COAST Foundation. Principal Office, Dhaka.
Date: 5 July, 2024

MEAL Policy

1. Definition of MEAL

Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) are part of everyday program management and are critical to the success of all programs. It enables organizations to track progress, make adjustments, discover planned or unplanned effects of programs on the lives, involve beneficiaries, and make accountable to the stakeholders through information sharing and developing a complaint or feedback mechanism which can help to guide better implementation.

## 2. Understanding Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

Monitoring: Regular collection of information to assess progress in the implementation of the work plan.

Evaluation: Periodic collection of information to assess progress in changing the behavior and well-being of the target population.

Accountability: Involves giving beneficiaries and stakeholders the opportunity, voice, and power to hold us to account in ways that influence the project/organization's policies, priorities, and actions through information sharing, feedback, and complaint mechanism and participation.

Learning: It refers to the systematic incorporation of lessons, recommendations, and observations into program design, including the findings that emerge from accountability and feedback mechanisms.

3. COAST MEAL Framework
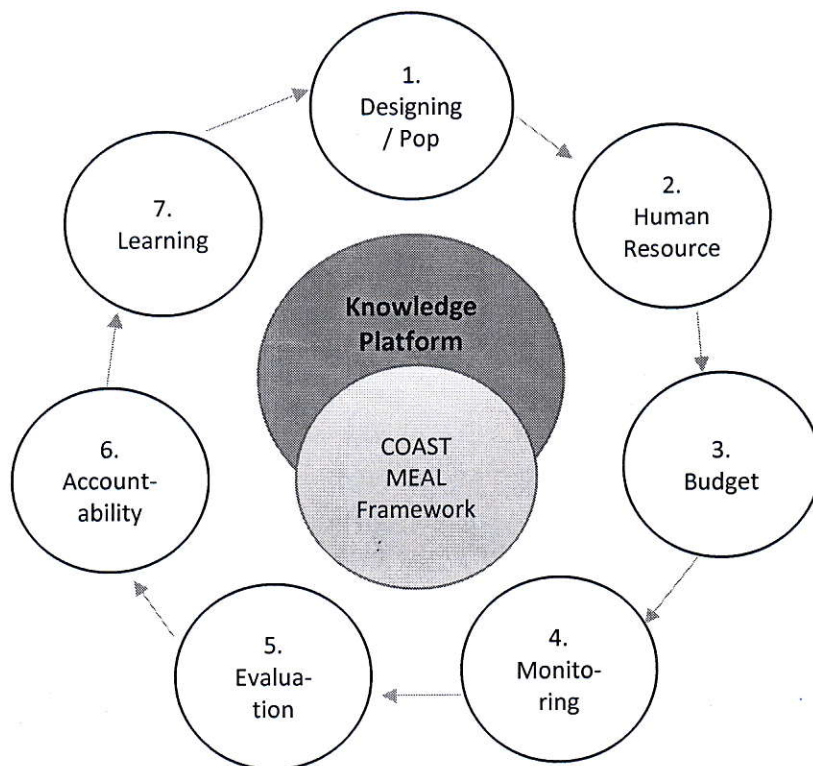
Learning and knowledge management form MEAL system will help improve designing the further program, this time more wisely. And, will allocate necessary skilled human resources and budgets to get out the most from the reviewed project or program.

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4. Objectives

4.1 Track and reduce the information gap about program activities, ensure quality performance, and put expected output in order through the exercising of MEAL.

4.2 Develop manager or leader's skills, especially on off-site monitoring in order to improve their performance in dealing with programs, policies and practices with a minimal cost.

4.3 Ensure beneficiary and stakeholder's participation in the MEAL system, allow them to share their views and ideas, hold accountable to them and document learning and knowledge management for future initiatives.

5. Process of preparing MEAL Policy

COAST analyzed its own practices of MEAL and reviewed different organizations' MEAL policy, practices and procedures. The organization also took into account of the feedback that derived from the HQAI audits, and drafted this policy. It shared and received feedback from the staff and included them later on into this policy.

6. Exercise of MEAL

6.1 MEAL exercise by Project personnel at the project level

Project Coordinator/Manager (PC/PM), M&E officer, Team Leader or Head along with Primary Stakeholders, throughout their direct participation, meeting, discussion and field visit will ensure regular monitoring by using some specific formats and checklists. Respective persons will compile the findings and share the findings and learning at their monthly PIU meeting and bimonthly/monthly Program Progress Monitoring Meeting (PPMM) for further decision.

6.2 Meal exercise by Principal Office staff (Focal persons, JD-MEAL&R, Head-MEAL&SD, etc.)

On behalf of ED, JD-MEAL&R and Head-MEAL&SD along with other focal persons are responsible for monitoring. They will prepare monitoring formats along with monitoring plan. They will monitor and evaluate programs or projects mainly in two ways, i.e. (a) off-site monitoring through receiving M&E report, newsletter, meeting minutes, etc. and (b) on-site monitoring while they visit programs/projects, and conduct evaluation. The core program (Micro Finance, Institution Building and Good Governance) will be monitoring under the core program.

7. Tools and Techniques

7.1. Tools for off-site Monitoring

Off-site monitoring can be defined as the viewing of closed-circuit television (CCTV). Monitoring formats, reports, pictures or zoom meeting with staffs, PPMM, etc. tools can be used for off-site monitoring. This type of monitoring controls programs from principal office to field offices and ensures quality implementation of programs.

COAST Off-site monitoring tools

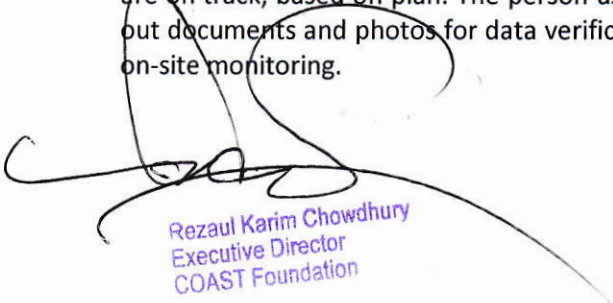| SI	Monitoring Tools	Objective	Process			Frequency	Follow-up
			Source	Compilation & Analysis	Preservation & Dissemination		
1.	Plan of Operation (PoP)	- To set project activities in time-frame	Project PoP receive or review of it	PC & PIU	PC & JD-MEAL&R	During project inception	Focal person, JD-MEAL&R
2.	Statutory requirement format of project	- To ensure timely submission and quality control	Printed Statutory requirement	PC, Focal person	PC, Focal person	During the project	Focal, JD-MEAL&R
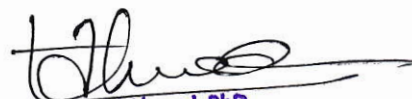
SI	Monitoring Tools	Objective	Process			Frequency	Follow-up
			Source	Compilation & Analysis	Preservation & Dissemination		
3.	Quarterly Project Plan	- To know the project planning	Report receive	PC/PM, JD-MEAL&R	JD-MEAL&R & disseminate at PPMM	Monthly	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD
4.	Monthly advanced plan	- To know staff/ PC/PMs monthly plan	Plan receive	Focal person, JD-MEAL&R	JD-MEAL&R & disseminate at PPMM	Monthly	Focal, JD-MEAL&R
5.	Activity progress review report	- To know the last month achievement performance	Report receive	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD	JD-MEAL&R & disseminate to the SMT at PPMM	Monthly	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD
6.	Finance review report	- To know the activity progress & expenditure	Burn Rate Report receive	Director-FCC&EA, Focal	Director-FCC&EA and disseminate to ED/PACM	Monthly	Director-FCC&EA
7.	Data segregation review report of project	- To know the diversity of communities, including disadvantage or marginalized	Data segregation report receive	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD & disseminate to the SMT at PPMM	Monthly	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD
8.	Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM)	- To know progress of submitted complaints	Complaint register/ compilation report	JD-GT&CR, Director-A&SR	JD-GT&CR and disseminate to ED	Monthly/ need base	GT&CR
9.	Meeting minutes review	- To know the project progress and decisions to be addressed	Meeting minutes receive	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD	JD-MEAL&R and disseminate at the PPMM	Monthly	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD, Focal
10	Challenges & Learning	- To know the key challenges and learning of project for adjustment	Challenges & Learning sharing at the PPMM/ yearly event	PC/PM & M&E	PC/PM, JD-MEAL&R & disseminate to the SMT at PPMM	Monthly/ Yearly event	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD
11	Desktop news-letter review	- To ensure project news are published & stakeholders receive it	Newsletter publication	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD	PC/PM, JD-MEAL&R	Monthly	JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD

7.2. Tools for on-site monitoring and evaluation

On-site monitoring is carried out by an individual who visits the program site at a regular basis and ensure activities are on track, based on plan. The person uses tools like formats, discussion with program participants and check out documents and photos for data verification. MEAL staff, focal, PCs and monitoring officers will carry out the on-site monitoring.

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On-site monitoring and evaluation tools

SI	Monitoring Tools	Objective	Process			Frequency	Follow-up
			Source	Compilation & Analysis	Preservation and Dissemination		
1.	Beneficiary feedback report	- To know the satisfaction level of beneficiaries & unintended negative effect of project, if any	Interview/ Focus Group Discussion-FGD report, photograph	AM/RPC, PC/PM/M&E, JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD	JD-MEAR&R and disseminate to all	Quarterly	JD-MEAL&R
2.	Risk assessment report	- To know and address, if there is any ongoing risk, e.g. SEAH, safety, security, finance, management, etc.	Monitoring, audit, report and interview	PC/PM, AM/RPC at field and Internal Audit, MEAL & finance dept. from central	Monitoring, Inter Audit & finance personnel and disseminate to focal, DED and ED	Quarterly/ regularly	DED, Director-ME&AI, Director-FCC&EA, JD-MEAL&R
3.	Leadership Performance Review(LPR)	- To assess the managerial skill, performance & knowledge on COAST policies	Staff and beneficiary interview	Focal, JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD	Focal, JD-MEAL&R & Head-MEAL&SD and disseminate to the DED and respective project leader	Need base	DED
4.	Financial (Burn Rate) Monitoring and Audit	- To assess the financial progress and performance of project	Budget line, cash book, ledger & BR reports	Director-FCC&EA, focal and Audit team	Director-FCC&EA, focal and Audit team and submit to the DED and ED	Monthly	Director-FCC&EA
5.	Post-facto Movement Checkup (PMC)	- To assess staff movement, output and effectiveness	Movement register and field visit	RTLs, JD-MEAL&R, Head-MEAL and Focal	RTLs, JD-MEAL&R, Head-MEAL and Focal and submit to the DED	Need base	Director-ME&AI, JD-MEAL&R
6.	Midterm participatory review	- To assess the midterm progress of project	Beneficiary and staff interview, documents, report check	JD-MEAL&R, Head-MEAL&SD and PIU staff	JD-MEAL&R, Head-MEAL&SD and PIU staff & disseminate to project leaders & SMT	Mid of the projects	JD-MEAL&R
7.	End line participatory review	- To assess the impact of project	Do	Do	Do	Ending of project	JD-MEAL&R

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8. COAST Accountability Mechanism

8.1 Core program

COAST ensures accountability in its programs, especially in Microfinance, Institution Building and Good Governance. It ensures display "Your Right to Know" policy on the board of every offices. It also publishes Information Discloser Policy, Communications Policy, Complaint Response Mechanism policy, Whistle blowing policy, etc. available both in the website and diary. It clearly declares a mechanism for responding to complaints, if anyone sought. COAST Micro Finance Passbook contains emergency communications numbers including the Executive Director's and it encourages stakeholders for submitting complaints, if any. COAST ensures proper solution of complaints within the stipulated time, it declared.

8.2 Social Development program (Non-core program)

Likewise, core programs, COAST ensures accountability mechanism in Non-core programs, i.e. ensures complaint receiving and solution mechanism, set-up of suggestion box, discloses email and postal address and emergency contact number, as well as ensures mutual accountability to all its beneficiary, stakeholder, staff and donor. COAST has a statuary requirement format in use which contains project basic information and must-be-done activities that makes the organization accountable to the donor in other way.

9. Beneficiary feedback

9.1 COAST ensures beneficiary feedback mechanism both in its core and social development programs. It regularly organizes Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and/or direct interview with beneficiaries and collects feedback to know their level of satisfaction over services, they receive. It considers beneficiary feedback as a learning tool too.

9.2 COAST also organizes FGD and/or direct interview with beneficiaries and collects feedback on actual or potential unintended negative effects, if there is any, e.g. gender discrimination, sexual exploitation and abuse, livelihood, safety-security, environment, etc. which is affected negatively by the implementation of COAST projects/programs. It also seeks beneficiary opinion to prevent that unintended negative effects and takes necessary action in consultation with the management.

10. Learning:

As learning refers to the systematic incorporation of lessons, recommendations and observations, including the findings that emerge from accountability and feedback mechanisms, COAST will document that, share and publish to get meaningful, evidence based learning from them to practice.

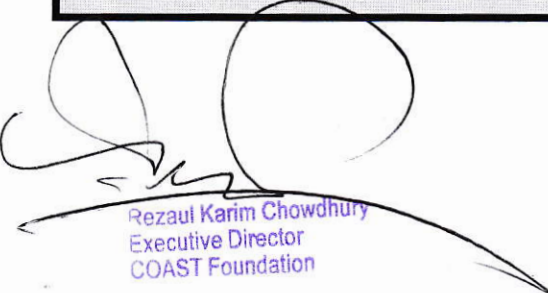## 11. Duties and responsibilities of staff/volunteers

11.1 All staff/volunteers must read this policy, they should have clear understanding on this. They have to abide by this.

11.2 Management action can be taken against those who violate this.
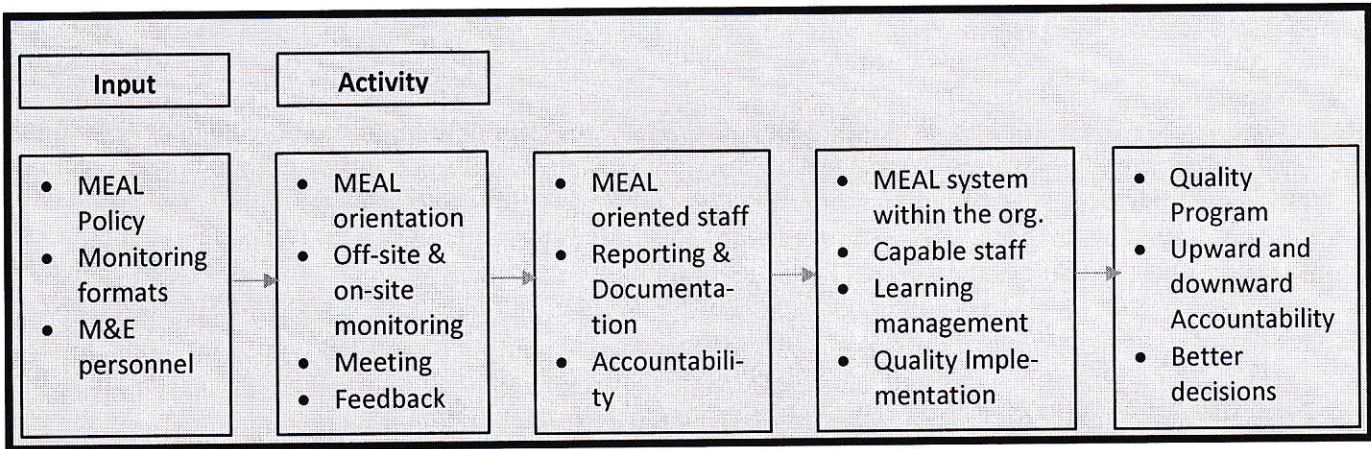
12. Theory of Change (ToC)

Theory of Change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions to reach its outcome. COAST, in consultation with staff, outlined its process to get out the most by practicing MEAL.
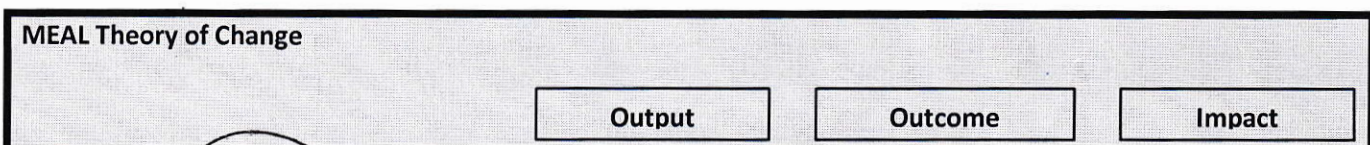
MEAL Theory of Change			
	Output	Outcome	Impact

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Input	Activity			
• MEAL Policy • Monitoring formats • M&E personnel	• MEAL orientation • Off-site & on-site monitoring • Meeting • Feedback	• MEAL oriented staff • Reporting & Documenta-tion • Accountabili-ty	• MEAL system within the org. • Capable staff • Learning management • Quality Imple-mentation	• Quality Program • Upward and downward Accountability • Better decisions

13. Approved by the General Council and effective date

The review of this policy has been approved unanimously in the 6th Annual General Meeting which was held on 6 July 2024 at COAST Principal Office, Dhaka, and be effective with no delay.
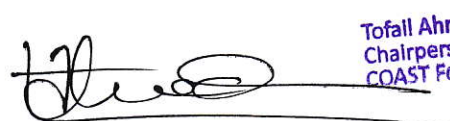
14. Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed by 2027 or earlier, if necessary, incorporating significant changes in national and international laws, policies, and human rights declarations.

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Executive Director/Member-Secretary
COAST Foundation

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