

Sustainability refers to how the work completed during the project lifespan will continue to have positive impacts and outcomes in the months and years after the end of funding.

These long-term positive impacts can be achieved by:

- ✓ Strengthening the capacity of individuals and community groups to run activities, maintain investments and build networks and advocate for rights and resources
- ✓ Enhancing income generating activities to strengthen financial health, skills, and access to finance for individuals and groups, fostering innovation and creativity
- ✓ Creating positive institutional environments where stakeholders, leaders and government agencies are willing and able to continue the benefits of the project.

Top tips for planning, integrating and reporting on project sustainability:

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Plan for sustainability from the start

Sustainability should be embedded in all stages of the project cycle, beginning at the concept and design phase. A strong sustainability plan anticipates handovers, engages key stakeholders early, and adapts to changing project contexts. For each activity, clearly define who will take ownership post-project, how stakeholders will be involved in the transition, when handovers should occur, and how success will be measured and monitored.



Co-creation

Co-creation approaches generate the best conditions for successful sustainability plans. Inviting local stakeholders to shape project goals, approaches, and delivery mechanisms can nurture a deeper sense of ownership. It is especially important to co-create with stakeholders who will remain involved in the community long after the end of the project.

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Engage all stakeholders including delivery partners

Involve all relevant stakeholders including project teams, delivery partners, government agencies, and local actors from the outset. Work with everyone to clearly define how individual roles will sustain project benefits after the project ends, and establish effective mechanisms for raising and resolving issues well before the end of the project.





Monitor and evaluate the sustainability plan

Regularly review your sustainability plan to ensure it remains relevant and achievable. Use existing Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems and logframe indicators to track progress—avoid creating separate monitoring processes.

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Types of evidence to demonstrate sustainability

Evidence to demonstrate the success of your sustainability plan can include behaviour change assessments, community action plans, financial reports from income-generating activities, and Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) from government partners committing to ongoing support.



Report annually but reflect often

Each annual report asks for clear analysis of the effectiveness of your project's sustainability plan, supported by relevant evidence demonstrating progress and impact – but don't wait for this annual milestone - reflect often on the smaller steps within your sustainability plan. Create a culture of reflection within the team and amongst key stakeholders.

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Understand and mitigate sustainability risks

Identify and address risks that could undermine your sustainability plan, such as changes in political economy, engagement or funding commitments, staff turnover or community disagreements. Your report should include a 'Risks to sustainability' section with realistic mitigation strategies.



Seek support when needed

Reach out to your Performance and Risk Manager (PRM) or the fund manager team for guidance on developing, implementing, or reporting on your project's sustainability plan.

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••➔ Additional resources

- Discussion series recording - [Sustainability: Evidencing effectiveness and risk management](#)
- Podcast episode - [Sustainability in action: Ripple effect and mdsustain share their journey](#)
- Section 7 in our annual report guidance - [How to report on your project's sustainability plans.](#)