



## MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS AS PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS : A DOCUMENTARY COMPARISON OF DONOR STANDARDS RELEVANT TO CENTRAL AFRICAN PROJECTS

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### Cite this article:

M., Liboum, J. M., Bell (2026), Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks as Project Management Tools : A Documentary Comparison of Donor Standards Relevant to Central African Projects. British Journal of Management and Marketing Studies 9(1), 67-114. DOI: 10.52589/BJMMS-VLP5TPAZ

### Manuscript History

Received: 2 Feb 2026

Accepted: 3 Mar 2026

Published: 1 Apr 2026

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**ABSTRACT:** *This documentary compares the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of donors as project management tools relevant to Central African projects. We compared 15 donors across seven dimensions (conceptual model, evaluation criteria, independence/quality assurance, results architecture, monitoring depth, learning, and reporting). The daily management utility (Logframe/Results Chain for Monitoring) is explicitly separated from the retrospective accountability utility (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD)/Union Nation Evaluation Group (UNEG) for evaluation). Using a structured document review inspired by the rapid review principles of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (transparent protocol and standardized extraction), we show that donors converge on conceptual architecture but operationally diverge (reporting frequency, quality assurance (QA) design, and role of verification). We theorize that this is important : procedural divergences raise tensions between funders and implementers, especially where state capacity is thin and institutional isomorphism leads governments to adopt donor frames without full appropriation. The practical takeaway is an alignment rule: match tools to function use Logframes/Results Chains for day-to-day monitoring; reserve OECD-DAC criteria for evaluation; and make QA and management responses traceable. This approach reduces administrative burden while preserving the accountability and learning of managers and governments.*

**KEYWORDS:** Central Africa; Monitoring and evaluation; Donors; Theory of change; Results-based management; Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (CEE).



## INTRODUCTION

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) is a key governance tool for forestry and environmental projects in Central Africa, ensuring accountability, learning, and performance management dependent on external funding (GEF IEO, 2018; OECD DAC, 2019). Beyond compliance monitoring, M&E supports decision-making and multi-stakeholder coordination, focusing on the reasoned application of context-specific evaluation criteria (OECD, 2021). In this respect, it contributes to international commitments, such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement (UN, 2015).

Central Africa –including Cameroon, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, and Chad is home to a major portion of the Congo Basin forests and is the focus of conservation, forest governance, and climate projects. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks are heavily influenced by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability) and the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Standards and Norms, which are now widely institutionalized within aid organizations (UNEG, 2016; OECD DAC, 2019). However, while this widespread adoption reinforces a common language, it also raises the question of its operationalization in heterogeneous institutional environments.

Methodologically, M&E approaches have evolved toward management-oriented conceptual frameworks, results-based management, theory of change, logical frameworks, and results chains, to clarify causal links and support decision-making (Bamberger et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). This consolidation is part of a broader movement to build national and organizational M&E systems to improve the performance of public action and project portfolio performance (Patton, 2004; Mackay, 2007). Indeed, this paper clearly distinguishes the functions of key M&E instruments. LogFrames and Results Chain support day to day by structuring planning and monitoring (Kusek & Rist, 2004; World Bank-IEG, 2012). In contrast, the OECD-DAC criteria and UNEG standards serve *retrospective accountability*, assessing relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability after implementation (OECD, 2019; UNEG, 2016/2020). Conflating these tools obscures their distinct purposes, a risk highlighted in evaluation literature on methodological clarity and utilization (Patton, 2008; Bamberger et al., 2015). Accordingly, we analyze donor mechanisms as project-management tools only when they play a forward-looking operational role and separately when they fulfil evaluative and accountability functions.

In forestry and environmental projects, these management frameworks are sometimes linked to technical monitoring tools (e.g., measurement, notification, and verification systems linked to REDD+, remote sensing data), mainly to document progress and traceability of results without these instruments becoming the subject of analysis (Herold & Skutsch, 2019).

Despite this normative convergence, persistent operational divergences are observed: choice and articulation of conceptual models, depth of monitoring, quality assurance and reporting requirements, and levels of flexibility granted to implementing units. These differences, documented by recent literature and sectoral assessments, can increase administrative burden, hinder national ownership, and fragment inter-donor coordination (Boone et al., 2019; OFAC-COMIFAC, 2021; Agbodjan et al., 2023). From a project management and governance perspective, they raise issues of planning, accountability, and managerial adaptation.



We adopt a mechanism based lens to explain why frameworks designed by western headquarters struggle in Central Africa. First, state capacity constraints (data infrastructure, staffing, and continuity) limit the feasibility of dense indicator systems (Boidin, 2020). Second, institutional isomorphism leads governments to adopt donor frameworks to access funding, not necessarily because these instruments fit managerial realities (Andrews, 2009; Johnson, 2015). Third, inconsistent quality assurance (QA) systems and reporting expectations across donors exacerbate relational frictions with implementing partners (Woods, 2005). Therefore, we therefore (i) analytically separate monitoring tools for daily management (Logframe/Results Chain) from evaluation criteria for retrospective accountability (OECD-DAC/UsNEG) and (ii) examine how independence/QA and management responses shape the cost-benefit balance of M&E in multi-donor settings.

Based on a structured literature review of official donor normative documents (evaluation policies, manuals, results frameworks), this study offers a comparative analysis of the M&E mechanisms used in forest-environment projects in Central Africa, drawing on the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence standards for data extraction transparency and traceability (Ivorieil et al., 2017; Baumeister & Meyer, 2024). Indeed, in Central Africa, there is currently no national platform or binding state framework that standardizes the use of M&E mechanisms across donors; governments largely align with donor proposed instruments (Mapitsa & Khumalo, 2018; Masvaure & Fish, 2022). Our study therefore focuses on official donor handbooks and policies and does not include field-level data collection. The research question is why procedural divergences in donor M&E frameworks persist despite long-standing harmonization agendas, and how the Monitoring/Evaluation separation and QA designs affect donor-implementer tensions in project governance in Central Africa?

Finally, the study explicitly adopts a project management and governance perspective: it does not evaluate environmental results as such but examines the managerial tools (frameworks, procedures, and requirements) that structure the implementation processes and the coordination between stakeholders.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was designed as a documentary comparative literature review of monitoring and evaluation systems as project management and governance tools. The methodology aims to examine the operability of these frameworks (readability, flexibility, administrative burden, decision support, and accountability) rather than to assess environmental impacts. This approach aligns with public management and results-based management approaches, as disseminated by aid organizations (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007).

This analysis focuses on the funders of forestry, conservation and biodiversity, protected area management, forest governance, climate/REDD+ (MRV), and related rural development projects.



## Identify and describe the M&E reference frameworks, methodological frameworks, and tools used by the main donors in forest-environment projects.

### Identification, inventory and classification of donors

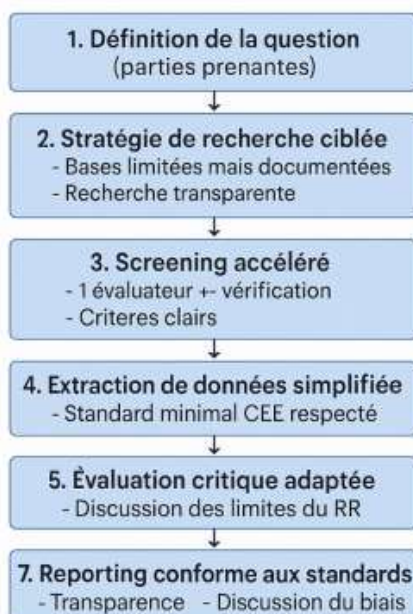
Given the lack of primary data collection in the field, we conducted a structured documentary review of official donor M&E policies, handbooks, and standards. The approach is narrative in synthesis but standardized in procedure: we pre-specified inclusion/exclusion criteria, applied a common extraction grid (document type; conceptual model; evaluation typologies & independence/QA; results architecture; reporting; learning/management response), and kept a full audit trail. The design is inspired by the CEE (Collaboration for Environmental Evidence) rapid-review principles (transparency, reproducibility of steps, standardized extraction) (Baumeister and Meyer, 2024; Livoreil et al., 2017), without claiming a full CEE systematic review.

It was based on a corpus consisting exclusively of M&E policies, handbooks, methodological guidelines, and results frameworks officially published by donors.

The CEE requirements include the following:

- Protocol transparency (inclusion/exclusion criteria, official sources, nature of documents)
- Full traceability (all elements refer to the source documents of the donors)
- Systematic extraction (same fields, same categorization rules)
- Inter-donor comparability (standardized 7-dimensional matrix)
- Documentation of boundaries (document variability, lack of field data)

### Figure 1: Summary diagram of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (CEE) standard for rapid reviews (Cifor, 2013).





This choice is consistent with the guidelines of Environmental Evidence, which recommends rapid approaches for reviews based solely on secondary documents.

The first step was to identify the actors involved in the forestry and environment sector in Central Africa using the OFAC analytical platform, which contained 758 projects<sup>[2]</sup>. In the 11 COMIFAC member countries (Congo, Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola, Rwanda, and Burundi), we extracted 428 projects from the six Central African member countries (Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, and Chad). We identified the donors from these projects implemented in Central Africa. These donors were then classified into three categories based on whether their M&E policies are published and their normative framework is accessible :

- Category A: Donors with public and consolidated M&E policies (selected for in-depth analysis).
- Category B: Organizations with partial or internal policies.
- Category C: Technical M&E practices without an identified public policy.

### **Document collection strategy**

Targeted searches were conducted on donor portals corresponding to the aforementioned primary sources:

#### ○ **Document inclusion criteria**

A document was considered if it was (i) officially published or validated by the donor, (ii) explicitly linked to M&E, (iii) publicly available online, and (iv) dated or updated after 2010 (or the reference is still in force), covering a generic scope and not an isolated case study.

#### ○ **Exclusion criteria**

A document was excluded from the analysis if it was an inaccessible internal operational document, an unofficial PowerPoint presentation, an academic article dealing with M&E without a direct link to donor policies, or a document whose sources or institutional validity were not confirmed.

#### • **Systematic data extraction**

A common data extraction grid was applied to each selected organization (Category A) to capture the following: (a) document type (policy, manual, results framework, directive); (b) core conceptual model; (c) evaluation typologies and independence/quality mechanisms; (d) results architecture; (e) reporting requirements; and (f) learning mechanisms (management response, improvement loops). Traceability was ensured by linking each item to its reference document.

The primary sources consisted of 33 official donor M&E policy documents and manuals, as presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Main sources of donor M&E policies, manuals and methodological guidelines**

No.	Organization	Official M&E Policy	Other relevant M&E documents
1	BMZ	<a href="#">BMZ Evaluation Policy for German Development Cooperation</a>	<a href="#">Evaluation criteria for German bilateral development cooperation</a>
2	BAD/AfDB	<a href="#">Independent Evaluation Policy (2019)</a>	<a href="#">Guidelines for the supervision and evaluation of private sector projects financed by the AfDB</a>
3	World Bank	<a href="#">Ten steps to a result-based monitoring and evaluation system</a>	<a href="#">World Bank Group Evaluation Principles</a>
4	CAFI	<a href="#">MEL Policy 2022</a>	<a href="#">CAFI Results Framework 2019</a>
5	DFID/FCDO	<a href="#">Evaluation and performance analysis strategy and playbook 2024 to 2028</a>	<a href="#">DFID ethical guidance for research, evaluation, and monitoring activities</a>
6	FAO	<a href="#">OED project evaluation manual for decentralized offices manual for decentralized offices</a>	
7	FFEM	<a href="#">FFM Evaluation Guide 2007</a>	
8	GIZ	<a href="#">GIZ Evaluation Policy (2018)</a>	
9	UNDP	<a href="#">UNDP Evaluation Policy 2025-2030</a>	<a href="#">Results-based planning, monitoring, and evaluation of development; Monitoring and Evaluation guide; Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results</a>
10	IUCN	<a href="#">IUCN Evaluation Policy (2023)</a>	<a href="#">Core Concepts in Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&amp;E) of Projects in IUCN; Management Response - IUCN Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Analysis (May 2021)</a>



No.	Organization	Official Policy	M&E	Other relevant M&E documents
11	UNEP	<a href="#">Strategy and action plan for M&amp;E and learning;</a>		
12	UNESCO	<a href="#">UNESCO Evaluation Policy 2022-2029</a>		<a href="#">UNESCO Evaluation Manual: Internal Oversight Service Evaluation Section</a>
13	USAID	<a href="#">USAID Evaluation Policy (2011 - ADS 220)</a>		<a href="#">ADS Chapter 220 Use of Reliable Partner Country Systems for Direct Management and Implementation of Assistance</a>
14	European Union (EU)	<i>The evaluation policy for European union development co-operation Evaluation Matters</i>		<a href="#">European Commission Evaluation Handbook 2024; EC Evaluation Handbook 2024; Project and program evaluation guide (volume 3).</a>
15	AFD	<a href="#">AFD's evaluation policy</a>		<a href="#">AFD Group Monitoring Evaluation Policy</a>

### Determine how the most frequent conceptual models in M&E mechanisms are operationalized

#### i. Systematic extraction of most frequently used conceptual models

Data for each category a donor were extracted according to a standardized grid that included document type, central model, independence, and quality assurance. This step specifically aims to isolate:

- Evaluation typologies (ex-post, mid-term, and thematic).
- Independence mechanisms (separate evaluation offices from operations) and quality standards (i.e., rating grids and peer reviews).
- The type of central conceptual model.

#### ii. Decomposition and operationalization of the conceptual models

The methodology included a structural analysis of the dominant models identified to understand their technical implementation. For each model, the study analyzed, where available:

- The results matrix (hierarchy of objectives).
- The matrix of indicators (performance measures, SMART, and CREAM).

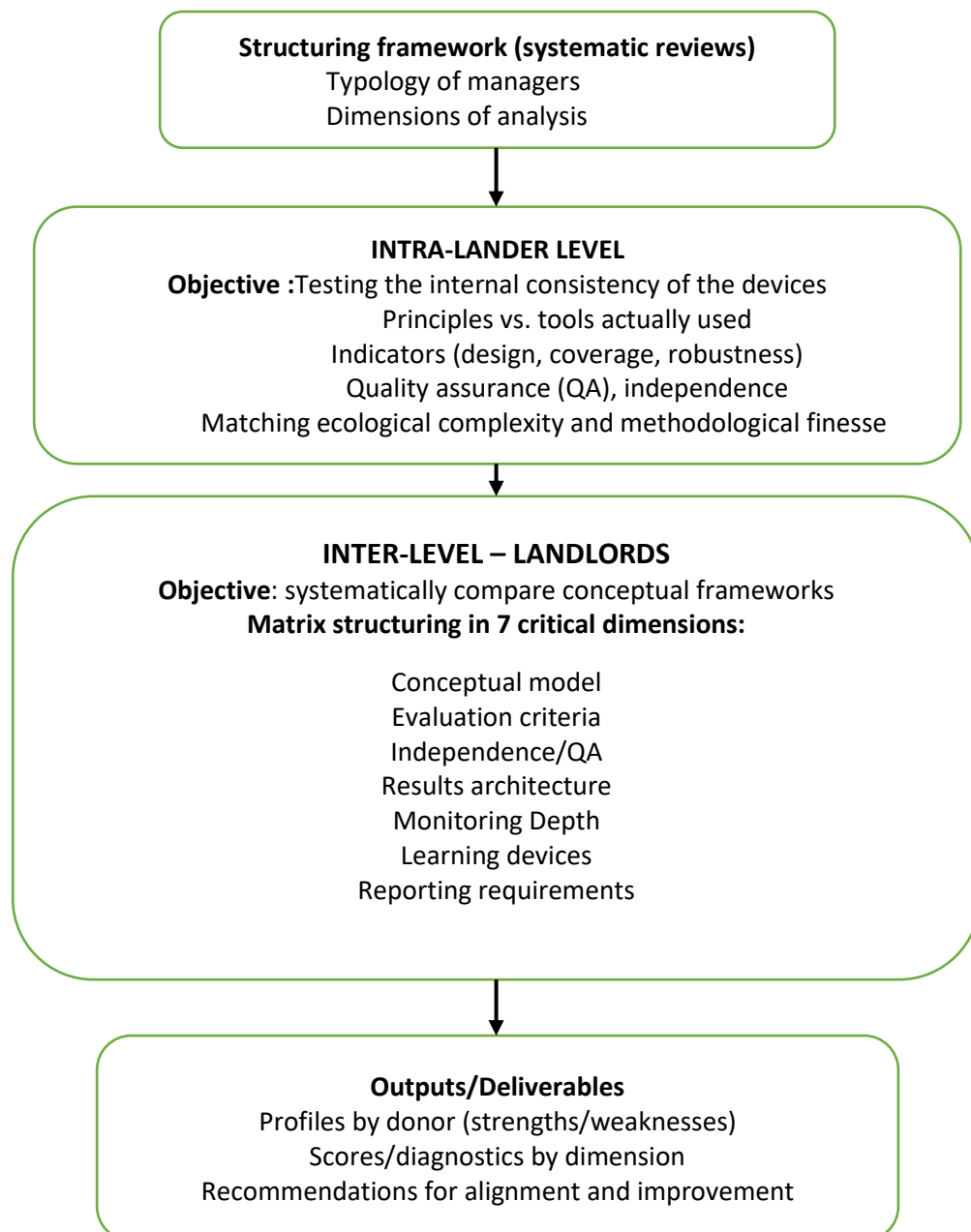


- The "Management Response" matrix (formal management response to recommendations).

**iii. Comparative analysis within and between donors**

The approach used in this study draws on recent systematic reviews in the forest-environment field (Buřivalov; *et al.*, 2025 ; Lopes da Silva *et al.*, 2023).

**Figure 1: Descriptive diagram of the comparative analysis within and between donors**



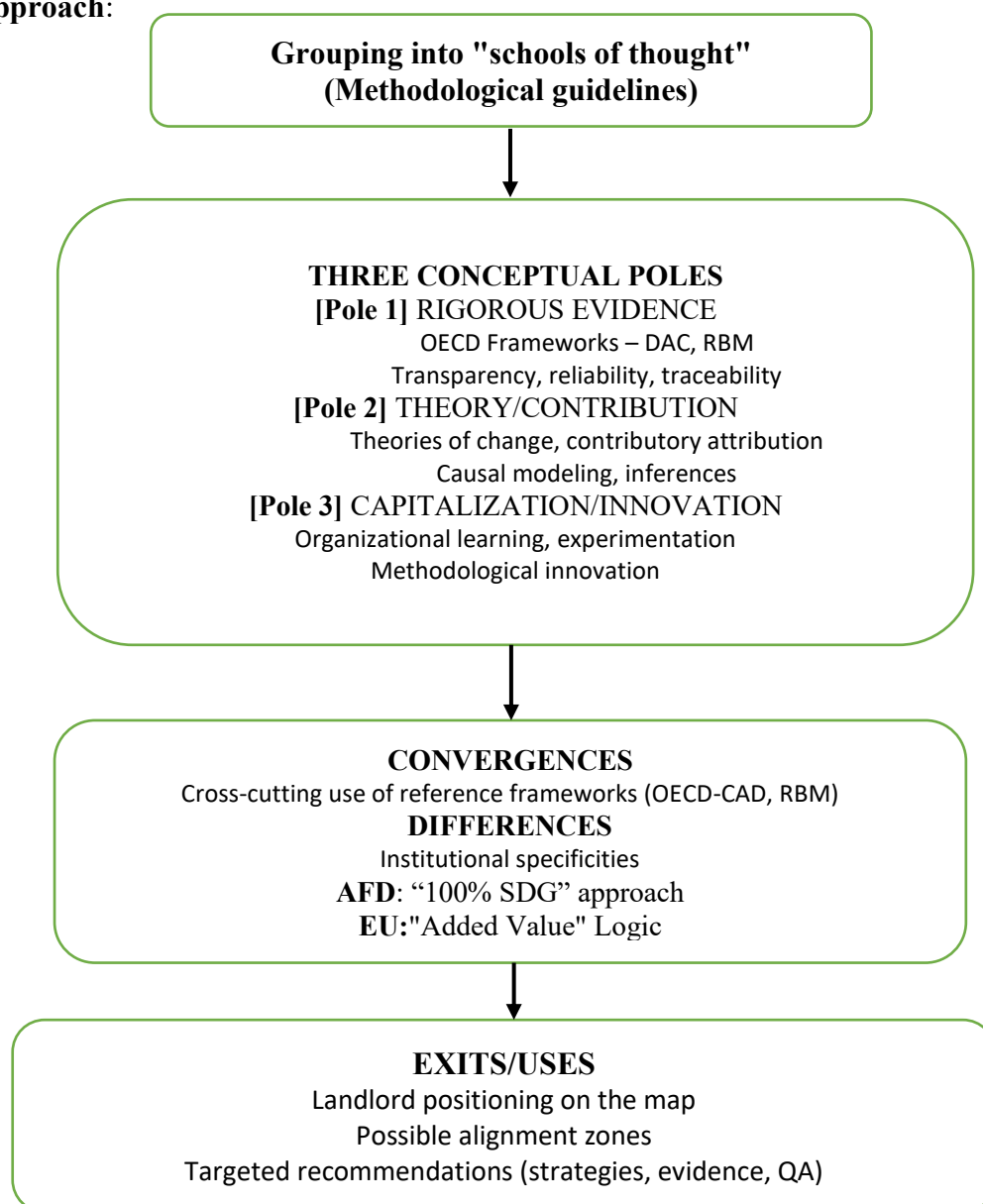
**Sources:** Buřivalov *et al.* (2025) and Silva *et al.* (2023).



The approach used draws on recent systematic reviews in the forest-environment field (Buřivalová et al., 2025) to analyze the consistency between stated methodological principles and the tools used (indicators, quality assurance, independence) at the donor level. At the inter-donor level, the comparison is based on a matrix structured around seven critical dimensions- conceptual model, evaluation criteria, independence/QA, results architecture, depth of monitoring, learning mechanisms, and reporting requirements- inspired by Lopes da Silva et al. (2023). This framework allows the creation of comparative profiles and the formulation targeted recommendations.

#### iv. Mapping of Strategic Convergences and Divergences

Figure 2 presents the descriptive diagram of the strategic convergences and divergences mapping approach:



**Figure 2:** Descriptive diagram of the strategic convergences and divergences mapping approach. **Sources:** Cooke et al. (2023), Murat and Prowse (2025), and Baumeister and Meyer (2024)



## v. Mapping strategic convergences and divergences

Inspired by Cooke et al. (2023), the mapping of strategic convergences and divergences between donors groups donors according to three methodological poles:

- **Innovation**, oriented towards learning devices, methodological innovation, and institutional experimentation.

This mapping exercise revealed both universal convergences (notably the cross-cutting use of OECD-CAD frameworks or the RBM logic) and institutional distinctiveness, such as the “100% SDG“ approach adopted by the AFD or the value-added orientation specific to the European Union. According to Cooke et al. (2023), such divergences reflect not only different strategic priorities but also contrasting views of the role of evidence in environmental decision-making.

### Data analysis

The data analysis employed a three-level structured comparative approach in accordance with the explicit literature review methodology and the principles of the Rapid Reviews of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (CEE) described in the CEE Guidelines v5.1 CEEe, (2022) and the CEE Rapid Review Guidance (CEE, 2023).

#### Level 1- Intra-donor analysis

The intra-donor analysis assessed the internal consistency of the M&E systems of each organization. This consistency is examined thrthe following five five main criteria:

- Identified conceptual models
- Operational tools deployed
- Evaluation mandates: Types of assessments planned: midterm, final, expost, thematic, and institutional
- Structuring the indicators: SMART/CREAM, SDG aggregates and product/effect/impact indicators
- Independence & quality assurance (QA) : Existence of an independent office, peer review, quality assurance grids, and validation mechanisms

This analysis verified whether the M&E instruments used by the donor were consistent with its guiding principles and central conceptual model, in accordance with CEE recommendations on internal alignment and methodological transparency.

#### Level 2 - Inter-donor analysis

The second level consisted of a systematic matrix comparison of donors across seven critical dimensions identified in the literature and normative documents : conceptual M&E model, evaluation criteria, independence and quality assurance, results architecture, type and depth of monitoring, learning mechanisms, reporting requirements.



Each donor was positioned according to these 7 dimensions, which makes it possible to identify normative convergences, structural differences, and distinct institutional logics (e.g., “rigorous proof”, “theory/contribution”, “capitalization/innovation”).

### **Level 3 - Harmonization and structural divergences**

Finally, the analysis identified the following convergences and divergences between donors:

- ***Structural convergences***
- Near-universal adoption of identified conceptual models
- General reference to the OECD-DAC criteria the UNEGUNEG standards.
- Office of Operational Separation/assessment
- Increasing the integration of management response and organizational learning.
- ***Functional divergences***
- The reporting frequency (annual, semi-annual, and policy milestones)
- The role of implementing agencies (e.g., EU/ROM vs. WB/ICR)
- The distinction between financial and results reporting is as follows:
- The role of technical monitoring (MRV, remote sensing, spatial tracking).

### **Quality assurance of the review process**

The quality of this literature review was ensured by its compliance with the CEE principles for Rapid Reviews, as defined in the CEE Guidelines v5.1 (Collaboration for Environmental Evidence, 2022) and updated in the Updates and Corrections (2022--2023).

### **Double cross extraction**

Two passages were completed by the main author:

#### ***First pass - Classification A/B/C***

- **Category A:** donors with public and consolidated M&E policies, including conceptual models, QA, reporting, results frameworks.
- **Category B:** organizations with partial or internal non-consolidated mechanisms (alignment with requirements of the main donor).
- **Category C:** organizations with limited M&E practices (technical monitoring or reporting to the donor without a formal policy).

#### ***Second round - Selection of Category A Donors***

Only category A donors were selected for the detailed analysis, as they present:



- complete documents,
- an explicit methodological architecture,
- identifiable conceptual models,
- and reproducible quality assurance standards.

### ***Classification of conceptual models***

This classification was based on the analysis of the official M&E policies of Category A donors and not on external interpretations.

This conceptual classification served as the basis for inter-donor comparisons and the identification of convergences/divergences.

### **Considerations of rigor and reproducibility**

To enhance procedural reliability, the method relied on: (i) an explicit protocol (field, criteria, sources, steps); (ii) consistent variable extraction; (iii) full traceability to source documents; and (iv) documentation of limitations. In line with best practices for building/strengthening M&E systems (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007), these elements aim to ensure the analysis is replicable by a third-party reader.

### **Validation of the structural consistency of conceptual frameworks**

This step aimed to ensure the internal methodological consistency of the documents analyzed by verifying the alignment between the conceptual models used, the indicators selected, the monitoring mechanisms, the QA standards and the evaluation purposes declared by each donor.

## **RESULTS**

### **1. Determine the evaluation typologies and independence/quality assurance mechanisms formalized by the donor**

#### ***1.1. Identification of public M&E policies***

The OFAC analytical platform enabled us to identify 428 projects implemented in six Central African countries (Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon). Table 2 below presents the conceptual M&E models of Category A donors used in the projects.

**Table 2: Selection of Category A Public M&E Policies**

No .	Donor/ Organization	Category	Number projects	Organization type	Project intervention area	Conceptual model
1	BMZ	Category A - Official published M&E policy	9	Donor/International institution	Central Africa, CAR, Congo, Cameroon	<b>Theory of change+</b> OECD-CAD criteria
2	African Development Bank (ADB)	Category A - Official published M&E policy	8	Donor/International institution	Central Africa, Congo, CAR	<b>RBM, Results Chain</b>
3	World Bank	Category A - Official published M&E policy	9	Donor/International institution	Gabon, Congo, Cameroon, Chad	<b>RBM, Results Chain</b>
4	CAFI	Category A - Official published M&E policy	8	Donor/International institution	Central Africa, Congo, Gabon, Cameroon	<b>ToC, Results Chain</b>
5	DFID	Category A - Official published M&E policy	2	Donor/International institution	Central Africa, Congo	<b>Results chain (ROAMEF)</b>
6	FAO	Category A - Official published M&E policy	3	UN agency	Central Africa, Cameroon	<b>Logical framework, Results chain</b>
7	FFEM	Category A - Official published M&E policy	90	Donor/International institution	Central Africa, Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Chad	<b>Logical framework</b>



<b>No .</b>	<b>Donor/ Organization</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Number projects</b>	<b>Organization type</b>	<b>Project intervention area</b>	<b>Conceptual model</b>
<b>8</b>	GIZ	Category A - Official published M&E policy	5	Donor/International institution	Central Africa, Congo	<b>ToC, Results Chain</b>
<b>9</b>	UNDP	Category A - Official published M&E policy	1	UN agency	Cameroon	<b>RBM (GRD), ToC, Logical Framework</b>
<b>10</b>	IUCN	Category A - Official published M&E policy	2	International NGO/ association	Cameroon	<b>RBM, ToC (Theory of Action)</b>
<b>11</b>	UNEP	Category A - Official published M&E policy	1	UN agency	Congo	<b>ToC, Adaptive Management</b>
<b>12</b>	UNESCO	Category A - Official published M&E policy	1	UN agency	Cameroon, Gabon	<b>RBM, ToC, Logical Framework</b>
<b>13</b>	USAID	Category A - Official published M&E policy	3	Donor/International institution	Central Africa	<b>Theory of Change, Logical Framework, Results Chain</b>
<b>14</b>	European Union	Category A - Official published M&E policy	95	Donor/International institution	Central Africa, Chad, Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Central	<b>Logical framework, Results chain</b>



No	Donor/ Organization	Category	Number projects	Organization type	Project interventio n area	Conceptual model
15	AFD	Category A - Official published M&E policy	6	Donor/Internati onal institution	African Republic, Equatorial Guinea  Central Africa, Congo, Cameroon	<b>RBM, ToC, Logical Framework , Results Chain</b>

Of these projects, 17 international donors are investing in forest-environment projects in the sub-region, including UN agencies, banks, international organizations, sub-regional donors, and local non-governmental organizations. Of these, 15 were identified as having M&E policies accessible online (category A), 2 (USFWS, ECCAS) as having partially accessible M&E policies internally (category B), and none as having unpublished policies (category C).

It also appears from this table that the conceptual models most frequently used by these different funders are: Results-Based Management (RBM), Theory of Change (ToC), the logical framework, and the results chain.

### **Determine the evaluation typologies and independence/quality assurance mechanisms formalized by the donor**

The evaluation typologies, as well as the independence and quality assurance mechanisms formalized by the 15 organizations and entities studied (Appendix 2), show that there is almost complete convergence with the standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, coherence) form the common language that allows for inter-donor comparisons and joint evaluations.

**Furthermore, independence is considered a bulwark of credibility because all major donors (World Bank, African Development Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, AFD, BMZ) separate implementation from evaluation (e.g., IEG/World Bank, IDEV/AfDB, IOS/UNESCO). This reduces undue influence and clarifies accountability lines.**

**The rise of "verification"** is an emerging trend trend (e.g., CAFI, AfDB) links disbursements to independent verification of milestones, shifting part of evaluation into a contractual lever.

**Quality assurance (QA) through "Double Checking"** now relies on peer review (WB, GIZ), reference groups (FFEM, EU, UNESCO), and rating grids (FAO, UNEP, GIZ), moving beyond simple proofreading to formal scoring and validation workflows.

**Sector-specific patterns** where economic/value-for-money analytics are prominent for FCDO/World Bank; science-policy interfaces for UNEP/IUCN; spatial monitoring (MRV,



geo-tagged evidence) for CAFI. These choices affect costs, data demands, and learning potential.

## 2. Compare the M&E frameworks analyzed with reRBMD to international standards (OECD-CAD, UNEG) to highlight normative convergences and operational divergences.

### Identify and describe the conceptual models common to all donors

The analysis of donor M&E policies specifies that although each donor sometimes uses its own terminology, there is a common conceptual architecture for M&E. This structure is based on four fundamental models shared by all donors and presented in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 : Comparison of conceptual monitoring and evaluation models**

Analytical dimensions	Results-based management (RBM)	Theory of Change (ToC)	Logical Framework	Results Chain
<b>Main function</b>	Overall philosophy of management and accountability	Explanatory Model of Change	Operational tool for planning and monitoring	Sequential model of causality
<b>Link with OECD-CAD / UNEG</b>	Strong alignment with effectiveness, efficiency, impact	Strong alignment with relevance, consistency, and impact	Alignment with effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability	Implicit common basis for all criteria
<b>Role in the project cycle</b>	Strategic management throughout the cycle	Design, learning, and adaptation	Planning, monitoring, and reporting	Initial logical structure
<b>Application level</b>	Public policy / program / portfolio	Project/Program	Project	Project
<b>Dominant orientation</b>	Results and overall performance	Causality, hypotheses, learning	Compliance, monitoring, and aggregation	Linear logic of interventions
<b>Conceptual structure</b>	Strategic Results Framework	Nonlinear causal pathways	Vertical and horizontal matrix	Linear sequence input → impact
<b>Assumption and Risk Management</b>	Implicit or secondary	Central and explicit	Formal (assumptions column)	Weak
<b>Managerial flexibility</b>	Average (depending on implementation)	Raised (life model)	Low to medium	Weak



<b>Primarily used by donors</b>	Accountability, resource allocation	Validation of intervention theories	Standardized reporting, aggregation	Initial design
<b>Examples of Donors</b>	IUCN, UNEP, USAID (PFMRAF), FCDO (ROAMEF)	FCDO, USAID, IUCN, UNEP	FFEM, UNEP	All (common basis)
<b>Notable characteristic</b>	Integrated RBM within financial governance (PFMRAF) or the political cycle (ROAMEF)	Highlights "missing middle" of change	Facilitates inter-project comparability	Simplicity and universality
<b>Main limitations</b>	Can become too prescriptive	Analytical complexity	Rigidity and low adaptability	Oversimplification

Table 3 above highlights a strong normative convergence among the M&E frameworks analyzed. All are based, explicitly or implicitly, on the principles promoted by the OECD-DAC and UNEG, particularly results orientation, accountability, learning, and impact seeking. This convergence is manifested in the systematic use of the results chain as a conceptual foundation, the logical framework as an operational tool, the Theory of Change as an explanatory framework, and RBM as a governance philosophy.

Despite this convergence in standards, the table shows that the divergences appear at the operational, not the conceptual, level. These divergences reflect distinct managerial choices:

- ROAMEF (FCDO) favours an iterative and adaptive logic, integrating evaluation into each phase of decision-making;
- The PFMRAF (USAID) emphasizes financial accountability a priori, prior to implementation.
- The logical framework favors standardization at the expense of flexibility.
- Theory of Change supports organizational learning more, but at the cost of increased analytical complexity.

The analysis shows that these models are not competing, but functionally complementary within a development project framework:

- the chain of results structures the basic logic;
- the logical framework organizes planning and reporting;
- the Theory of Change makes assumptions explicit and supports learning;



- the RBM provides the strategic framework for governance and accountability.

### Present the indicator matrix for each conceptual model

Analysis of donor M&E policies reveals that the structure of indicators varies according to the conceptual model adopted, although they all share a focus on development outcomes. The following is a comprehensive presentation of the indicator matrices for the four fundamental models.

#### Results Chain Indicator Matrix

This model breaks down the intervention into a logical sequence of five levels (Table 4), where each step has specific types of indicators to verify the transformation of resources into impacts.

**Table 4: Characteristics of the results chain indicator matrix**

Level of result	Indicator focus	Examples of measures
<b>Inputs</b>	Financial, human, and material resources mobilized.	Budget spent, number of experts recruited, equipment delivered.
<b>Activities</b>	Concrete actions taken to transform inputs.	Training sessions organized, awareness campaigns launched.
<b>Products (Outputs)</b>	Direct goods and services resulting from activities.	Number of people trained, kilometers of road built
<b>Effects (Outcomes)</b>	Changes in behavior or condition among beneficiaries.	Increased revenue, improved access to services.
<b>Impact</b>	Long-term effects on the population or the system.	Poverty reduction, lower infant mortality.

#### Logical framework indicator matrix

The logical framework is the most structured planning tool, used in particular by the European Union, the FFEM, and the UNEP. It takes the form of a matrix (generally 4x4 or 6x4) articulating the vertical and horizontal logic (Table 5).

**Table 5: Characteristics of the logical framework indicator matrix**

Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of verification	Assumptions and risks
<b>Overall Objective Impact</b>	Measuring the long-term impact.	National statistics, reports from global organizations.	External factors for sustainability.
<b>Specific Purpose/Effects</b>	Behavioral Change Indicators (SMART)	Surveys of beneficiaries, reports.	Conditions for the products to generate effects.
<b>Products</b>	Goods/services delivery indicators.	Project activity reports.	Conditions for activities to lead to products.



<b>Activities</b>	/	Process indicators	Accounting, attendance sheets.	Prerequisites for starting activities.
<b>Resources</b>		and costs.		

### Matrix of Indicators for the Theory of Change

The Theory of Constraints (ToC) is more analytical and less rigid than the logical framework; it focuses on "missing media" and causal trajectories. Its matrix of indicators is used to test the validity of hypotheses throughout the cycle.

- **Progress indicators:** They measure the intermediate steps needed to move from one level to another.
- **Hypothesis indicators:** They check whether the identified critical conditions (e.g., political stability, market price) are maintained.
- **Contribution indicators:** Used by GIZ and AFD, they measure the share of the intervention in the observed change compared to other external factors.
- **Evidence narrative:** A journal of qualitative and quantitative data that validates each causal link.

### Results-Based Management Indicator Matrix

Adopted by the World Bank, USAID, and UNDP, results-based management (RBM) Often uses the Strategic Results Framework (CRS) as its main matrix (Table 6). It is designed for accountability and steering of organizational performance.

**Table 6: Strategic Outcomes Framework for the RBM**

Performance component	Indicator type	Characterization
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>	Measures of organizational effectiveness and efficiency.	Based on the CREAM criteria (Clear, Relevant, Economical, Adequate, Controllable).
<b>Rating System</b>	Qualitative judgment of progress (e.g., scale from 1 to 6).	Allows for the aggregation of performance at the level of a global portfolio.
<b>Dashboard</b>	Real-time visualization of targets vs. achievements.	Uses basic indicators (key indicators) for comparison between countries.

### Present the management response matrix for each conceptual model

Management Response is the official and formal reaction of the management team of an organization or project to the findings, recommendations, and lessons learned from an evaluation.

In other words, after an external or internal evaluation has been carried out, management must: review the findings, validate, modify, or reject the recommendations, commit to concrete



actions, define roles and responsibilities and deadlines, and assume responsibility for implementation. This is a mandatory step in most evaluation standards (AFD, UN agencies, major NGOs).

Here is the presentation of the matrices and their focal points according to the four models:

### **Management Response Matrix: Results Chain Model**

In this sequential model (Inputs-Activities-Outputs-Effects-Impact), the matrix focuses on the breaking or fluidity of causal links.

- **Matrix components:** recommendation, acceptance correctiverrective action, responsible party, Timeline.
- **Specific focus:**The actions are aimed at correcting the transformation process. If a product has not generated the expected effect, management's response will detail how to modify the delivery or nature of the products to restore the chain of causality.

### **Management Response Matrix: Logical Framework Model**

Since this model is the ultimate operational planning tool, the response matrix is normative and linked to targets.

- **Matrix components:** Recommendation, Management Response (Accepted/Rejected), Detailed Action Plan, Action Monitoring Indicator, Deadline.
- **Specific focus:**The management response focuses on the gap between actual achievements and the initially defined SMART targets. Planned actions often aim to realign activities to achieve the performance indicators of the Logical Framework.

### **Management Response Matrix: Model of the Theory of Change**

Since Theory of Change is based on assumptions and understanding of the "missing environment", the matrix here is analytical and focused on adaptive learning.

- **Matrix components:** observation on the hypostrategicstrategic recommendation, status, action to adjust the Theory of Change, Responsible party, Learning follow-up.
- **Specific focus:**Management uses this matrix to validate or refute assumptions about change. If the evaluation shows that the rationale for change was flawed, management's response will be to redefine the intervention strategy or modify the results model for the next cycle.

### **Management Response Matrix: Results-Based Management (RBM)**

In RBM, the matrix is an instrument of high accountability and strategic steering.

- **Matrix components:**Recommendation (by priority), Official response, Implementation measures, Owner of the action, Timetable, Status of progress.



- **Specific focus:** The responses are often intended for decision-making bodies (Board of Directors, senior management). The emphasis is on organizational effectiveness and long-term impact. The matrix serves as a "dashboard" to monitor whether the organization is progressing towards its overall strategic objectives (e.g., 100% SDG alignment).

In conclusion, Table 7 below presents a typical summary of the official and formal reactions of a management team of an organization, regardless of its conceptual model.

**Table 7: Typical summary of official and formal reactions from an organization's management team (common to all 4 models)**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Direction position</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Responsible (Entity/Individual)</b>	<b>Due date</b>	<b>Follow-up (1 year later)</b>
<b>Evaluator's exact words</b>	Agreement, Partial Agreement, or disagreement	Concrete and verifiable description of the task	Clear designation for accountability	Completion deadline	Progress status (done/not done)

### **Comparative Intra-component analysis**

Based on the M&E policies analyzed, the analysis presents an architecture where these four models are not mutually exclusive but fit together to form a performance management system.

#### ***Internal coherence: From philosophy to operationalization***

The consistency between the models is based on a hierarchy of complementary functions.

- **Results-Based Management :** The overall management framework and organizational culture define the institution's intent. It uses other models to demonstrate that the resources mobilized generate real change.
- **The Theory of Change :** It constitutes the explanatory and complex narrative of the intervention. It identifies the "missing middle" and the critical assumptions that allow us to move from one level of result to another.
- **The Logical Framework :** This is the simplified and contractual version of the Theory of Costs. It fixes the objectives and indicators in a rigid matrix to facilitate operational monitoring.
- **The Results Chain :** It is the linear causal framework (inputs\activities\products\effects\impact) that underlies all other models.



## Evaluation Tools and Mandates

Each model defines a specific focus for the evaluator's mandate.

- **RBM Mandate:** Focuses on overall accountability and institutional efficiency (e.g., AfDB or World Bank performance reports).
- **ToC mandate:** Aims to understand the "why" and "how" of the change. Tools contribution analysis (GIZ, AFD) or causal chain analysis (process tracing) are used to test causal links.
- **Logical Framework Mandate:** It assesses compliance with and achievement of set targets. The main tool is the verification of objectively verifiable indicators.
- **Results Chain Mandate:** Analyzes the transformation of resources into products. Emphasis is placed on process evaluations and mid-term reviews.

## Indicator Devices

The indicators vary depending on the level of ambition of the model.

- **RBM indicators:** often aggregated at the global level (e.g., EU GEF, UNEP Core Indicators) to compare performance between countries.
- **Indicators of the ToC:** These include "path indicators" or "progress markers" (IUCN, CAFI) which measure changes in actors' behavior.
- **Logical Framework Indicators:** They must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) and CREAM (Clear, Realistic, Economical, Adequate, Controllable).
- **Results Chain Indicators:** They strictly distinguish between indicators of means (inputs) and outputs (products).

## Quality Assurance

Quality assurance mechanisms aim to guarantee the credibility of the system.

- **Evaluability:** A common preliminary step (WB, UNESCO, EU) is to check if the project is "evaluable" (existence of a baseline and a solid logical framework).
- **Independence:** All donors require a separation between operational units and evaluation offices (IEG for the World Bank, IDEV for the AfDB, IOS for UNESCO).
- **Triangulation:** This is the methodological standard for data quality assurance, combining primary and secondary sources and interviews with beneficiaries.
- **Management Response:** The final quality is ensured by the obligation for management to formally respond to the recommendations (FCDO, USAID, UNDP, AFD).



Analysis of M&E policies of major development organizations (WB, AfDB, UNDP, EU, GIZ, etc.) shows that the inclusive use of these four conceptual models (RBM, Theory of Constraints, Logical Framework, Results Chain) is not redundant but a necessity to respond to the increasing complexity of field interventions.

### **Relevance analysis**

The analysis of the relevance of the M&E mechanisms of the 15 organizations studied (appendix 3), highlighting their use of conceptual models (RBM, Theory of Constraints, Logical Framework, Results Chain) and the relevance of their approach.

Indeed, it emerges that organizations managing long-term or multi-sectoral interventions (UNDP, AFD, GIZ, UNESCO, USAID) tend towards an inclusive use of the four models. This approach is the most relevant for capturing the "trajectory of change" rather than simple statistics.

The Theory of Change (ToC) is used by donors as a driver of modernization. Newer or specialized donors (CAFI, UNEP) are moving away from the rigid logical framework in favor of the Theory of Change, which is considered more relevant for managing the uncertainty of fragile contexts. For entities like the European Union or the FFEM, maintaining the Logical Framework model remains relevant because it provides an essential legal and financial basis for verifying compliance.

Unlike more contractual donors (EU, FFEM), USAID encourages regular review of results chains (RCs), insists on updating assumptions, and requests revision of M&E-learning plans as soon as the context changes.

USAID's MEL and CR documents emphasize the need to maintain a living framework, reinforcing the idea that methodological rigidity is now obsolete in fragile environments.

Furthermore, all organizations, whether they use two or four models, are converging towards the integration of knowledge management (Learning) as the ultimate goal of M&E.

### **Inter-donor analysis**

This inter-donor analysis examines the M&E systems of the 15 donors (Table 2) under study across the seven dimensions of matrix comparison, highlighting normative convergences and operational specificities.

### **Conceptual model of M&E**

The majority of donors (World Bank, AfDB, UNDP, UNESCO, AFD) rely on Results-Based Management (RBM) to strategically link resources to impacts as defined by results frameworks. However, a shift towards Theory of Change is observed among actors addressing complex issues (GIZ, CAFI, UNEP, AFD Group), enabling the analysis of "paths to change" and causal hypotheses. The logical framework remains the key contractual planning tool for the European Union and the FFEM. Finally, DFID/FCDO stands out for its integration of agile cycles (ROAMEF), adapted to digital services and rapid iterations.



### Evaluation criteria

The OECD-DAC framework (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability) forms the universal basis for all donors. Specific criteria are added depending on the mandate:

- **EU added value:** Specific to the European Union to justify community action in relation to member states.
- **"One Program" approach:** Specific to the IUCN to measure the integration of the components of the Union.
- **100% SDGs** AFD's commitment to align each intervention with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Additionality (Incremental Cost):** Focus of the FFEM and the BM to justify the financing of global environmental protection.

### Independence and quality assurance

Structural independence is guaranteed by "firewall" evaluation offices attached to the governing boards: IEG (World Bank), IDEV (AfDB), IEO (UNDP), IOS (UNESCO), and the Evaluation Division (AFD). Quality assurance relies on checklists and peer reviews that conform to the standards of the UN Global Network of Evaluation (UNGE) or the OECD. FAO and UNESCO clearly distinguish between centralized (institutional) and decentralized (managed by field offices) evaluations.

### Results architecture

Architecture typically follows a linear chain of results: Inputs\Activities\Outputs\Outcomes\Impact. Donors now differentiate between:

- The sphere of control (Products): What the project delivers directly.
- The sphere of influence (Effects): Changes in the behavior of the beneficiaries.
- The sphere of interest (Impact): Long-term development goals (e.g., CO2 or poverty reduction).

### Type and depth of monitoring

Monitoring is evolving from monitoring processes to tracking results.

- **Technological innovations:** CAFI requires spatial monitoring via the collection of mobile data with GPS points and georeferenced photos.
- **Results-Oriented Monitoring:** Specific EU mechanism for obtaining external "snapshots" of performance.
- **Adaptive Management:** Advocated by UNEP and USAID to adjust interventions in real time in fragile contexts.



## Learning devices (Learning)

The shift from a culture of punishment to a culture of learning is central :

- **Capitalization:** The AFD and the FFEM prioritize the transformation of field experience into reusable knowledge.
- **Communities of practice:** used by the World Bank, USA, and IUCN and UNDP for horizontal knowledge sharing.
- **Management Response:** Formal obligation for management to respond to recommendations and monitor their implementation through action plans.

## Reporting requirements

Reporting is becoming increasingly digitized and standardized:

- **Dedicated tools:** OPSYS (EU), SISTER (UNESCO), FPMIS (FAO), Portal (IUCN/AFD), DEC (USAID/WB).
- **Contradictory records:** The EU and the AFD use annual monitoring sheets to check the application of the recommendations one year after the evaluation.
- **Transparency :** The majority of donors now publish all final reports on public platforms to meet the requirements of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

## Present the convergence/divergence matrix between these different conceptual models

The comparative table of donors in Appendix 1 highlights strong convergences between the frameworks analyzed. All are based on a results-oriented structure, generally organized around logical chains linking activities, outputs, outcomes, and strategic objectives. This convergence reflects a standardization of project management practices, largely inspired by the principles of results-based management. The frameworks also share common requirements regarding initial planning, indicator definition, and periodic reporting. In theory, these convergences facilitate project comparability and strengthen accountability mechanisms to donors. However, they also contribute to homogenizing managerial practices, regardless of specific organizational contexts. More specifically, these are detailed below:

### Deep convergences: universal standard

Despite their varied missions, all donors agree on four fundamental pillars:

1. **The transition from means to results (RBM/RBM) :** The shift from "monitoring activities" to "managing results" is complete for all donors. Evaluation no longer simply judges whether money has been spent but whether social or environmental change has occurred.
2. **Structural Independence:** All have a "firewall" evaluation body (IEG for the BM, IDEV for the AfDB, IOS for UNESCO, EVA for the AFD) attached directly to the Board of Directors or the General Management to guarantee impartiality.



3. **The OECD-DAC Framework:** The six criteria (Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Sustainability) constitute the common grammar of all these mechanisms.
4. **The Learning/Accountability Balance:** Each system pursues this dual objective: to be accountable to taxpayers/donors and to learn from its mistakes to improve future projects.

### Differences in approach: three schools of thought

There is a major divergence in the way the scientific "truth" of evaluation is conceived:

- **The school of rigorous evidence (USAID, World Bank):** These donors favour the counterfactual approach (comparison with a control group) and randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to isolate the direct impact of aid.
- **The school of theory and contribution (GIZ, AFD, UNDP, UNESCO):** They recognize the complexity of development and prefer to prove that the intervention has "contributed" to the change through a contribution analysis rather than claiming exclusive attribution.
- **The School of Capitalization and Innovation (FFEM, AFD):** Here, evaluation is a research tool to transform field experience into disseminable knowledge, with an emphasis on the innovative nature and leverage effect of funding.

### Originality and distinctive features by Donor

Each donor brings a unique nuance to their mechanism:

- **AFD:** Its originality lies in its "100% SDG" integration. Each evaluation must measure the project's trajectory in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.
- **CAFI:** It stands out for its spatial M&E. It is the only one to systematically require georeferenced data (satellite photos and GPS points) to verify the fight against deforestation in Central Africa.
- **EU (European Union):** Its distinctive feature is the "EU Added Value" criterion. It systematically assesses whether European action has been more effective than if the Member States had acted alone.
- **DFID/FCDO:** It stands out for its Agile approach. The ROAMEF cycle is designed for digital services and allows for rapid trajectory corrections (the "fail fast" principle).
- **UNDP:** Its strength lies in the assessment of "intangible" aid (soft assistance): political influence, advocacy, and facilitation, which are often the most difficult to measure.
- **BAD:** Places deep emphasis on strengthening the national M&E capacities of African countries so that they will no longer need external evaluators in the long term.



- **IUCN:**It uses an original line of inquiry on the science/policy interface, checking whether the scientific knowledge produced has actually influenced political decisions.
- **UNEP:**It is distinguished by the use of basic qualitative indicators (0 to 5) to measure the institutional maturity of governments in waste management.
- **FFEM:**It focuses on the "incremental cost". It does not evaluate the overall project, but specifically the added value of its own financial contribution to the protection of the global environment.
- **USAID:**Its distinctive feature is radical transparency via the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC), a public database where almost all raw evaluation data is stored for researchers.

## DISCUSSION

### Convergence of outcome architectures and standardization of project governance

The results show a marked convergence among donors around conceptual frameworks such as results-based management, results chains, and logical frameworks, confirming earlier observations by Kusek and Rist (2004) that M&E systems have become core instruments of governance and performance planning in development interventions. In this view, results architectures operate as organizational scaffolds that structure planning, measurement, and accountability processes across agencies.

This widespread adoption can also be seen as part of a larger trend toward standardized governance. This is in line with Pollitt and Bouckaert's (2017) claim that modern public management reforms depend on the spread of standardized models based on New Public Management logics. M&E frameworks reinforce this dynamic by imposing shared planning and reporting routines across diverse organizations.

However, despite this conceptual convergence, operational practices remain highly differentiated among donors. This coexistence of similar architectures but varied applications aligns with Moynihan's (2008) insight that performance management systems generate divergent organizational behaviors depending on institutional constraints, incentives, and administrative traditions.

These findings indicate that the worldwide proliferation of RBM-type frameworks results in structural standardization without complete harmonization. Organizations adopt common conceptual models, but their practical implementation is influenced by internal governance structures, accountability mandates, and managerial cultures—demonstrating that convergence at the formal level does not necessarily lead to convergence at the practical level (Moynihan, 2008; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

### Limited state capacities and reliance on information

National monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are often partial or under institutionalized in contexts where administrative and statistical capacities remain thin, which pushes public



administrations to lean heavily on donor-designed methodological frameworks that may not fully fit managerial realities on the ground (Mapitsa & Khumalo, 2018; Masvaure & Fish, 2022; Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). This pattern is consistent with the broader diffusion of standardized public management models across aid systems, which travel faster than local capacity can grow (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

In these conditions, M&E architectures function as external information infrastructures, organizing the production, quality assurance, and circulation of project data. As Moynihan (2008) argues, performance management systems fundamentally depend on an organization's ability to generate and interpret reliable information; when those capabilities are constrained, organizations default to external information systems and templates provided by funders (Moynihan, 2008; Kusek & Rist, 2004). This procedure contributes to the visible standardization of tools while leaving ample room for local capacity gaps to persist (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

Our findings suggest that the heterogeneity of donors' methodological requirements, distinct reporting calendars, evaluation cycles, and quality assurance routines, can intensify information dependency in multi-donor settings. The coexistence of parallel procedures raises organizational complexity and demands on frontline teams, thereby increasing coordination and compliance costs (Williams et al., 2010; OECD-DAC, 2019; OECD, 2021). In practice, implementers must simultaneously satisfy several "grammars of evidence" at once, which reinforces reliance on external guidance and templates (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Moynihan, 2008).

However, this interpretation requires nuance. Although fragmented or "broken" information architectures can lether projects to international partners (Befani, 2016), well-designed, learning-focused M&E can also strengthen local institutions by embedding analytic routines, clarifying causal assumptions, and supporting adaptive management (Patton, 2008; Mackay, 2007; Kusek & Rist, 2004). When combined with management response and feedback loops, M&E becomes a capability-building device, not just a compliance tool (OECD, 2021; Patton, 2008).

In short, M&E frameworks can be both capability-enhancing and dependency-reinforcing. They supply data and analysis that help local organizations improve practice and navigate uncertainty, yet their procedural diversity across donors can lock projects into externally steered information systems unless deliberate investments are made in national platforms and evaluative capacities (Befani, 2016; Mapitsa & Khumalo, 2018; Patton, 2008).

### **Institutional isomorphism and selective appropriation of monitoring and evaluation frameworks**

The convergence observed across donors around outcome-oriented architectures can also be interpreted through institutional isomorphism, whereby organizations adopt similar frameworks to reinforce institutional access to resources. In a field structured by influential multilateral and bilateral actors, the widespread dissemination of M&E standards particularly results based management, theories of change, and the OECD-DAC criteria, helps consolidate a shared methodological language in a field structured by influential multilateral and bilateral actors.



Yet, our findings indicate that this structural convergence does not translate into full homogeneity of practice. Donors selectively appropriate these frameworks and adapt them to their strategic priorities, accountability systems, and internal control mechanisms, producing differentiated operational routines. This observation aligns with Befani and Stedman-Bryce (2017), who demonstrated that theories of change are interpreted and operationalized differently depending on organizational context. Similarly, Cooke et al. (2023) showed that methodological frameworks in environmental and development assessments frequently undergo pragmatic adjustments to accommodate institutional constraints and implementation realities.

From this perspective, divergences between donors should not be viewed as inconsistencies but rather as context-specific adaptations of shared architectures. Organizations adopt common frameworks to meet international expectations while tailoring their use in ways that influence evaluation quality, the robustness of evidence, and ultimately the reliability of decisions grounded in these systems.

### **Heterogeneous quality assurance requirements and organizational effects**

The comparative analysis highlights substantial variation in quality assurance (QA) and evaluation validation mechanisms across donors. Some agencies rely on highly formalized, independent review systems grounded in detailed methodological standards, whereas others adopt more flexible, adaptive approaches. These discrepancies arise operationally: in multi-donor projects, teams must simultaneously respond to divergent methodological expectations, increasing coordination burdens. This aligns with Williams et al. (2010), who showed that expanding control and reporting requirements can increase transaction costs and reduce organizational adaptability.

Differences in QA also reflect distinct conceptions of the evaluation role. Approaches centered on performance indicators privilege standardization and comparability, whereas theory-based strategies emphasize the causal mechanisms identification. As Beach and Pedersen (2019) demonstrated, process tracing provides a structured way to uncover causal pathways linking interventions to outcomes, offering analytical depth that complements indicator-based performance systems. Similarly, Doswald et al. (2025) underlined that robust assessments of environmental and development interventions often require the integration quantitative and qualitative evidence to clarify how and why changes occur.

Taken together, these findings show that disparities in QA systems stem not only from organizational variation but also from divergent interpretations of what evaluation should accomplish—whether ensuring standardized accountability, enhancing causal understanding, or supporting adaptive management.

### **Management implications for projects in Central Africa**

The results of this study point to several implications for managing development projects in multi-donor environments. First, the convergence of outcome-oriented architectures provides partners with a shared basis for planning and measuring results. Tools such as logical frameworks and results chains help align objectives, indicators, and assumptions across organizations, which echoes broader discussions on the structuring role of results frameworks in development management (Kusek & Rist, 2004).



Discrepancies across monitoring and evaluation systems can increase organizational complexity. As Moynihan (2008) notes, inconsistent reporting requirements place heavy demands on performance management systems and can limit their usability. In multi-donor settings, this fragmentation may amplify transaction costs and complicate day-to-day coordination.

Therefore, project managers must navigate competing methodological requirements in contexts marked by limited administrative capacity while trying to maintain coherence within the M&E system. This dynamic can lead to confusion and inefficiencies. Sense (2011) emphasized that organizational learning in project settings depends on teams' ability to integrate diverse sources of information—an ability that becomes more difficult when methodological expectations diverge.

Finally, the findings suggest that greater harmonization of M&E frameworks across donors could reduce coordination burdens and strengthen management effectiveness. However, as Patton (2008) argues, such harmonization must remain flexible enough to adapt to varying contexts, stakeholder expectations, and resource constraints. From this perspective, M&E frameworks should be seen not only as instruments of compliance and accountability but also as vehicles for learning and improved project governance.

### **Theoretical contribution of the article**

Beyond offering a descriptive comparison of donor monitoring and evaluation frameworks, this study contributes to the literature on development project management by underscoring the role of M&E architectures as instruments of organizational governance. First, the analysis shows that M&E systems serve as **management infrastructures** that shape project planning, information production, and accountability processes—an observation consistent with Kusek and Rist (2004), who identify M&E as a central pillar of performance management in public organizations.

Second, the findings reveal how structural convergence in performance frameworks coexists with operational divergence in implementation. This adds to the scholarship on the governance of multi-donor projects by illustrating that standardizing conceptual models does not automatically harmonize organizational practices. As Moynihan (2008) emphasizes, performance management systems often lead to differentiated adaptations shaped by institutional context and administrative constraints.

Third, the results highlight the importance of organizational appropriation dynamics in the use of methodological frameworks. While donors adopt common architectures, they adjust their implementation according to internal governance logics and accountability requirements. This interpretation aligns with Befani and Stedman-Bryce (2017), who show that theories of change and evaluation frameworks are translated differently depending on organizational environments.

Finally, by comparing quality assurance and evaluation validation mechanisms, the study contributes to research on the credibility of evaluation systems. The methodological insights of Beach and Pedersen (2019) underline the necessity of identifying causal mechanisms in policy and development evaluations, while variations in quality systems reveal divergent conceptions of what evaluation is expected to accomplish. These differences can in turn



influence how project success is judged and how effectively evaluations function across diverse implementation contexts.

### **Methodological limitations of the study**

This study, like any other based on documentary analysis, acknowledges certain methodological limitations explicitly.

First, the analysis relies exclusively on an examination of institutional monitoring and evaluation frameworks as described in official donor documents. These documents reflect the methodological principles and institutional standards of the organizations, but they do not allow for direct observation of the operational practices implemented in the projects.

The literature on public policy evaluation widely acknowledges the differentiation between formal frameworks and practical implementations. Befani (2016) notably emphasizes that the evaluation mechanisms described in institutional documents may differ from the actual evaluation practices implemented in development interventions.

Second, the study does not examine mid-term review reports, logical frameworks, or completion reports. Thus, this research focuses on monitoring and evaluation system institutional structures rather than project use.

Third, comparative analysis relies on a structured literature review method inspired by the principles of knowledge syntheses. Baumeister and Meyer (2024) contend that structured literature reviews constitute scientific contributions in their own right; however, they fundamentally rely on an analytical interpretation of the reviewed documents.

Finally, this study does not seek to establish causal links between monitoring and evaluation frameworks and project performance. Methodological frameworks based on the elucidation of causal mechanisms, as demonstrated by process tracing according to Beach and Pedersen (2019), require more extensive empirical data concerning the implementation of interventions.

### **Future research agenda**

The results of this study offer numerous avenues for additional research into monitoring and evaluation systems in development projects.

First, empirical research could examine the actual implementation of institutional monitoring and evaluation frameworks in projects funded by international donors. A comparative review of logical frameworks, evaluation reports, and reporting systems could help identify the organizational adaptation mechanisms that occur during the operationalization of methodological frameworks.

Secondly, future research could explore in greater detail the organizational effects of the coexistence of multiple monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in multi-donor projects. The work of Williams et al. (2010) shows that complex projects are particularly sensitive to early signs of organizational dysfunction, suggesting that multiple reporting mechanisms could influence project management capacity.



Third, methodological approaches that combine document analysis with qualitative methods may improve the understanding of the causal mechanisms linking monitoring and evaluation systems to intervention outcomes. Beach and Pedersen (2019) propose mechanism analysis methods, while Befani (2016) discusses comparative approaches that offer interesting methodological perspectives for this type of research.

Finally, new research on environmental and development sciences evidence syntheses shows how using data from different sources improves analyses. For example, Cooke et al. (2023) and Doswald et al. (2025) demonstrate that systematic synthesis can help researchers understand complex development interventions.

From this viewpoint, the integration of documentary analysis, project case studies, and causal analysis methods represents a promising pathway for enhancing the comprehension of monitoring and evaluation systems in development projects.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze and compare the monitoring and evaluation frameworks used by major international donors in development cooperation. The focus was on how these frameworks affect project governance in Central Africa. The analysis, grounded in a systematic review of institutional policies and methodological manuals presented as documentaries, investigated the conceptual frameworks, operational practices, and quality assurance procedures that support donor monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

The results show that donors are converging strongly around some conceptual frameworks, in particular results-based management, results chains, logframes, and theory of change approaches. These frameworks offer a common vocabulary for organizing development efforts and evaluating performance across different organizations. However, the study also points out major differences in operational procedures, evaluation cycles, reporting requirements, and quality assurance mechanisms. The fact that structural convergence and procedural divergence coexist suggests that, while international organizations are more and more adopting common conceptual models, their operational implementation continues to be shaped by distinct institutional governance arrangements.

Moreover, the analysis shows that these disparities strongly shape project-management practices in multi-donor environments. In environments characterized by constrained administrative capabilities, such as those prevalent in numerous Central African nations, the diversity of monitoring and evaluation frameworks can engender information dependencies, thereby complicating the coordination efforts of project managers. Simultaneously, the proliferation of standardized frameworks for outcomes could potentially facilitate the gradual institutionalization of performance-oriented management methodologies.

This research contributes to the existing literature on project governance and performance management in development settings by conceptualizing monitoring and evaluation systems as organizational structures that govern information flows, establish accountability mechanisms, and facilitate learning processes. The findings indicate that monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be seen as more than just technical tools for assessing results. These



mechanisms also function as institutional instruments, shaping the governance and coordination of development interventions. Nevertheless, this study's findings stem from an analysis of institutional policy documents, rather than direct observation of project implementation.

Consequently, future studies could therefore investigate how donor monitoring and evaluation frameworks are applied in concrete projects, as well as how these frameworks are adapted by local stakeholders. The research highlights the imperative for improved harmonization and coordination of monitoring and evaluation frameworks among development partners while simultaneously preserving the adaptability required to customize these systems for diverse institutional contexts. Strengthening the coherence of monitoring and evaluation architectures can enhance project management effectiveness and improve the learning capacity of development organizations operating in complex multi-actor environments.

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### APPENDIX 1: Summary of key information from donor M&E policies

Donnor's name	Central conceptual model	Expected S&E levels	Independence process and quality assurance	Indicator devices	Learning devices	Reporting methods	Sector-specific characteristics	Notes on applicability in Central Africa	Bibliographical references
<b>AFD (Group)</b>	<b>Results-Based Management (RBM)</b> and Theory of Change.	Project (ex-post, mid-term), clusters, strategic (country, sector) and impact.	<b>Evaluation Division (EVA)</b> attached to Research. Managed by an independent Evaluation Committee.	Product, effect and impact indicators aligned with the SDGs (100% SDG).	<b>Capitalization</b> experience, systematic Management Response and knowledge networks.	Completion reports (PCR), performance sheets and biennial report to Parliament.	Public sector, private sector (Proparco), technical sector (Expertise France) and NGO.	Focus on vulnerable countries in Africa; capacity building and local expertise.	<i>AFD's Evaluation Policy</i> (2013); AFD Group Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (2024).
<b>World Bank (WB)</b>	<b>RBM, Results Chain</b>	Project, program and policies.	<b>IEG (Independent Evaluation Group)</b> structurally independent.	Outcome indicators and CWIQ for Africa.	Inquiry culture, IPDET training and horizontal sharing.	Completion reports (ICR) and performance reviews.	Infrastructure, education, health, water.	Focus on strengthening national statistical capacities.	<i>Ten Steps to a Results-Based M&amp;E System</i> (2004); <i>Evaluation Principles</i> (2019).



Donnor's name	Central conceptual model	Expected S&E levels	Independence process and quality assurance	Indicator devices	Learning devices	Reporting methods	Sector-specific characteristics	Notes on applicability in Central Africa	Bibliographical references
<b>BAD</b>	<b>RBM, Results Chain</b>	Projects, clusters, countries, themes and institutional.	<b>IDEV</b> Independent; General Assessor appointed for a non-renewable term of 6 years.	TRF (financial profitability) for the private sector and development indicators.	Communities of practice and a dedicated knowledge.	Validation notes for completion reports (RAP/XSR) and recommendation follow-up mechanism (MARM).	Infrastructure, agriculture, private sector.	Priority support for the development of national assessment capacities.	<i>Independent Evaluation Strategy 2013-2017</i> ; Revised evaluation policy (2019).
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>Results-Based Management for Development (RBM).</b>	Project, programme (CPD), portfolio, regional and global.	<b>Independent Evaluation Bureau (IEO)</b> ; decentralized evaluations by external consultants.	SMART indicators and theories of change.	EVALNET networks, summaries of factual elements and communities of practice.	Annual reports (ROAR) and mandatory management response.	Human development, fight against poverty, governance.	Assessments sensitive to contexts of crisis and fragility.	<i>Results-Oriented M&amp;E Planning Guide</i> ; Evaluation Policy 2025-2030.
<b>European Union (EU)</b>	<b>Logical framework, Results chain</b>	Intervention (project), strategic (country	Unit D4 (INTPA); Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM)	Logical framework and aggregate indicators	Capacity4 dev platform and conflicting	ROM reports, management reports and publication on the Europa website.	International cooperation and Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs).	Rigorous management in contexts of fragility and conflict.	<i>Evaluation Handbook</i> (2025); Evaluation Matters Policy.



Donnor's name	Central conceptual model	Expected S&E levels	Independence process and quality assurance	Indicator devices	Learning devices	Reporting methods	Sector-specific characteristics	Notes on applicability in Central Africa	Bibliographical references
		/region), thematic and instruments.	mechanism by external experts.	of the GERF.	tracking sheets.				
<b>GIZ</b>	<b>ToC, Results Chain</b>	Central (representative sample) and decentralized (evaluative studies).	Business valuation unit attached to the Executive Board; use of external evaluators.	SMART indicators and outcome models with assumptions.	Technical discussion forums and inter-sectoral dialogue.	Published reports (IATI standards) and "At a glance" summaries.	Energy, environment, peace and security.	Assessments must be sensitive to conflicts and human rights.	<i>GIZ's Evaluation System</i> (2022); <i>Evaluation Policy</i> (2018).
<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>RBM, ToC, Logical Framework</b>	Institutional (Corporate) and decentralized (Project/Program).	<b>IOS (Internal Control Services Division)</b> and network of focal points (EFP).	SMART/RACER quantitative and qualitative indicators.	UNESCO Evaluation Knowledge Hub and annual synthesis reviews.	SISTER system, publication on the IOS website and responses from management.	Education, science, culture, communication.	The evaluation must systematically integrate the overall priority of Africa.	<i>Evaluation Policy 2022-2029</i> ; <i>Evaluation Manual</i> (2023).
<b>FAO</b>	<b>Logical framework,</b>	Project (Individual)	<b>OED (Office for</b>	Indicators derived	Stakeholder	FPMIS system and follow-up	Agriculture, forestry,	Strengthening M&E	<i>OED project</i>



Donnor's name	Central conceptual model	Expected S&E levels	Independence process and quality assurance	Indicator devices	Learning devices	Reporting methods	Sector-specific characteristics	Notes on applicability in Central Africa	Bibliographical references
	<b>Results chain</b>	ual or Cluster), Country and Theme.	<b>Evaluation);</b> strict independence from project staff.	from the ToR evaluation matrix.	workshops and on-site feedback.	reports for recommendation s.	fisheries, food security.	capacities at the decentralized office level.	<i>evaluation manual for decentralized offices(2019).</i>
<b>CAFI</b>	<b>ToC, Results Chain</b>	Portfolio (Regional), Program (National) and Letters of Intent Milestones (LoI).	Double blind review; independent third-party verification.	Impact (CO2), effect and product indicators; spatial M&E via mobile data.	South-South learning and capitalization via university networks (ERAIFT).	Semi-annual narrative and financial reports; disbursements linked to results.	Forests, sustainable agriculture, energy.	A donor exclusively dedicated to Central Africa (DRC, Gabon, etc.).	<i>Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Policy(2022); Results Framework (2019).</i>
<b>DFID FCDO</b>	<b>Results chain (ROAMEF)</b>	Service (digital), Program, Impact and Economic.	Magenta Book and Green Book standards for value-for-money (VfM).	Key performance indicators (KPIs) and performance frameworks.	Agile principles and failure reflection sessions ("fail fast").	Publication via the DEC and submission to the National Audit Office (NAO).	Public services, climate, digital economy.	Rigorous Value-for-Money (VfM) analysis in conflict zones.	<i>Evaluation and performance analysis playbook 2024-2028Ethical guidance.</i>



Donnor's name	Central conceptual model	Expected S&E levels	Independence process and quality assurance	Indicator devices	Learning devices	Reporting methods	Sector-specific characteristics	Notes on applicability in Central Africa	Bibliographical references
<b>FFEM</b>	<b>Logical framework</b>	Project (mid-term/ex-post) and thematic/geographic clusters.	Reference groups including the Secretariat and member donors (AFD, Ministries).	<b>Aggregable indicators</b> (Biodiversity, Climate, Land, POP).	A process of continuous capitalization and transformation of experience into knowledge.	Semi-annual and completion reports based on the concept of Action.	Global environment, innovation and local development.	Focus on the incremental environmental cost and the additionality of financing.	<i>Assessment Guide</i> (2007).
<b>IUCN</b>	<b>RBM and Theory of Change.</b>	Project, program/portfolio, four-year review and impact.	PPME unit (2nd line of defence); evaluation managed by a manager independent of the project.	Performance indicators and "Indicator cookbook" for common indicators.	Action Learning Cycle.	Project portal, systematic archiving and public access to results.	Biodiversity conservation, climate, resource management.	A "One Programme" approach mobilizing members and committees from the region.	<i>Evaluation Policy</i> (2023); Core concepts in planning, monitoring and evaluating projects (2004).
<b>UNEP</b>	<b>ToC, Adaptive Management</b>	Program (Global) and Project	Dedicated MEL Specialist and UNEP	<b>Basic Indicator No. 1 and No.</b>	Toolkit and evidence-based	Annual technical and financial reports; rating dashboards.	Chemical and waste management.	Strengthening institutional capacities for compliance	<i>Strategy and action plan for M&amp;E and</i>



Donnor's name	Central conceptual model	Expected S&E levels	Independence process and quality assurance	Indicator devices	Learning devices	Reporting methods	Sector-specific characteristics	Notes on applicability in Central Africa	Bibliographical references
		(National).	Evaluation Office.	2(institutional capacities and planned integration).	brainstorming sessions.			with global conventions.	<i>learning; S&amp;E information sheet.</i>
<b>USAID</b>	<b>Theory of Change</b> and impartial measurement of results.	Performance (descriptive) and Impact (causality with counterfactual).	Technical audits of PPL/LER; evaluators with personal interest in the results.	Gender-sensitive indicators and variables corresponding to the results.	Online registration for assessments and Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC).	PPR (annual), standardized summaries of 3 to 5 pages and archiving of raw data.	Stabilization, agriculture, democracy/governance.	Use of the PFMRAF framework to assess national systems prior to direct aid.	<i>USAID Evaluation Policy(2011, aligned ADS 220);ADS Chapter 220/Use of Reliable Partner Country Systems for Direct Management and Implementation of Assistance (2012)</i>



Donnor's name	Central conceptual model	Expected S&E levels	Independence process and quality assurance	Indicator devices	Learning devices	Reporting methods	Sector-specific characteristics	Notes on applicability in Central Africa	Bibliographical references
BMZ	Results-oriented approach aligned with the revised OECD-CAD criteria; grounded in context-appropriate theories of change	<b>Three levels</b> Central evaluations (policies/programs), decentralized evaluations via operators (GIZ/KfW), and thematic/cross-cutting evaluations	Independence architecture: autonomous central assessment unit of the BMZ for strategic assessments + functional independence of the GIZ/KfW mechanisms	Indicators aligned with OECD/DA C criteria (2019) and BMZ 2024 guidelines : relevance, coherence, impact, sustainability, effect, efficiency	Strong learning organisation system: systematic feedback to operators, GIZ/KfW capitalisation, and scientific cooperation (DEval).	BMZ central evaluation reports; GIZ/KfW reports published accessible (IATI, online databases). Regular publication of impact reports and evaluation summaries.	Bilateral cooperation including: governance, education, climate, biodiversity, agriculture, peacebuilding. Systematic approaches based on OECD-CAD criteria	Highly relevant: emphasis on coherence, fragility, resilience, governance, and local ownership. GIZ/KfW approaches are already strongly present in Cameroon, the DRC, and Congo.	<i>BMZ Evaluation Policy for German Development Cooperation (2021); GIZ Evaluation System/Central project evaluation in BMZ business (2022)</i>



## Appendix 2: Independence and quality assurance of assessment types

Organization	Evaluation typology	Independence and Quality Assurance	Specific documentary references
<b>AFD (Group)</b>	Ex post project, in-depth (impact/theory of change), strategic, syntheses and meta-evaluations.	<b>Evaluation Division (EVA)</b> independent of operational services. External evaluation committee and grid based on OECD DAC standards.	<i>AFD's Evaluation Policy (2013)</i> ; AFD Group Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (2024).
<b>World Bank</b>	Independent (thematic, country, mandatory self-assessments (ICR, XPSR), impact assessments).	<b>Independent Evaluation Group (IEG)</b> reporting directly to the Boards of Directors. Peer-reviewed and methodologically rigorous.	<i>World Bank Group Evaluation Principles (2019)</i> ; Ten Steps to a Results-Based M&E System (2004).
<b>BAD</b>	Validation notes (RAP/XSR), project performance, strategic regional impact.	IDEV unit attached to the Board of Directors. General evaluator appointed for a non-renewable 6-year term. Codified evaluation manual.	<i>Independent Evaluation Strategy 2013–2017</i> ; Independent evaluation policy (2019).
<b>UNDP</b>	Independent (thematic, country, institutional), decentralized (programs, projects), evidence syntheses.	<b>Independent Evaluation Office (IEO)</b> Structurally autonomous. Quality rating system for decentralized assessments.	<i>UNDP Evaluation Policy (2025-2030)</i> ; Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results.
<b>European Union</b>	Intervention level (mid-term, final, ex post), strategic themes), meta-evaluations.	INTPA.D4 unit ensuring coordination. External Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) system and control grids (QA Checklists).	<i>Evaluation Handbook (2025)</i> ; Evaluation Matters: EU Evaluation Policy.
<b>GIZ</b>	Project hubs (random sample), decentralized, corporate strategic, cross-sectional analyses.	<b>Assessment Unit</b> reporting directly to the Board of Directors. Use of a mandatory quality grid (minimum 60/100 points).	<i>GIZ's Evaluation System (2022)</i> ; GIZ Evaluation Policy (2018).



<b>Organization</b>	<b>Evaluation typology</b>	<b>Independence and Quality Assurance</b>	<b>Specific documentary references</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	Institutional/Corporate (strategic), decentralized (projects), annual summary reviews.	<b>IOS Evaluation Office.</b> Network of Focal Points (FPOs) for decentralized quality control according to GNUE standards.	<i>UNESCO Evaluation Policy 2022-2029</i> ; UNESCO Evaluation Manual (2023).
<b>FAO</b>	Individual or cluster projects, thematic projects, country programs.	<b>Evaluation Office (OED)</b> Independent. Evaluation of decentralized reports with final rating by the OED.	<i>OED project evaluation manual (2019)</i> .
<b>CAFI</b>	Quality of proposals (ex ante), performance (mid-term), verification of Letters of Intent (LoI) Milestones.	Verification by independent third parties and anonymous reviewers (double-blind review) before approval.	<i>CAFI Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Policy (2022)</i> .
<b>DFID FCDO</b>	/ Process, results/monitoring, impact (experimental), economic (Value for Money).	Strict ethical framework and EQuALS checklist for compliance and scientific rigor.	<i>Evaluation and performance strategy 2024 to 2028</i> DFID ethical guidance.
<b>FFEM</b>	Mid-term (innovative projects), ex post by project, retrospectives of project clusters.	Management by evaluation managers and pluralistic reference groups. Control grid attached to the terms of reference.	<i>Evaluation Guide (2007)</i> .
<b>IUCN</b>	Projects, themes, programs/portfolios, quadrennial external reviews, impact.	PPME Unit (second line of defense). Independent manager for each assessment.	<i>IUCN Evaluation Policy (2023)</i> ; MEL Analysis Final Report (2021).
<b>UNEP</b>	Program assessments (mid-term/final), external mid-term exams (> 200k USD).	<b>UNEP Evaluation Office</b> overseeing impartiality. Standardized rating criteria on a scale of 0 to 5.	<i>M&amp;E Strategy and Learning (2020)</i> .



Organization	Evaluation typology	Independence and Quality Assurance	Specific documentary references
<b>BMZ</b>	<b>Independent central assessments</b>  <b>Decentralized assessments</b> conducted by mandated bodies (GIZ, KfW, etc.), additional reviews/controls (audits, effectiveness reviews)	Guaranteed independence through a multi-level architecture: a central BMZ assessment unit for strategic assessments (independent of operations), and systems specific to the operators (GIZ, KfW) with quality lines and reporting to the BMZ.	<i>BMZ Evaluation Policy for German Development Cooperation (2021); GIZ Evaluation System/Central project evaluations in BMZ business (2022)</i>
<b>USAID</b>	<b>Mandatory externals</b> For activities > \$20M; impact assessments (experimental/quasi-experimental) with cost analyses and performance evaluations	Independence is organized by an external evaluation committee (not carried out by the implementer) and transparency (registration/publication).	<i>USAID Evaluation Policy (2011, aligned with ADS 220); ADS Chapter 220/Use of Reliable Partner Country Systems for Direct Management and Implementation of Assistance (2012)</i>

### Appendix 3: Analysis of the relevance of M&E mechanisms for donors

Organization Name	Conceptual models used	Type of approach (inclusive or selective)	Relevance analysis	Bibliographical references
<b>AFD (Group)</b>	<b>RBM, ToC, Logical Framework, Results Chain</b>	<b>Inclusive</b>	<b>High</b> : The integration of the Theory of Constraints makes it possible to move beyond the rigid framework of the logical framework to align with the SDGs.	<i>AFD Group M&amp;E Policy (2024)</i>



Organization Name	Conceptual models used	Type of approach (inclusive or selective)	Relevance analysis	Bibliographical references
World Bank (WB)	RBM, Results Chain	Selective	<b>High :</b> Robust 10-step model focused on macroeconomic and systemic performance.	<i>Ten Steps to a Results-Based M&amp;E (2004)</i>
BAD	RBM, Results Chain	Selective	<b>High :</b> Successful balancing between accountability (audit) and institutional learning.	<i>IDEV Independent Evaluation Strategy (2013)</i>
UNDP	RBM (GRD), ToC, Logical Framework	Inclusive	<b>Very high :</b> Use the Theory of Change to navigate the complexity of political and institutional changes.	<i>Handbook on M&amp;E for Results (2002/2025)</i>
European Union (EU)	Logical framework, Results chain	Selective	<b>High (Contractual) :</b> The Logical Framework is the pivotal tool for managing the project cycle and ensuring consistency with Member States.	<i>Evaluation Handbook (2025)</i>
GIZ (Germany)	ToC, Results Chain	Selective	<b>Very High (Analytical) :</b> Leader in theory-based contribution analysis to prove impact.	<i>GIZ's Evaluation System (2022)</i>
UNESCO	RBM, ToC, Logical Framework	Inclusive	<b>High :</b> Allows for the measurement of intangible changes (culture, education) via complex outcome frameworks.	<i>Evaluation Policy 2022-2029</i>
FAO	Logical framework, Results chain	Selective	<b>Average :</b> The UNEG normative approach focused on the delivery of	<i>OED Project Evaluation Manual (2019)</i>



Organization Name	Conceptual models used	Type of approach (inclusive or selective)	Relevance analysis	Bibliographical references
			agricultural products.	technical
CAFI	ToC, Results Chain	Selective	<b>Very (Contextual)</b> : The theory of change is essential to link political reforms to the reduction of deforestation.	<i>CAFI MEL Policy (2022)</i>
DFID / FCDO (UK)	Results chain (ROAMEF)	Selective	<b>High (Agile)</b> : Prioritize responsiveness and rapid feedback cycles over rigid planning.	<i>Evaluation &amp; Performance Playbook (2024)</i>
FFEM	Logical framework	Selective	<b>Specific</b> : Focused on incremental cost and isolated environmental innovation.	<i>Evaluation Guide (2007)</i>
IUCN	RBM, ToC (Theory of Action)	Inclusive	<b>High</b> : Uses action theory to assess the interface between science and conservation policy.	<i>Core concepts in SMEs (2004)</i>
UNEP	ToC, Adaptive Management	Selective	<b>High</b> : Uses the Theory of Change (ToC) to adapt to unpredictable environmental dynamics.	<i>M&amp;E Strategy and Learning (2020)</i>
BMZ	Results-oriented approach aligned with the revised OECD-CAD criteria; grounded in	Selective	<b>High (Normative and Systemic)</b> : The BMZ framework is distinguished by its rigor, aligned with OECDDAC international standards, and inter-agency harmonization.	<i>BMZ Evaluation Policy for German Development Cooperation (2021); GIZ Evaluation System/Central project evaluations in BMZ business (2022)</i>



Organization Name	Conceptual models used	Type of approach (inclusive or selective)	Relevance analysis	Bibliographical references
	context-appropriate theories of change			
<b>USAID</b>	<b>Theory of Inclusive Change, Logical Framework, Results Chain</b>	Inclusive	<b>Very High (Systemic and Learning):</b> The simultaneous integration of the results chain, the logical framework and the Theory of Constraints reflects a mature approach oriented towards adaptability (Collaborating, Learning & Adapting).	<i>USAID Evaluation Policy (2011, aligned with ADS 220); ADS Chapter 220/Use of Reliable Partner Country Systems for Direct Management and Implementation of Assistance (2012)</i>

### Appendix 3: Strengths of the analytical approach and methodological limitations

#### Strengths of the approach

The strengths of our approach can be summarized in the following points:

- Reproducible and rigorously documented.
- Inter-donor comparability thanks to the DAC (Development Assistance Committee)/UNEG criteria.
- Adapted to a context without field data collection.
- Transferable to a systematic CEE map in case of evolution.

#### Limitations of the study

Three main limitations are recognized: (i) the analysis focuses on formal frameworks and not on actual implementation practices; (ii) the variability in documentation between organizations (dates, depth, terminology) can lead to information asymmetries; (iii) the lack of field data prevents an assessment of the actual use of recommendations and the administrative burden perceived by project teams. These limitations are inherent to a literature review and justify, for future work, empirical supplementary data (interviews, contextual scoring and analysis of management response loops).