Mid-Term-Evaluation of MAVA's OAPs

MAVA
FONDATION POUR LA NATURE

How-to Guide #3 (v1.0)

This Document

This document provides technical guidance to managers and partners of MAVA's Outcome Action Plans (OAP) for conducting the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE). It is available in English, French and Portuguese.

The document consists of two main parts and has a glossary in the back.

INTRODUCTION
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Introduction to the Mid-Term Evaluation. This part is meant to provide clarity on what we mean with the MTE and what is expected from partners.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDANCE
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Step-by-step Guidance. This part provides guidance on how to conduct the MTE. It is meant to be helpful rather than prescriptive.

This guide is part of an emerging series of How-to Guides, consisting of:

#1 Designing
MAVA's OAPs

#2 Managing MAVA's
OAPs Adaptively

#3 Mid-Term Evaluation
of MAVA's OAPs

All guidance is developed on the basis of the CMP Open Standards. It is being improved on the basis of feedback from users. Please send us your input using mava@fosonline.org.

Guidance and formats can be downloaded from the Resources section of MAVA's website.

Part 1: Introduction to the MTE

1.1 Aim

We use the term Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) to describe the process by which OAP-partners (often organised in a Steering Committee) systematically assess progress and effectiveness of their collective conservation work during the current contracting phase (OAP v1).
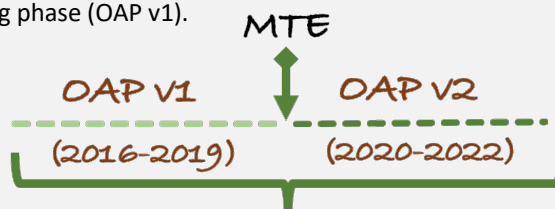

Figure 1: Position of the MTE in MAVA's Final Strategic Cycle

The conclusions of the MTE will help OAP-partners adapt OAP v1 to OAP v2 and design meaningful projects for the last phase of MAVA funding.

For MAVA the stakes are high. The final funding allocation decisions represent the foundation's final investment to leverage and sustain conservation impact before closure in 2022. MAVA will use the conclusions of the MTEs, to carefully consider trade-offs and make wise, no doubt at times tough decisions to optimise this final push. Please study carefully the Important information for partners regarding the last phase of MAVA funding, by Lynda Mansson, Director General of MAVA.

1.2 Approach & Roles

The approach to the MTE is that of an evaluation carried out by the OAP-partners themselves in the form of a guided and systematic self-reflection. It is focused on assessing the progress of conservation work and the impact of this work in terms of the achievement of objectives and ultimately of the outcome (being the anchor point of each Outcome Action Plan). OAP-partners are requested to substantiate conclusions with evidence, i.e. data gathered on an agreed set of indicators. If required by MAVA and/or by the OAP-partners, the self-evaluation can be complemented by (partial) third-party input.

Figure 2: The main approach in the MTE is "self-reflection"

MAVA believes that by critically assessing our own reflection in the mirror, we are more likely to learn what works and what does not, and hence adapt and innovate – traits that are crucial to achieving impact on a scale that matters.

Overall, OAP-partners, be it in the form of a Steering Committee or other form, are responsible for conducting and writing up of the MTE. The division of roles between them, as well as the specific role of the OAP-manager, will be tailored to each OAP.

MAVA has tasked FOS Europe to provide technical support to the MTE process. This includes methodological guidance, capacity building, coaching and facilitation. The level of support required is dependent on the needs of the OAP.

1.3 Process

The overall process - from the evaluation to the final approval and contracting of OAP v2- is spread out over a maximum of 8 months (although some OAP partnerships might be able to shorten the entire process considerably) and spans 6 phases:

1. **Preparation:** OAP-partners consolidate and digest data of OAP v1, draft preliminary conclusions and determine the agenda for the MTE-meeting.
2. **MTE & Design Meeting:** Partners meet for 2-4 days (often in the form of a dedicated Steering Committee Meeting) to jointly discuss and agree on the main conclusions of the MTE, and to draft OAP v2 and design project concepts.
3. **Write-up & submission:** OAP-partners write-up and submit the final MTE-report, OAP v2 and concept notes to MAVA.
4. **Funding Allocation Decision:** MAVA reviews the OAP v2 and concept notes in the context of the MTE conclusions and makes funding allocation decisions.
5. **FPP Development:** Once green-light is given, partners are invited to develop and submit a Full Project Proposal (FPP).
6. **Final Approval & contracting:** FPP are approved directly or after revision. Then contracts are finalised and implementation of the last phase can start.
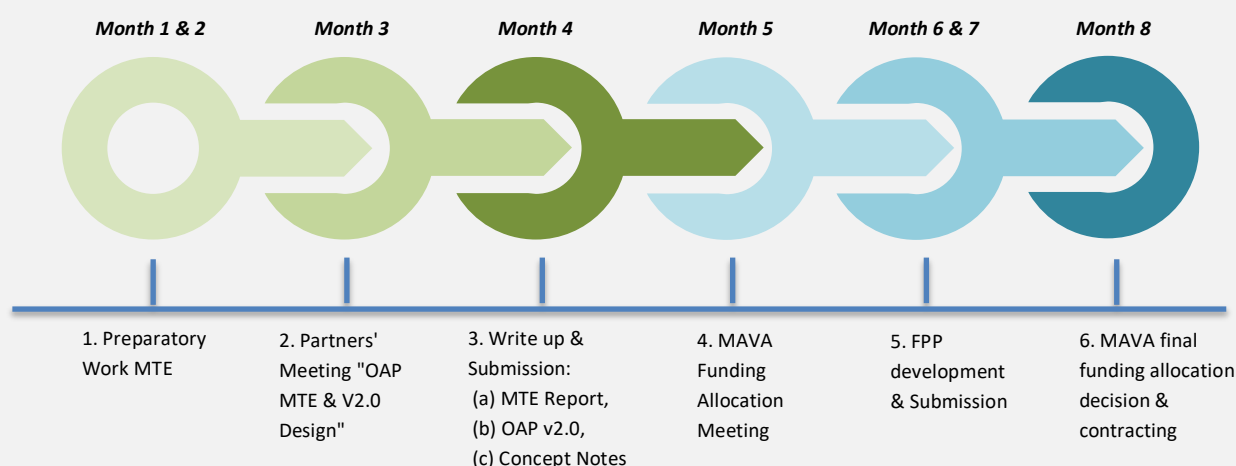

Figure 3: Sketch overall process: from the MTE of OAP v1.0 to the contracting of OAP v2.

The MTE is only part of this overall process and will take 3-4 months only. Also, note that the process described above is generic and needs to be tailored to the specifics of each OAP.

1.4 Scope

The MTE requires the use of different "lenses". Combined, these lenses provide the holistic image we are looking for.

Progress: Were you able to do what you planned for?

You aim to get a clear image of planned versus actual progress over time made, per strategy, per partner, on different scales and across different geographies. You aim to understand the reasons behind, and consequences of setbacks and breakthroughs. This analysis will help us think through ways to increase efficiency, maximise momentum, overcome operational hurdles, and decrease the risks to the overall progress. Data for this analysis will be harvested from project progress reports and from the OAP Progress Scorecard.

Effectiveness: What is the impact of your work?

You aim to understand the achievement of planned objectives over time on different scales and across different geographies and the correlation of these achievements with our progress findings. This will help you understand if your strategies are having the desired effect and if our Theory of Change (TOC) is making sense, hence what adaptation is needed to increase the effectiveness of the work. Assessing effectiveness is closely related to managing risks - the less sure you are that something in your TOC is happening, the closer you need to look at it. The data for the effectiveness analysis will be harvested from the OAP Effectiveness Scorecard and correlated with those of the Progress Scorecard.

Partnership leverage: Is collaboration paying off?

You aim to understand if together the partners are achieving more than on their own, in other words to what extent the partnership is leveraging collective wisdom, authority, political clout and resources to increase and sustain impact. You aim to understand the nature and effectiveness of communication and collaboration within the partnership; the extent to which the partnership is able to mobilize other partners and stakeholders, and additional financial resources. You aim to get a picture of the collateral benefits of the partnership and the vision beyond 2022. You do this in order to help increase the added value and sustainability of each partnership and to increase the impact of each OAP. Data are sourced directly from (indirect) partners and stakeholders and from relevant additional sources such as steering committee meetings reports and others.

Contextual changes: Has the world around us changed?

Through this lens, you scan for developments in the world around us that might be important to take into consideration in the development of the OAP v2. Examples are; increased momentum for policy change, changes in funding, civil unrest and technological developments. Input for the contextual analysis will be gathered through a quick-scan across different scales and geographies from (indirect) partners and stakeholders. In special cases, a third-party expert is tasked to assist.

1.5 Deliverables

There are 4 concrete documents that OAP partners need to deliver. The documents are meant to be short, as light as possible, yet contain the required information.
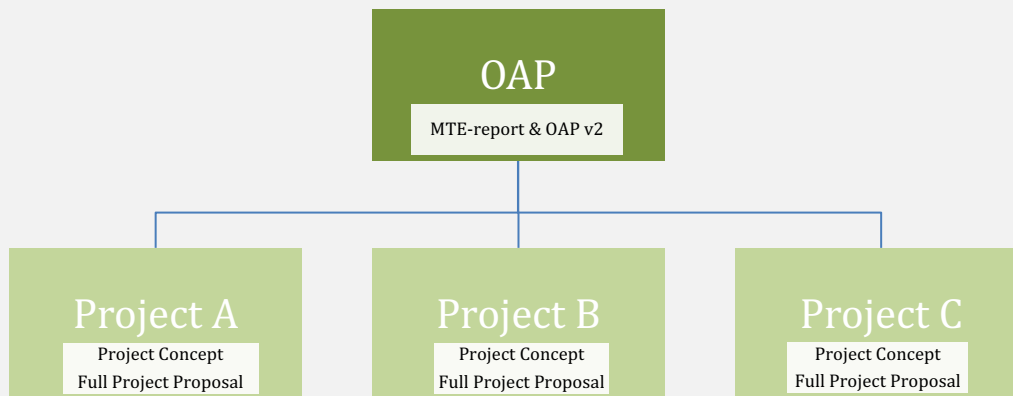

Figure 4: Overview of deliverables on OAP-level and on Project-level.

1. The *MTE-report*, containing a summary of findings and high-level agreed conclusions of the MTE. The findings and conclusions need to be justified, based on the best available knowledge and need to reflect agreements and decisions made in the MTE-meeting.

2. The *OAP v2-report*. This report will contain a summary of the adapted Theory of Change, with adapted Objectives and Indicators. It will also contain a sketch of the main strategies that will be taken forward and a summary of adaptations to these strategies, including budget. Last but not least, the OAP v2 must have concrete actions planned to increase leverage and sustain impact. There needs to be a strong link between the conclusions of the MTE and the changes made in OAP v2.

3. For each project implied in the OAP v2, a *Project Concept* needs to be delivered that is clearly linked to OAP v2.

4. After approval of the Outcome Action Plan (OAP v2) and its constituent Project Concept(s) by MAVA, OAP-partners are requested to submit a *Full Project Proposal* (FPP) for each of the projects.

Part 2: Step-by-Step Guidance

STEP 1: GETTING ORGANISED

Before getting started, it might be good to get organised. This step should not take you more than a few hours.

Establishing the MTE-team

A good first step is to form a team that takes responsibility for the implementation of the MTE. Ideally, the team appoints an MTE-lead (note that the OAP-leader could be the logical candidate for this role). The team probably needs to have a stable representation of all direct partners. If relevant, the team can also include representation of sub-committees (see tip #1). Keep the team as small and action-oriented as possible - though with enough representation to make it valuable for the partnership. Elaborating the responsibility of each member helps manage expectations. It could be wise to appoint a "chief editor" of the final documents on behalf of the partnership.

It is crucial to work closely with MAVA's OAP-manager throughout the MTE and jointly agree on his/her exact role in the MTE process. The OAP-manager will decide on the level of support required from FOS Europe. This support can include methodological guidance, capacity building, and facilitation of (parts of) the process.

> *Tip #1:*
> *Consider the representation of sub-committees in the MTE-team*
> *Some OAPs are organised in sub-committees; i.e. operational units for discussing progress and impact on either a particular geographic scale or a particular part (strategy/project) of the overall OAP. The "unit of thought" for these sub-committees is often represented in the design of the scorecards; e.g. the scorecards contain different columns for different geographies, and/or the results in the scorecard are organised per strategy.*

Designing the MTE & Design process

Building on the process outlined in part 1.3 of this document, the team will tailor the overall MTE process, spanning all steps -from the MTE of OAP v1 to the potential approval of OAP v2. Please take into consideration the (sometimes different) end-dates of the different projects that make up the OAP. Ideally, gaps in financing should be avoided - as these can create serious operational issues. If unavoidable, please agree with MAVA how to deal with this. Also, consider if other partners and stakeholders need to be included in the process.

In your planning, please specify concrete deadlines for important milestones, including:
- ⟹ finalisation of data gathering;
- ⟹ preliminary conclusions and potential topics for the MTE-meeting;
- ⟹ sending out the final MTE agenda and relevant documents to participants;
- ⟹ the MTE & OAP v2 Design meeting (often a Steering Committee Meeting); and
- ⟹ sending the MTE-report, OAP v2 and project concepts to MAVA.

Finding Focus & managing expectations

Upfront discussions with MAVA OAP-manager about important issues such as potentially available budget, co-funding and the level of ambition about conservation impact will help ensure that OAP-partners enter the process with the right level of expectation, and deliver a OAP v2 that fits the aspirations of both the partners and MAVA.

The MTE provides a great opportunity to strengthen the partnership and improve collective conservation impact. This does, however, require OAP-partners to sincerely look beyond their own interests and accept that

MTE conclusions could have implications for the (dis)continuation of particular work at particular geographies or with particular direct and/or indirect partners.

To make the MTE process valuable, it is critical to focus on questions that are important to the partnership. It, therefore, pays off to do a quick inventory of the questions that partners would most like to get answered and analyse the "scale" at which these questions need to be answered. Some of these questions are relevant on the OAP-level, some of them more on the country level or site level. Typically, the MTE-team would select the more transversal issues - issues that cut across partners, across strategies, sometimes across geographies to help focus this MTE.

Communicating with Partners

Please ensure clear communication with all OAP-partners about the aims of the MTE, the composition of the MTE-team, its responsibilities, the process and the milestones and some of the focal questions. It might be good to address the main concerns that partners have upfront, inform them how they are involved and manage expectations. Last but not least, the MTE might provide the OAP with excellent opportunities for communication within and beyond the partnership.

STEP 2: DATA GATHERING & PROCESSING

Progress and effectiveness

- Capture monitoring data in your OAP progress and effectiveness scorecards. Please note that this work is done prior to all partnership meetings in the context of ongoing Adaptive Management of the OAP. Ideally in preparation of the MTE, data need to be completed per year, for each year of the project duration (OAP v1). For effectiveness, the baseline needs to be in place (the situation before the project started). All scores need to be justifiable and in line with progress reports to MAVA. For transparency reasons, it is advisable to ensure all OAP-partners have access to all progress reports.

  ⇒ **Deliverable:** Draft MTE Annex 1: Progress Scorecard (PDF); and Draft MTE Annex 2: Effectiveness Scorecard (PDF)

- Process ratings for both progress and effectiveness in your scorecard and visualise the ratings in the Theory of Change of your OAP.

  ⇒ **Deliverable:** Draft MTE Annex 3: Draft TOC annotated with progress & effectiveness markers for the final year (PDF)

For an example and more detailed explanation on capturing and processing effectiveness and progress data you can refer to steps 1-3 in Guidance #2: Adaptive Management of MAVA's OAPs.

Please note that there is not much new so far.

Partnership Leverage and Contextual Changes

For most OAPs, an efficient way to gather data on partnership leverage and contextual changes is to send out a short survey to solicit input from (in)direct partners and stakeholders. A standard survey form is available. The survey will help gather quantitative as well as qualitative data.

The form has two sections. The first section focuses on "partnership leverage" and includes questions about the functioning and added value of the partnership. Leverage questions help to explore the extent to which the impact of the partnership is greater than the sum of impact by individual partners.

The second section serves as a quick scan of "contextual changes"; i.e., developments in the world around us that might be important to take into consideration in the development of the OAP v2. These contextual changes are often opportunities that could be seized or pose a risk to the effectiveness of strategies. Questions in the survey are focused around 5 main elements: (1) Policy changes; (2) Attention from the media, general public, private related to events and trends; (3) Technological and conceptual developments; (4) Opportunities for financing or for building new synergies; and (5) Societal changes & access to key players.

⇒ **Deliverable:** Draft Annex 4: Summary Findings Partnership Leverage & Contextual Changes (PDF)

Here are some steps you might want to take to tailor the survey to your needs:
⇒ Make a list of all (in)direct partners and other stakeholders whom you think should take participate in the survey;
⇒ Decide if participation can be anonymous;
⇒ Fine tune the survey question by deleting, adding and/or rephrasing;
⇒ Compose a message in which you appeal for input;
⇒ Send out the survey with a clear deadline and send a reminder a week prior to the deadline;
⇒ Automated survey software (Google Form or Survey Monkey) can process gathered data in dashboard views.

FOS Europe is happy to provide support in any or all of the steps mentioned.

STEP 3: DRAWING PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS & IDENTIFYING DISCUSSION POINTS

Using the scorecards, the annotated TOC and the survey outcomes, you can start drawing preliminary conclusions whenever obvious and identify the questions that need to be discussed with partners. Ensure that preliminary conclusions are well justified by information in the scorecard - and/or capture additional information where needed.

The more work is done prior to the MTE-meeting, the more time the partners can spend on discussing the more contentious issues. It is highly recommended that the preparation work includes discussions with partners involved in specific geographies or even strategies.

⇒ **Deliverable:** Draft MTE-report containing preliminary findings when obvious and highlighting discussion items for the MTE-meeting

Below are the main questions that you can also find in the format for the MTE-report. You will have to tailor the list of questions that are relevant to your OAP. Each OAP is different in complexity and this means that there is no "one size fits all". (Please ensure that there is consensus with the OAP-manager and liaise with FOS Europe on this!)

Tip #2:
Use a Google Doc version of the MTE format as scribbling pad

Processing preliminary conclusions and questions directly into the MTE format not only helps to efficiently process findings but also helps MTE team members to keep up to date on progress. It can be very encouraging to see different sections of a document being filled gradually in the run-up to the MTE meeting and helps the MTE coordinator to keep track of progress.

Progress Evaluation Questions:

⇒ What has been the progress in implementing planned work over the years on OAP-level and in the different geographic regions (region, country, site), on different strategies, different projects and/or by the different partners?

⇒ Are there large differences between geographies, strategies, projects and partners and what are the main reasons for these differences?

⇒ What are the potential consequences of these operation setbacks (risks) and breakthroughs (opportunities) for other geographies, strategies and the OAP as a whole?

⇒ What can we do to increase efficiency, maximise momentum, overcome operational hurdles, and decrease the risks to the overall progress?

Effectiveness Evaluation Questions:

⇒ What impact have we had, i.e., to what extent have we achieved our objectives over the years on OAP-level and in the different geographic regions (region, country, site), on different strategies, different projects and by the different partners? What do we need to celebrate, where did we not succeed?

⇒ When correlating our progress findings with the achievement of objectives and results, what can we say about the effectiveness of each strategy? Are there large differences between geographies, strategies, projects and partners and what are the main reasons for these differences? Which strategies seem to be effective? Which ones seem not to be effective?

⇒ Are there any parts of our Theory of Change that we need to question, that pose a risk to our assumed impact? How can we minimise this risk?

⇒ What are the potential consequences of setbacks (lack of impact) and breakthroughs (impact) for other geographies, strategies and the OAP as a whole?

⇒ What do we need to consider to increase impact on OAP-level and on regional scales?

Partnership Leverage Evaluation Questions:

⇒ How do partners characterise the partnership?

⇒ How is it functioning in terms of inclusiveness and shared responsibility?

⇒ To what extent are partners actively collaborating and learning from each other?

⇒ To what extent are partners actively exploring to expand the partnership?

⇒ To what extent are the partners involved in fundraising on behalf of the partnership?

⇒ What is the added value of the OAP to partners?

Evaluation Questions about Contextual Changes:

⇒ What seems to be the main changes in the outside world that could jeopardise our impact? What is the risk exactly? What can we do to minimize this impact?

⇒ What changes could potentially provide a big opportunity? What is the opportunity exactly? What would it take to harvest this opportunity?

STEP 4: THE MTE & DESIGN MEETING

A crucial step is to develop the agenda for the upcoming MTE-meeting. Ideally, the meeting is 3 to 4 days and is divided into 2 parts: (1) the MTE; and (2) the design of OAP v2.

The MTE

The basis for designing the MTE part of the meeting is the preliminary findings identified issues captured in the draft MTE-report. During the meeting, partners will review findings and zoom in on the more contentious issues.

FOS Europe can help the MTE-team with the design of the workshop and can facilitate sessions where needed and/or help prepare others to facilitate sessions.

⇒ **Deliverable:** The end product of this part of the meeting is a completed draft MTE-report (including its Annexes). It will be based on a systematic self-reflection focused on assessing the progress of conservation work and impact of this work in terms of the achievement of objectives and ultimately the outcome (being the anchor point of each Outcome Action Plan).

Tip #3:
Carefully design your workshop agenda

Consider forming a "facilitation group" - a group of people that jointly delivers and reflects on the workshop. The work in steps 2 (data gathering and processing) and 3 (preliminary conclusions & identification of issues) might have been spread among different MTE-team members. Consider asking these team members to facilitate "their" part of the discussion. The roles of MAVA program managers and FOS Europe need to be clear and agreed upon well in advance of the meeting. It would be really efficient if each group has someone that is tasked to record the findings. Ideally, findings are directly processed in the products mentioned above. Doing this with other partners present increases the levels of transparency and ownership.

Spot the really contentious issues and ensure you can deal with them on the agenda. Ensure time and resources to deal with these issues - the last thing you want is to leave the MTE-meeting with a half-baked conclusion that demands time and resources in this precious last phase.

Try to establish a well-balanced agenda with work in break out and in plenary. Each session should have a clear aim, clear deliverables, and a facilitator that knows what he or she is doing. Ensure that you have ample space for break out groups with the facilities you need (think through projectors, wifi, flipcharts etc.). In the MTE closing session, all decisions need to be summarized and agreed upon. During this session, the partnership agrees on the continuation of, and emphasis on certain strategies and the implied work of partners in specific geographies against the background of effectiveness, opportunities and risks on OAP-level. This session is typically heavy - and demands serious preparation by the facilitation team.

Avoid "free-flowing discussions" by making sure that discussions build on all the work done to date. Participants should all have received and digested all the draft products: Draft MTE-report, Annex 1: the Effectiveness Scorecard, Annex 2: the Progress Scorecard, Annex 3: the annotated TOC, Annex 4: the Survey Summary and the preliminary conclusions & questions. These products should also be readily available during the workshop. Also, consider bringing one or more large prints (A1) of the annotated TOC.

The Design of OAP v2

The **design part** of the meeting will carry the conclusions of the MTE forward into the design of OAP v2. OAP v2 serves as a "roadmap" for the work by partners in the last phase of MAVA funding. During this part of the meeting, partners will need to jointly agree on:

⟹ The Theory of Change v2
⟹ The objectives and indicators v2
⟹ The scales (regional, countries, sites)
⟹ The strategies
⟹ The project concepts
⟹ Proposed allocation of the overall OAP budget to strategies and projects. MAVA will give clear guidance on the available budget prior to the Design Meeting.

Note that the aim is to simplify the design of individual projects - aligning them closer to the objectives and indicators of the OAP. This stronger project-to-programme alignment will help optimise Adaptive Management of the OAP and help minimise double reporting. We anticipate the design of the OAP v2 and FPPs to be considerably lighter than v1. (V2 is an iteration of V1, meaning that we are not starting from scratch!)

⟹ **Deliverable:** The end product of the Design meeting is a draft OAP v2 and 1-page concepts notes of the projects.

STEP 5: WRITING UP MTE CONCLUSIONS AND OAP V2 & PROJECT CONCEPTS

These draft documents now need to be finalised and submitted to MAVA. The document will form the justification for the proposed OAP v2 and the accompanying project concepts. It is important that all documents are readable and well presented as they don't only serve to report back to MAVA but also as a precious summary of work done by your impressive partnership on a priority conservation topic and a roadmap for the work in the last phase.

⟹ **Deliverable**: Final MTE-report, Final OAP v2-report & Project Concepts

Glossary

Adaptive Management (AM)	A structured, iterative process of robust decision making in the face of uncertainty, with the aim of reducing uncertainty over time via monitoring.
Effectiveness	The extent to which partners are achieving the results & objectives. On OAP-level, effectiveness is tracked in the effectiveness scorecard.
Mid-term Evaluation (MTE)	In this document, the term is used to describe a guided and systematic self-reflection focused on assessing the progress of conservation work and impact of this work in terms of the achievement of objectives and ultimately the outcome.
Outcome Action Plan (OAP)	A term used by MAVA to describe a programme level partnership. A OAP encompasses one or more projects.
Partner	An organisation that is involved in the implementation of the OAP. Direct partners have contracts with MAVA. Indirect partners have contracts with direct partners.
Progress	The extent to which partners have implemented the strategies. Progress is related to the work plan. On OAP-level progress is tracked in the progress scorecard.
Steering Committee Meeting (SCM)	Typically, an annual meeting of OAP-partners
Scorecard	A tool -in the case of OAPs in the form of a web-based spreadsheet - to capture effectiveness and progress data and interpret these data along predefined scales. Scorecards support AM and increase transparency of data across projects, scales and between different partners.
Theory of Change (TOC)	An explanation of how a strategy is assumed to lead via various results to achieving the outcome. In the case of our OAPs, it is presented in the form of a results chain.

Acknowledgement