recommendations are adopted and lead to the required adjustment and performance improvements. ACBF recognizes, in particular, that often evaluation reports, by their very nature, cannot propose the kind of clear-cut operational recommendations that implementers need. Similarly, ACBF recognizes that evaluation results need to be communicated through user-friendly products.

ACBF will pursue this objective through the following guidelines:

(i) After completion of an evaluation report, M&E Unit will facilitate a process through which the main users of the evaluation can deepen their understanding of the evaluation findings and recommendations and make them more operational.

(ii) As and when required, the Head of M&E Unit will assign evaluation officers to participate in selected project development teams and program and policy working groups in order to facilitate the understanding of evaluation recommendations.

(iii) In addition to the evaluation report, M&E Unit will continue to prepare short, easy-to-read communication products on evaluation findings and recommendations and disseminate them widely among ACBF staff, their development partners and the general public.

(iv) While   M&E Unit has a key role to play in generating and communicating evaluation lessons, responsibility for uptake and learning extends beyond M&E Unit and requires the commitment of ACBF management, the Executive Board and stakeholders at the project level to follow up and act on lessons learned. In response to this need, the Executive Secretary will ensure that evaluation recommendations found to

be feasible by users are adopted at the operational, strategic and policy levels (as appropriate).

B. Evaluation Criteria

40.   Evaluation functions aim to form judgments about particular development interventions. Hence criteria are needed to underpin and focus these assessments. The OECD/DAC recommends a set of five criteria for evaluations. These general criteria and their relative emphasis will be specified for each review or evaluation undertaken. The five Criteria are:

Relevance: The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.

Effectiveness: The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

Efficiency: A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc are converted to results. That is, the extent to which the program and/ or project could have been implemented at less cost without reducing the quality and quantity of the activities.

Impact: Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a developmental intervention, directly or indirectly, intended and unintended.

Sustainability: The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the benefit flows over time.

 Each of the criteria will be implemented by a set of evaluation questions during evaluations.

Chapter IV: Implementation Procedures and Arrangements

41.   These procedures and arrangements span the entire evaluation cycle from the formulation of the M&E Unit work program and budget to the finalization and disclosure of evaluation reports. They are the means by which the policy framework is implemented in practice.

I. Annual Work Programming and Budgeting

A. Work Program and Budget Formulation Process

42.   Each year, M&E Unit will register the interest of its internal and external partners and prepare a yearly work program for independent evaluation. This work program will be based on the selection of a critical mass of evaluations that, according to M&E Unit is required for promoting accountability and learning in ACBF as well as for the preparation of the annual report on the results and impact of ACBF operations. Every work program will include a mix of different types of evaluation.

43.   The M&E Unit budget will build on the annual work program. It will include expenses related to staffing, evaluation studies, publications, training, and partnership.

B. Work Program and Budget Approval Process

44.   The Head of M&E Unit will formulate the annual work program and budget in consultation with Manager, Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning Department; and management before consolidation into the Foundation-wide annual business plan and budget.

II. Devising the Evaluation Approach

45.   Every evaluation conducted by M&E Unit will be guided by a concept paper, which is the first step in the evaluation process. This document shall contain a standard format covering the following aspects of the proposed evaluation:

   (i)   background and rationale;
   (ii)   objectives;
   (iii)   expected scope;
   (iv)   expected outcome;
   (v)   key evaluation questions;
   (vi)   evaluation methodology;
   (vii)   Core Learning Team (CLT) and the other partners involved[7];

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[7] While the composition of the CLT depends on the nature of the evaluation and the stakeholders involved, the CLT typically consists of representatives of the Program Operations Department, the Grant recipient, the implementing agency, the cooperating

(viii)   processes and work plan;
(ix)   human resource requirements for the evaluation; and
(x)   communication and dissemination of results.

46.   The concept paper will be shared for comments with all the parties involved in the evaluation. This makes the evaluation process transparent to stakeholders and helps coordinate their inputs and participation according to a realistic timetable.

47.   While preparing the concept paper, M&E Unit will identify members of the CLT, which consists of the main users of evaluation. At the beginning of the process, the CLT helps flag issues and information sources for the evaluation. After the completion of the independent evaluation report, the CLT discusses the evaluation findings, deepens the understanding of the findings and recommendations, and eventually works out the operational implications of evaluation recommendations and the division of labour and responsibilities for their implementation among the various stakeholders involved. The Operations department will organize the meeting where CLT would meet to discuss the findings and operational implications of the evaluation recommendations. The CLT is assigned this role because evaluation reports by their very nature often cannot make clear-cut recommendations that can immediately be adopted and implemented. The CLT's output is recorded in the format of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or agreement at completion point (ACP) among the stakeholders involved[8].

III. The Evaluation Analysis and Report

A. Conducting the Evaluation Analysis

48.   The overall responsibility for the conduct of the evaluation analysis rests with M&E Unit. However, M&E Unit will engage relevant ACBF staff and stakeholders at appropriate stages of the evaluation process, taking into account the role of the partners concerned.

ACBF management will ensure that ACBF staff and ACBF-supported projects promptly provide all documents and other information required by M&E Unit and participate and cooperate actively in the evaluation process.

49.   Before initiating an independent analysis, Operations Department in conjunction with the project implementers and the beneficiaries concerned undertakes regular monitoring and self-assessment. This is followed by M&E Unit's independent analysis based on internationally accepted evaluation criteria, and a methodology aimed at promoting accountability through impact and performance assessment. This analysis

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institution, involved in the project's implementation and, in addition to M&E Unit as a facilitator.

[8] Project authorities and other agencies involved in the implementation of the project.

will continue to be grounded in extensive fieldwork and a review of all information made available by relevant Operations Department and other stakeholders.

50.   In conducting evaluation, independent evaluators will be appointed to carry out all evaluations. The information collected through the fieldwork will enhance the quality of the evaluation.

B. Stakeholders Participations

51.   As a rule, M&E Unit evaluation missions will be carried out with the participation of in-country stakeholders, in particular the people involved in ACBF-supported projects, the project management units and other stakeholders involved in project or program implementation. The evaluation mission will contribute to strengthening the position of the beneficiaries in their interaction with implementing agencies, governments and ACBF itself, through intensive works at country level and evaluation meetings with all stakeholders. It is the main instrument to enable the partners to participate in the evaluation learning process with ACBF, and to enable ACBF to learn from them.

52.   The evaluation mission will present and discuss its preliminary findings and conclusions at meetings with all evaluation partners. This interaction allows the mission to provide feedback to all partners, while in turn giving them an opportunity to provide additional information and insights that can be used in the draft evaluation report, for which M&E Unit remains solely responsible.

C. The Evaluation Report

53.   The evaluation team will prepare the evaluation report, which will consist of the executive summary, main text and working documents as annexes, if necessary. The evaluation team will work under the supervision of a Task Manager, assigned by the Head, M&E Unit to manage the evaluation process. The Task Manager will be responsible, for managing the evaluation process and ensuring the quality and content of the evaluation report, which should be short and user-friendly.

54.   M&E Unit will use peer review from within the Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning department to ensure quality standards. When undertaking a complex evaluation, it may also engage an ad- hoc advisory committee to provide expert advice and feedback.

55.   Before the report is transmitted to the Executive Board by the Executive Secretary, M&E Unit will share it with ACBF management for management response and, whenever applicable, with the concerned grant recipient country's authorities, the implementing agencies and the cooperating institution in order to check facts and accuracy and obtain comments.

52.   M&E Unit will decide which comments should be incorporated in the revised (final) report. As a general rule:

(i) The draft report is revised to incorporate comments that correct factual errors or inaccuracies.

(ii) It may also incorporate, by means of a note in the report, judgments that differ from those of the evaluation team.

(iii) Comments not incorporated in the final evaluation report can be provided separately and included as an appendix to the report.

53.   The Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning will have the authority to issue final evaluation reports, including management response after consultation with the Executive Secretary and the Executive Board.

IV. Learning with Partners to Operationalize Recommendations

54.   Upon completion of each independent evaluation report by M&E Unit, the Unit will support relevant department and other stakeholders to develop a separate action-oriented document, called the memorandum of understanding or agreement at completion point (ACP). The ACP is the end point of a process that aims to determine how well evaluation users understand the recommendations proposed in the independent evaluation, and how they propose to make them operational. Interaction among the stakeholders working through the CLT helps deepen the understanding of evaluation findings and recommendations contained in the independent evaluation report, and elicits ownership for implementing the recommendations. The ACP illustrates the stakeholders' understanding of the evaluation, findings and recommendations, their proposal to implement them and their commitment to act upon them. M&E Unit will participate in this process to ensure a full understanding of its findings and recommendations.

54.   The ACP will continue to be the outcome of the work of the CLT. The two objectives of the ACP are to: (i) clarify and deepen the understanding of evaluation recommendations, document those that are found acceptable and feasible and those that are not, make the former more operational, and eventually generate a response by the stakeholders on how they intend to act upon them within the framework of an action plan that assigns responsibilities and deadlines; and (ii) flag evaluation insights and learning hypotheses for further future discussions and debate.

55.   The ACP will make explicit reference to the partners with whom it was concluded. These include all major users of evaluation results such as the relevant ACBF operational department (s), projects, beneficiaries, and other relevant stakeholders.

V. Reporting, Follow-up, Disclosure and Dissemination

A. Reporting and Follow-Up at Management Level

56.   The Manager, Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning will convey completed evaluation reports and other evaluation documents, such as the annual report on the results and impact of ACBF operations to the Executive Board through the Executive Secretary.

 57.   The Executive Secretary will be responsible for ensuring that evaluation recommendations adopted by users at the operational, strategic and policy levels (as appropriate) are implemented and adequately tracked. The Executive Secretary will provide the Executive Board an annual report on the status of adoption and implementation of evaluation recommendations.   M&E Unit will provide to the Executive Board its independent comments on this report, including an inventory of recommendations not found feasible by the users, hence not implemented.

B. Reporting to the Executive Board

58.   All evaluation reports will be submitted to the Executive Board through the Executive Secretary. Every year; Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning Department will also submit to the Executive Board an annual report on the results and impact of ACBF operations in its second meeting. This report will present a consolidated picture of results and impact achievement, and a summary of cross-cutting issues and learning insights on the basis of the project evaluations undertaken during the reporting year.

C. Disclosure and Dissemination to the Public

59.   M&E Unit will produce evaluation summary[9], that provide an overview of the main evaluation conclusions and recommendations, and another summary that contain one learning theme from the evaluation and serve to stimulate discussion among practitioners and other development specialists on some important issues.

60.   M&E Unit will ensure that all evaluation reports including the ACP and summaries are disclosed to the public at the completion of the evaluation process and disseminated widely through the print and electronic media in accordance with ACBF's disclosure policy.

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[9] The Practice in most Development Agencies is to publish the Evaluation Summaries with special titles. For instance at IFAD, one is called " *Insight*" and another called " *Profiles"*

VI. Human Resource Management

A. Management of M&E

61.   The Executive Secretary shall appoint the Manager of Knowledge, Evaluation and Knowledge. The Head of M&E Unit will report to the Executive Secretary through Manager, Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning.

B. M&E Staff and Evaluation Consultants

62.   The Head, M&E Unit in conjunction with Manager, Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning will have authority for managing M&E Unit personnel, their work plans and the demands on their time. Assignment of staff in and out of M&E Unit by management shall be done in consultation with the Head, M&E Unit and Manager, Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning. In accordance with ACBF rules and procedures, the M&E Unit staff performance assessment shall be done by Head, M&E Unit and Manager, Knowledge, Evaluation and Leaning. The performance of Head, M&E Unit will be assessed by the Manager, Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning in consultation with the Executive Secretary

C. Conflict of Interest

63.   M&E Unit will make certain that the engagement of any individual in an evaluation exercise will not generate a conflict of interest. In particular, an evaluation will not be entrusted to an M&E staff member who has been responsible in the past for the design, implementation and supervision of the project, program or policy to be evaluated.

64.   A consultant who has worked previously on the design or implementation of a project, program or policy may be engaged as a resource person for providing information to the evaluation team but not as a consultant entrusted with the conduct of the evaluation analysis and the preparation of the evaluation report.

D. Protection from Retribution

65.   M&E staff who may seek professional experience in other department of ACBF may be re-assigned after consultation with the Head of M&E Unit and Manager, Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning. Such staff, if re-assigned, shall be protected from retribution as a result of recommendations emerging from an evaluation report, which he has participated.

Chapter VII: Summary of High-Level Responsibilities

I. Role of the Executive Board and Evaluation Policy Review

66.   ACBF's Executive Board is the Foundation's oversight body for all purposes. In accordance with the role that it has specified for itself in relation to evaluation, the Board will:

(i) Ensure the independence of evaluation in ACBF and assess the overall quality and impact of ACBF programs and projects as documented in evaluation reports.

(ii) Approve policies aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the evaluation function.

(iii) Receive from Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning through the Executive Secretary all evaluation reports, including the annual report on the results and impact of ACBF operations.

67.   The implementation of the present evaluation policy and the evaluation function will be reviewed periodically to extract lessons and make improvements. The guiding principles for the evaluation function in ACBF as contained in the policy framework will serve as institutional performance indicators for the review of the policy and its implementation. The Executive Board will review the policy framework as necessary.

II. Executive Secretary

68.   The following are the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Secretary.

(i) Performs broad oversight roles on the evaluations conducted in the Foundation in consultation with the Executive Board.

(ii) The Executive Secretary and management may receive, comment on, and respond to the draft and final evaluation reports, but the Executive Secretary and other members of ACBF management will not have the right to approve, hold back, request changes to or otherwise modify such draft or final evaluation reports.

(iii) Will ensure that evaluation recommendations found to be feasible by users are adopted by users at the operational, strategic and policy levels (as appropriate) and their implementation adequately tracked.

(iv) Provides the Executive Board an annual report on the status of adoption and implementation of evaluation recommendations and M&E Unit will provide to the Executive Board its independent comments on this report, including an inventory of recommendations not found feasible by the users, hence not implemented.

III. Knowledge, Evaluation and Learning

69.   In particular, and perhaps more than just being a coordinating evaluation Unit, the Unit must ground its evaluation in extensive fieldwork and generate much of the evaluation-based knowledge that ACBF requires to learn from past operational experiences.

70.   Furthermore, M&E Unit will provide guidelines and technical inputs for developing the M&E capacity of ACBF operational departments and ACBF-assisted projects to undertake self-assessment. These inputs would be rendered through evaluation of the self-assessment system and through technical advice aimed at improving the system. In relation to the latter, M&E Unit, together with other partners in and outside ACBF will develop a toolkit for Project Monitoring and Evaluation in capacity building intervention and provides assistance in customizing this for different projects and programs in countries of intervention.

71.   Drawing on international good practices, M&E Unit   would build the capacity of its staff to conduct evaluations that meets internationally agreed evaluation principles and criteria.

<center>End</center>