



## **Development Foundation**

### **Resources for Implementing the Mikoko Development Foundation (MDF) Project & Programme Standards**

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#### **Accountability to Communities and Beneficiaries**

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These guidelines and resource document have been approved by the MDF – HQ Board of Directors has adopted from MDF – Tanzania as reference partner organization. The document may change over time; the most recent version can be accessed at: [www.mikoko.or.tz/standards.html](http://www.mikoko.or.tz/standards.html)

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## 1. Scope of this Guidance

This guidance is focused on how MDF can be accountable to communities and beneficiaries and other stakeholders. It is meant to be used in tandem with the PPMS guidance on Stakeholder Analysis as well as guidance on Complaints Resolution Process. In addition, MDF also encourages rights-holders and beneficiaries to hold duty bearers to account; this is covered in the last section of this guidance.

In this document we use the term ‘beneficiary accountability’, but it should be noted that some organizations and donors may use different terms e.g. community, downward or social accountability. Here we define community / beneficiary accountability as being a combination of beneficiary accountability and other stakeholder accountability. Beneficiaries are the people meant to benefit from the project. There can be some overlap between beneficiaries and stakeholders. Both beneficiaries and other stakeholders are mainly present in the communities that the project is targeting. Beneficiaries and other stakeholders have the right to be aware of MDF’s social policies and commitments as well as the specific project interventions.

## 2. What is Beneficiary Accountability and Who Are the Beneficiaries?

### 2.1 Introduction

MDF recognizes that we have a responsibility to be accountable to our supporters, donors, and the communities and partners that we work with. Most projects have in place good systems that enable accountability to donors, the MDF network and partners. However, it is equally important to be accountable to the communities and stakeholders with whom MDF works for sustained improved impact. This includes, in particular, those who have rights (to resources, participation and decision making) and will be affected by the MDF projects (both positively and negatively). Being accountable to these beneficiaries involves providing all those potentially affected with the opportunity to understand and influence the key decisions which are made throughout the project’s lifetime. It is a dynamic process of listening to beneficiaries and adapting and responding. It involves the following elements: Sharing information, Consultations, Participation, Feedback, and Adaptation to learning’s.

### 2.2 Who are the Project’s Beneficiaries?

Beneficiaries are the people meant to benefit from the project. They are mainly present in the communities that the project is targeting. However, there may be others in the communities that are not beneficiaries. There are three types of beneficiaries:

- *Ultimate*: Men and women, households and communities in the project area / focus countries whom ultimately MDF’s work is intending to benefit. See Box 1 for examples
- *Proximate*: Men and women, organisations or institutions that the project works with directly e.g. civil servants, government departments, community based organisations, and businesses.
- *Intermediate or Indirect*: institutions, organisations, governments, groups, or men and women with whom the project aims to bring about change but with whom the project may not be working directly.

There may also be some men and women or organisations that are ***negatively affected*** by the project. When a project includes risks of negatively affecting the land or resource rights of local communities, MDF is committed to engaging with these communities in order to prevent or minimise harm, and to ensure adequate compensation for negative effects that cannot be mitigated.

Policy projects typically do not work directly with ultimate beneficiaries but there are ways to include them. These are covered under each method under section 4. The potential impact of the project's work on the ultimate beneficiaries should be explored, with their active involvement.

### **3. Why it is Important to be Accountable to Beneficiaries**

MDF is responsible for the impacts of its projects in people's lives and livelihoods, including positive impacts but also unintended negative impacts. Being accountable to beneficiaries can contribute to more effective and sustainable conservation results in a number of ways:

1. Demonstrate respect and promotion of human rights
2. Foster good cooperation, empower rights-holders, build trust and stronger relationships with project stakeholders.
3. Help to strengthen ownership amongst partners, improving the chance of long-term impact.
4. Provide MDF with feedback on what is working well and not so well.
5. Strengthen our understanding of the context in which the project operates.
6. Identify unintended consequences that are impacting negatively on some stakeholders; remedial action can then be taken so that these do not become a risk to the project's success.
7. Motivate staff e.g. when positive feedback is received.
8. Help to pick up on issues such as fraud and misconduct
9. Support MDF in implementing the network's social principles<sup>3</sup> and suite of social policies, guidelines and other relevant commitments

### **4. How to be Accountable to Beneficiaries**

This section looks in more detail at different methods to support beneficiary accountability. The listing does not represent a chronological order; the five approaches should be considered at all stages of the project cycle.

#### **4.1 Sharing of Information**

Stakeholders and beneficiaries as well as partner organisations need, and have the right to, timely access to relevant information on issues related to: the proposed project (objectives, approaches, budget, staffing and contact details), what they should expect from MDF (in terms of information, participation, respect etc.), and how to lodge a complaint with MDF. Information should be shared in accessible ways including in accessible locations, in local language, and using pictures with limited text if literacy rates are low.

##### ***Methods for sharing information***

- Physical - sign-boards, posters, pamphlets, pictures (including cartoons)
- Digital – social media, TV, radio, films / cartoons, information sharing platforms
- Events – community or individual meetings / workshops, drama or music events

- Individual - phone calls, individual meetings

Although policy projects may not always work directly with the ultimate beneficiaries, it is good to consider how information can be made available to ultimate beneficiaries i.e. via radio, TV, internet.

## 4.2 Consultations (including surveys)

In this approach communities are consulted on matters that directly affect them, especially in relation to the project. Any consultation needs to follow the principle of obtaining free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from communities and men and women as stated in MDF Privacy Policy. This is both good practice and the right of all involved in consultations.

Consulting beneficiaries enables the project to gain a greater understanding from the communities of their views, capabilities, needs and concerns. Since these may change during the life of the project, it is important to consult beneficiaries throughout the project life. After surveys are conducted, it is important to follow up with feedback sessions to share the results and discuss the findings.

It is key to remember that beneficiaries are not a homogenous group and there may be differences in the perspectives and concerns of men and women and other social groups e.g. young, old, ethnic groups, socio-economic status, class and religion etc. Consultations should be designed so that they hear from these different groups.

### *Methods for carrying out consultations*

- Meetings – community meetings, stakeholder workshops, personal meetings
- Individual - phone calls
- Surveys – face-to-face, hard copy, on-line or SMS. Then hold meetings to verify and share findings
- Involve in rights mapping, land use mapping, participatory rural appraisal (PRA) type exercises, social and environmental impact assessments (SEIA), etc.

Although policy projects typically do not work directly with ultimate beneficiaries it is good to consider whether and how to consult with at least a sample of some of the ultimate beneficiaries.

## 4.3 Participation

The project should ensure beneficiaries have the opportunity to be involved in project design, planning and decision-making concerning activities as well as opportunities to lead or support the implementation of the activities. Participation needs to be meaningful and so should enable beneficiaries to help shape, be involved in, and – whenever possible – lead on some of the activities. The project should be clear on when and how beneficiaries will participate and how decisions will be made. This should be discussed and agreed with beneficiaries.

### *Methods of enabling participation*

- Beneficiaries design and implement activities
- Beneficiaries jointly develop guidance or plans with the public and private sector
- Beneficiaries develop evidence (e.g. films) for advocacy
- Beneficiaries take an active role in monitoring and evaluation

Although policy projects may not always work directly with the ultimate beneficiaries, it is important to consider how the voices of ultimate beneficiaries can be brought into policy dialogues e.g. through ensuring groups that represent these beneficiaries are consulted and represented in the policy dialogue process.

#### **4.4 Feedback**

Providing opportunities for stakeholders and beneficiaries to give feedback is not only a right; it is vital since it can help you better understand how well the project is running and whether it is relevant to the context in which you are operating. It also allows those who may be negatively affected by your work to voice their concerns. To ensure that all the different social groupings of beneficiaries are reached, more than one method of feedback may need to be used. For a feedback system to be effective it should:

- a) Provide appropriate mechanisms for beneficiaries to give their feedback.
- b) Trigger a response / action at the appropriate level
- c) Communicate the response back to the original provider and if appropriate the wider beneficiary community

##### ***Methods for giving feedback***

- In meetings
- In participatory monitoring, reflection and evaluation processes
- ‘Post box’ where communities / beneficiaries can submit written complaints
- A toll free mobile phone number which people can phone and/or to which texts be sent
- Help desks in certain locations and on certain days where complaints can be either addressed verbally or written complaints submitted.

For policy projects, it is good to develop a feedback system in order to hear opinions from at least a sample of the ultimate beneficiaries.

There are various complaints and response approaches that can be used. Mechanisms for receiving and resolving complaints at the project or national level should be the first option for stakeholders to turn to. It is important that the community engages and helps shape a suitable complaints resolution process for that community.

MDF also has a formal Projects Complaints Resolution Policy, and a Projects Complaints Resolution Process. This should deal with complaints related to cases where MDFF offices have failed to comply with MDFF’s social policy commitments. The process document gives the general steps for communities to raise a complaint and receive a response.

#### **4.5 Learning and Adaptation (including from monitoring and evaluation)**

Project progress and findings should be shared with beneficiaries and stakeholders, and the team should work with them to explore suitable solutions and adaptations. When progress or learning’s are shared, beneficiaries and stakeholders should have the opportunity to discuss and give feedback. They can be included in monitoring or evaluation processes.

##### ***Methods to support adaptation and learning***

- Reflection - Hold reflection meetings with beneficiary groups
- Analysis of Change – beneficiaries develop change stories or pictures
- Meetings to share and discuss monitoring and evaluation findings

- Beneficiaries are part of the monitoring and evaluation team. For policy projects this could mean that some of the ultimate beneficiaries are included as part of the evaluation team.
- Beneficiaries participate in the process to update, revise or redesign project plans on the basis of the findings from consultations, reviews and evaluations.

## 5. When to Consider Beneficiary Accountability in the Project Cycle

Many MDF projects and programs are already practising elements of good beneficiary accountability but perhaps they are not doing so consistently across the project cycle and lifetime of the project. This section (and also Section 6) presents recommendations on when and how beneficiary accountability can be strengthened. It is beneficial to plan carefully, especially in the design stage, for how you will consider beneficiary accountability throughout the whole project cycle, including implementation and the Analyse / Adapt and Share stages.

### 5.1 During the Define Stage

During the Define stage, the stakeholder analysis (Step 1.4) provides an excellent opportunity to begin to identify who the stakeholders are, including beneficiaries, and develop initial thoughts on how you will engage with them. It is helpful to begin to group these stakeholders into ultimate, proximate, and intermediate beneficiaries, and groups that are (likely to be) negatively affected. Where it is not possible to work directly with beneficiaries (e.g. a national-level advocacy programme), the process of setting the Scope, Vision and Targets should at the very least be based upon an informed understanding of the rights that beneficiaries have and their relationship with what the project is aiming to achieve. The Context Analysis (Step 1.4) provides an opportunity to develop a better understanding of the context.

To gather information for both of these documents, it is helpful to meet with some stakeholders and potential beneficiaries. Even at the early Define stage it is good practice, particularly for place-based projects, to:

- Share information about Mikoko Development Foundation the potential project in an appropriate format with key stakeholders, including beneficiaries;
- Either consult or work with them to develop a Scope and Vision (Step 1.2) and Targets (Step 1.3) that are based on a shared perspective.

Policy focussed projects often do not have a direct relationship with ultimate beneficiaries and the impact on this group may be felt beyond the lifetime of the project. In such instances it is important to think about how the partners you are working with relate to these beneficiaries. Who do your partners represent and how do they represent them? And what processes do they have place in place to ensure the voices of the most marginalised are heard in policy dialogues?

### 5.2 During the Design Stage

#### a) *Deepening the Stakeholder Analysis*

At the Design stage, the stakeholder analysis can be expanded, providing a further opportunity to develop your ideas around who are the rights-holders and other stakeholders, what their interests are, whether the impact will be positive or negative, and how to engage them.

#### b) *Beneficiary Accountability and Inclusion in the Design Process*

Having identified and grouped your stakeholders, including beneficiaries, you should think about how to include them in the design stage and also in the Implementation, Analyse / Adapt and Share stages. By considering this now you can build their engagement into the design document, the monitoring plan and the budget. However, approaches should be constantly reviewed and improved during implementation. Consider the ways in which beneficiaries and stakeholders can be involved in the design stage (via information, consultation, participation approaches). This includes engaging them when exploring the underlying issues of problems, identifying possible solutions and reflecting these in the Action Plan, and providing input to the monitoring plan to track progress. Discussion should include the following:

- When and how they will be involved in this stage?
- What information will be shared and how?
- How and by whom decisions about the direction of the work will be made?
- How disagreements will be handled?

**c) *Planning Beneficiary Involvement for the other Stages***

***For the Implementation Stage:*** Consider the ways in which stakeholders (including beneficiaries) can be included and involved in the implementation stage. This includes determining what information needs to be shared and consultations held, with which groups and how often. Inclusion of beneficiaries and other stakeholders should be considered in terms of how they can participate or lead on activities. It also important to work with the beneficiaries to define what success looks like, how progress towards this will be monitored and by whom?

As well as developing 2 way feedback approaches, it is helpful to also include some form of formal complaints and response mechanism (as outlined in the MDF Complaints Resolution Process), and to include it in the logframe / results chain, monitoring plan and budget.

***For the Analyse / Adapt and Share Stages:*** Consider the ways in which stakeholders (including beneficiaries) be included and involved in the Analyse / Adapt and Share Stages (including information, consultation, participation).

It is helpful to capture this information in a Stakeholder Engagement and Accountability Strategy (Step 2.4). Table 1 in the Appendix 1 provides a framework for capturing this information and possible ways to include different groups.

### **5.3 During the Implementation Stage**

In the Implementation stage, engagement with stakeholders, including beneficiaries, needs to be actively continued and the necessary time and resources allocated. The project should follow the plans that were outlined in the design for the implementation stage. However, the effectiveness of this engagement be continually reviewed and adapted. This could include formal and informal methods and could be carried out with the Beneficiaries as whole or specific groups (including via single-gender groups if helpful), such as:

- Information sharing methods
- Consultations
- Discussing progress, monitoring and evaluation findings, research findings



- Participation activities
- Feedback Approaches (including Complaints and Response Mechanism).

For local communities this may be formalised through a memorandum of understanding and/ or a FPIC agreement. If the project is working with partners, it is important to ensure that they have understood and are applying the approaches for communication accountability.

#### **5.4 During the Analyze / adapt and Share Stages**

In the Analyze / adapt and Share Stages engagement with stakeholders, including beneficiaries, needs to be actively continued and the necessary time and resources allocated to it. Ideas include:

- Involving stakeholders and beneficiaries as members of the evaluation team
- Including indicators in the monitoring plan that specific stakeholders and beneficiaries monitor themselves and then share with MDF
- Engaging stakeholder and beneficiaries in reflection sessions, or empowering them to lead these sessions.

### **6. Enabling Communities to Hold Duty Bearers to Account**

Accountability helps effectiveness and can also minimise corruption. For improved effectiveness and sustained impact it is beneficial for MDF to help communities to: 1) understand their human rights and policies that should be applied by Governments and the private sector and 2) to facilitate them to be able to hold these duty-bearers to account.

MDF can enable this by facilitating approaches (formal and informal) by which communities can claim their rights and hold duty-bearers (i.e. local government and public service staff) accountable. These could relate to factors that affect ecosystems and beneficiaries' well-being such as policies on pollution, logging, land-rights, and also services that should be present such as agroforestry extension services and insurance schemes.

While policy projects typically do not work directly with ultimate beneficiaries, they should aim to:

- Understand the potential impact of the project's work on different groups by discussions with the community
- Identify how the voices of ultimate beneficiaries can be brought into policy dialogues e.g. through ensuring groups that represent these beneficiaries are included and given voice during the policy dialogue process.
- Explore ways to work directly with ultimate beneficiaries to develop policies that are grounded in local experiences and knowledge.

If the beneficiaries are involved in monitoring for both the project and monitoring of an ecosystem, then they can use this evidence to push for change by authorities.

## Appendix 1 – Stakeholder Engagement and Accountability Framework

Stakeholder	Type of beneficiary: ultimate, proximate, intermediate or negatively affected (where applicable).	Level of participation: when and how you will engage each stakeholder. (N.B. these are illustrative examples, for each stakeholder the level of participation will vary but at the very least all stakeholders should be informed and consulted about the project)					Feedback mechanism
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Partnership	Empower	
Community/School Group Members	Ultimate	Notice board with info about MDF and the project Verbal updates at regular meetings.	On project plans on annual basis.	In design, monitoring and in evaluations	In co-creation and co-management of the overall project.	Throughout the project to be able to manage forest resources by themselves by end of project.	Public Hearing and Public Audits annually. Informally during field visits Local grievance mechanism
Women/Youth engaged in income generating projects.	Ultimate	Notice board in villages with info about MDF and the project Verbal information about project provided at start and on annual basis.	Interviewed / focus groups during evaluations	In design of appropriate projects; in monitoring and in evaluations	In co-creation and co-management of the overall project	Throughout the project to be able to manage income generation approaches by themselves by end of project.	Informally during field visits. Local grievance mechanism.
Community Members impacted by policy changes to regional conservation policies.	Ultimate Possibility of some conservation people being negatively affected.	Information about project provided at start and on annual basis	Groups representing beneficiary are consulted on proposed policy changes.	In evaluations	In lobbying and advocacy	To affirm their voice in representing their communities to those in power	Grievance mechanism. Policy dialogue workshops. Formal consultations.