



CI-GEF PROJECT AGENCY

MONITORING AND EVALUATION POLICY FOR GEF-FUNDED PROJECTS



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I. CONTEXT

1. Conservation International (CI) was accredited as a Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project Agency in November 2013. As part of the accreditation process, the CI-GEF Project Agency was required to articulate its monitoring and evaluation policy.¹ The CI-GEF Project Agency Monitoring and Evaluation Policy was developed as part of the recommendations from the GEF Accreditation Panel and aligns with the [GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy](#). As a Project Agency, CI will have a new role with increased responsibility and accountability within the GEF partnership. Initially, this will only involve conducting project-level evaluations for all GEF-funded projects.

II. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE CI-GEF PROJECT AGENCY MONITORING AND EVALUATION POLICY

2. An institutional evaluation policy responds to our need to efficiently evaluate the contribution of our actions in achieving goals defined by our mission. It also meets the demands and expectations of donors, partners, governments and beneficiaries engaged by CI in providing transparent and credible documentation of our decision-making and results. This policy establishes standards and guidelines for promoting accountability, organizational learning and advancing knowledge within the organization through evidence-based results reporting. It is focused on project-level evaluations, though CI's other levels of analysis including program-, division- and organization-level evaluations could supplement and reinforce this when appropriate.
3. This policy informs Executing Agencies of GEF-funded projects, partners and stakeholders about:
 - The purposes of evaluation;
 - The types of evaluation conducted; and
 - Evaluation standards to be followed for GEF-funded projects.
4. This policy is intended to explain the concept, role and use of evaluation within GEF-funded projects, and define the institutional framework and responsibilities of the Project Agency and Executing Agencies. Specifically, it establishes guidelines for planning, implementing and using evaluations in line with international principles, norms and standards.
5. Although financial management and performance are part of any evaluation, this policy does not address systems for financial oversight and auditing. Protocols and procedures for financial reporting are addressed through the Project Agency's grant management processes. Outputs of these processes will serve as an input to evaluations.
6. This policy is formulated in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-

¹ An initial version of this monitoring and evaluation policy was included in Conservation International's accreditation materials; this is a revised and updated version to reflect further development of Conservation International's GEF Project Agency.

operation and Development (OECD DAC) guidelines for evaluation, and informed by minimum requirements for evaluation described by the Global Environment Facility.

III. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring

7. **Definition:** The CI-GEF Project Agency applies the following definition of monitoring: *“A continuous or periodic function that uses systematic collection of data, qualitative and quantitative, for the purposes of keeping activities on track. It is first and foremost a management instrument.”*
8. **Purpose:** Monitoring provides early information on progress, or lack thereof, toward achieving intended objectives and outcomes. By tracking progress, monitoring helps identify implementation issues that warrant decisions at different management levels, supporting adaptive management. A good monitoring system combines information from various levels in such a way that it provides a comprehensive picture of performance and allows periodic reports to management that facilitate decision making and learning.

Evaluation

9. **Definition:** The CI-GEF Project Agency applies the following definition of evaluation: *“The systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors. Evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or program. An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, on-going, or completed development intervention. Note: Evaluation in some instances involves the definition of appropriate standards, the examination of performance against those standards, an assessment of actual and expected results and the identification of relevant lessons.*
10. The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy further adds, *“In the context of the GEF, evaluation aims at assessing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, results, and—where feasible—sustainability of GEF interventions in the context of their contribution to global environmental benefits in GEF focal areas at the local and global levels.”*
11. **Purpose:** The practice of evaluation for CI projects has three primary purposes:
 - **Accountability:** The organization has a responsibility to donors, partners, collaborators and stakeholders to document the results of projects, assess their effectiveness, validate their relevance and track the efficiency and sustainability of efforts. Evaluation promotes greater transparency in decision-making by documenting resources allocated, results achieved, lessons learned and good practices.

- *Knowledge Generation:* Evaluation generates knowledge on many aspects of project design, planning, implementation and reporting. This includes progress in meeting broader institutional goals, selection of interventions based on which ones are working and others that are less successful, and factors that influence effective project outcomes. Results from evaluations have the potential to build and strengthen existing evidence on effectiveness of different actions, decisions or policies. Evaluation is useful in not only enhancing institutional knowledge, but also improving evidence used by other development and conservation organizations.
- *Learning:* Knowledge gained from informative evaluations can foster learning and strengthen decision-making by the Project Agency, Executing Agencies and partners through adaptive management. Dissemination and integration of evaluation conclusions and recommendations into future projects will enable the organization to replicate successes, avoid mistakes and enhance best practices.

IV. MONITORING AND EVALUATION STANDARDS, PRICIPLES AND NORMS

12. Monitoring and evaluation under the auspices of the CI-GEF Project Agency will adhere to a set of standards, principles and norms drawn from best practice in evaluation. These will be based on internationally recognized professional norms and standards defined by the UN Evaluation Group and the OECD DAC, and informed by existing evaluation policies by the Global Environment Facility² and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The standards, principles and norms are intended to guide the management of the monitoring and evaluation function, the conduct of evaluations, and the use of evaluations within CI.
13. **Independence:** Evaluation of GEF-funded projects should be impartial and consider potential conflicts of interests or biases in measurement. In particular, evaluators should not personally have been engaged in the activities to be evaluated or have been responsible in the past for the design, implementation or supervision of the project, program or policy to be evaluated. To ensure that members of evaluation teams are independent from the policy-making process and delivery and management of project activities, oversight of the evaluation function sits in CI's Office of the General Counsel (GCO). Evaluations shall be conducted by independent external individuals or entities, with terms of reference (TORs) reviewed by the GCO.
14. **Credibility:** Evaluations shall use sound qualitative and quantitative research methods that generate rigorous and credible evidence that corresponds to relevant evaluation questions. In addition, methods are selected based upon time, budget and other practical considerations. Selection of appropriate methods and analyses shall be informed by current research in the pertinent fields and determined by empirical strength and feasibility of application of available tools or methods.

² Note that the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy provides a set of principles for each monitoring and evaluation, although a subset of the same principles are applied for monitoring as for evaluation. The CI-GEF Project Agency has opted to outline a single set of principles that apply to both monitoring and evaluation, as relevant.

Analysis shall be based upon reliable data and/or observations. Use of sex-disaggregated data and considerations of gender in evaluation methods shall be conducted with respect to principles described in CI's Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF). Evaluation reports shall require consistency and dependability in data, findings, judgments and lessons learned with reference to the quality of the instruments, procedures and analysis used to collect and interpret information.

15. **Utility:** The purpose and scope of evaluations should be developed to serve information needs of intended users. Intended users shall be clearly identified in the evaluation approach, and evaluation questions framed accordingly. Potential users include project staff in field programs, managers of specific programs, and peer organizations using similar approaches. Information needs of users might include knowledge on project impacts, information on project design and delivery, or factors influencing effective implementation across different contexts.
16. **Impartiality:** Evaluations must give a comprehensive and balanced presentation of the strengths and weaknesses of the policy, program, project or organizational unit being evaluated. The evaluation process should reflect impartiality at all stages and take into account the views of all stakeholders. The commissioning of evaluations should be conducted with the aim of ensuring that evaluators selected are impartial and unbiased.
17. **Ethics:** Evaluations shall abide by professional and ethical guidelines and codes with respect to research on human subjects as described in CI's human research ethics policy³ and be mindful of the culture, language, customs, religious beliefs, welfare and practices of all stakeholders involved or affected. Evaluators must avoid conflict of interest. Evaluators must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence. In case of any evidence of wrongdoing, any individual involved in the monitoring and reporting for GEF projects is obligated to report cases in an appropriate manner to the appropriate individuals within Conservation International and the GEF Secretariat or Independent Evaluation Office. Ethical evaluation also requires that management and/or commissioners of evaluations remain open to the findings and do not allow vested interests to interfere with the evaluation.
18. **Participation:** GEF evaluations must be carried out with the participation of in-country stakeholders, in particular the GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP), as well as other national stakeholders such as project managers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in project implementation. Comprehensive stakeholder participation will enable the project and program beneficiaries to participate in the learning process with the GEF and the GEF partnership to learn from them.
19. **Transparency and Disclosure:** The lessons from monitoring and evaluation shall be disseminated in accordance with widely accepted international standards by establishing effective feedback loops to policy makers, operational staff, beneficiaries and the general public. To meet the purpose of

³ CI's Human Research Ethics Policy: <https://sites.google.com/a/conservation.org/rights-based-approach/rba-policies/research-ethics>

evaluation in strengthening CI's institutional accountability, evaluation reports including a description of methods, key findings and recommendations shall be available to the public online in a fully searchable form. With exceptions of where reasonable protection and confidentiality of stakeholders or proprietary material is required, CI commits to full and active transparency and disclosure. Results shall be available within six months of an evaluation's conclusion.

20. **Integration into Design of Projects:** For each project, performance evaluations shall be incorporated at the proposal development stage, and subsequently integrated into the planning and design of project activities. Sufficient budget and staff time shall be allocated for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. Projects shall identify key evaluation questions at the onset, which will strengthen project design and guide data collection required to inform subsequent evaluation. Furthermore, projects shall collect and synthesize appropriate baseline data that will inform subsequent project-level evaluations as well as broader institutional performance monitoring. Partners and sub-grantees shall also be required to collect necessary monitoring data related to project activities. A system for data management and archiving should be internalized into project design and administration.

V. EVALUATION CRITERIA

21. The performance of the CI-GEF Project Agency's work, including individual projects, is assessed according to five main evaluation criteria (GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2010):
- *Relevance:* The extent to which the activity is suited to local and national environmental priorities and policies and to global environmental benefits to which the GEF is dedicated; this analysis includes an assessment of changes in relevance over time.
 - *Effectiveness:* The extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved.
 - *Efficiency:* The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.
 - *Results:* In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes, and progress toward longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects, and other local effects.
 - *Sustainability:* The likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion; projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable.
22. These five main evaluation criteria provide the framework for all evaluations relating to CI's portfolio of GEF activities. In some instances, the relevance of one or more evaluation criteria may be lower than others, and may be identified as such in the descriptions of an evaluation's approach. Further, in the evaluation of GEF activities, evaluators may choose to develop additional criteria appropriate to the subject or context of the evaluation.

VI. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

23. Conservation International empowers societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature, our global biodiversity, for the well-being of humanity. Our geographic portfolio reflects countries we have identified as strategic for field and policy engagement, investment and relationship development with key regional and global partners.
24. **CI-GEF Project Agency:** Conservation International, as a GEF Project Agency, is responsible for oversight and monitoring of CI's GEF portfolio and for reporting the Project Agency's project, program and portfolio progress, results, learning and lessons. For Midterm Reviews and Terminal Evaluations, CI-GEF Project Agency will notify the GCO to begin the evaluation process. Recognizing that evaluations need to be independent, the CI-GEF Project Agency will only participate in evaluations as requested by the GCO and the independent consultant conducting the evaluation.
25. **Office of the General Counsel (GCO) of Conservation International:** Key evaluation functions of the organization lie within the GCO of Conservation International. The Senior Director for Compliance and Risk Management coordinates the evaluation functions to measure CI's organizational performance, provides guidance and advice in the design and implementation of evaluation plans in line with donor requirements, ensures adherence to CI's evaluation standards, and communicates evaluation results to the Board, donors and other key stakeholders.
26. The activities of the GCO Senior Director aim to improve the overall effectiveness of the CI-GEF Project Agency portfolio as well as generate knowledge on conservation impacts of relevance to broader conservation and development sectors. This position in the GCO serves as a coordinating entity in evaluations. Evaluations are conducted by an independent evaluation team of external consultants, who are not involved in any aspects of policy making, delivery or management of project activities. The primary function of the GCO in evaluation is to develop evaluation standards to be followed by the external evaluators, ensure compliance of external evaluations with GEF and CI standards, and to synthesize conclusions and recommendations across multiple evaluation reports for presentation to GEF and senior CI leadership.
27. **Executing Agencies, Partners, and Interested Parties:** As outlined in the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2010⁴, the following groups should be included in evaluations, depending on the project and their role in the identified project: national project or program executing agencies; groups contracted to conduct activities at various stages of the project or program; and other civil society groups including local community members who may have an interest in the project or program, who are living in the project or program area, or who are dependent on the natural resources of the project or program area for part of their livelihoods or in times of stress.

⁴ GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2010

https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/ME_Policy_2010.pdf

28. **Key Roles and Responsibilities:** Table 1, below, summarizes the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the GEF network in relation to monitoring and evaluation.

Table 1. Key Roles and Responsibilities in Monitoring and Evaluation for GEF-funded Projects

ENTITY	KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION
CI Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set institutional policies for evaluation • Enabling environment for evaluation
CI-GEF Project Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop monitoring guidelines for projects • Monitor the CI-GEF Project Agency GEF portfolio • Report CI’s project, program, and portfolio progress, results, learning, and lessons to the GEF • Ensure monitoring and evaluation at the project and program levels in coordination with CI’s GCO and Executing Agencies • Oversee adaptive management of project and program implementation • Provide feedback on monitoring and evaluation outputs (i.e., inception workshop reports, quarterly and annual progress and financial reports, MTR reports, PIRs, Tracking Tools and TEs) • Communicate with CI Leadership and the GCO about project initiation and anticipated and actual completion • Support knowledge sharing through follow-up on GEF evaluation results and recommendations • Support knowledge sharing through dissemination of lessons and good practices from CI’s GEF portfolio and within the GEF network • Involve national partners, and share project monitoring and evaluation information at the national level • Liaise with GEF Secretariat and GEF Independent Evaluation Office • Provide comments on GEF Independent Evaluation Office reviews of final evaluation report quality
The Office of the General Counsel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review CI-GEF TOR for evaluations to ensure alignment with CI evaluation norms and minimum standards • Select independent consultant to conduct evaluations • Synthesize conclusions and recommendations across multiple evaluation reports for presentation to GEF and senior CI leadership • Facilitate uptake of evaluation results and institutional learning within CI • Quality control of evaluation methods and analyses • Oversee ethical integrity of evaluation designs and implementation • Oversee quality of project evaluations • Liaise with GEF Evaluation Office as necessary
Independent Evaluators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare evaluation work plan and overall approach • Adhere to CI and GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy norms and standards for evaluation, and GEF Independent Evaluation Office guidelines on conducting final evaluations • Inform Executing Agencies and other stakeholders of evaluation design, questions, approach and methods

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out independent midterm reviews and final evaluations of projects • Compile evaluation report with evaluative evidence, findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons
Executing Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop project monitoring and evaluation plan and budget • Identify project performance indicators and baselines • Implement relevant monitoring activities, and report monitoring results • Manage data and archiving for evaluation purposes • Provide data and input to evaluation process • Support logistical arrangements necessary for evaluation • Cooperate with and support the evaluation team
GEF Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive monitoring materials and data, such as PIRs, MTRs, Focal Area Tracking Tools and AMR inputs from the CI-GEF Project Agency • Provide policy and guidance on monitoring in the GEF network to GEF agencies
GEF Evaluation Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive evaluation reports from the CI-GEF Project Agency • Review evaluation reports to verify ratings and assess quality • Notify the CI-GEF Project Agency of comments on evaluation • Finalize review of evaluation report based on all comments received

VII. GEF PROJECT LEVEL MONITORING AND EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS

29. The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy includes a set of four minimum requirements for the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation in the GEF network.

30. The GEF has specific, mandatory activities that are linked to the minimum requirements for monitoring and evaluation. Table 2 summarizes the required monitoring and evaluation activities at the project level based on the GEF Secretariat Results-based Management Guidelines, by project type, for Full-sized Projects (FSPs), Medium-sized Projects (MSPs) and Enabling Activities (EAs). In addition, the CI-GEF Project Agency requires specific monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities during project implementation, such as quarterly progress and financial reporting. These requirements are summarized in Table 2 for the reference of CI-GEF Project Agency, Executing Agencies and other relevant partners.

Table 2. CI-GEF Project Agency Project Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements

MONITORING AND EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit baseline information at CEO endorsement; • Organize Inception Workshop within three months of signing CI-GEF Grant Agreement; • Complete inception report within one month of project inception workshop; • Submit quarterly progress and financial reports; • Submit annual PIR to CI-GEF Project Agency by July 31st until project closure for projects that have been under implementation for one year or longer; • Complete an independent external midterm review (MTR)⁵ within 90 days prior to or following the midpoint of the period of performance of the grant agreement; • Submit relevant GEF focal area tracking tool three times during the life of the project: at CEO endorsement,

⁵ Midterm Reviews are not required for Medium Sized Projects (MSPs) with a duration of up to 2 years

midterm, and project closure; and

- Carry out a final evaluation within 90 days before the end of period of performance of the grant agreement

Minimum Requirement 1: Design of M&E Plans

31. All projects and programs will include a concrete and fully budgeted Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan by the time of CEO endorsement for full-size projects and CEO approval for medium-size projects. Project results frameworks should align, where appropriate, to the GEF's focal area results frameworks. The M&E plan will contain the following as a minimum:
- Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) indicators for results and implementation linked appropriately to the focal area results frameworks; additional indicators that can deliver reliable and valid information to management may also be identified in the M&E plan.
 - Baseline for the project or program with a description of the problem to be addressed, including indicator data or, if major baseline indicators are not identified, an alternative plan for addressing this by CEO endorsement.
 - Identification of reviews and evaluations that will be undertaken, including midterm reviews and terminal evaluations.
 - Organizational set-up and budgets for M&E.
32. The CI-GEF Project Agency Project Managers review all projects and programs prior to submission to the GEF for approval to ensure that they meet the above minimum requirements, including the use of indicators and targets that align with focal area objectives and indicators.
33. To support implementation of project M&E, the M&E plans should include activities to monitor project indicators, complete tracking tools, undertake monitoring reports, and complete midterm review and final evaluation reports.
34. A budgeted M&E plan is distinct from the project management cost budget. A fully outlined and budgeted M&E plan must be included at the time of submission for CEO Endorsement. The budget for the M&E plan can be spread across the various components of a project, as applicable. A separate budget for what will be spent on M&E should be provided in the CEO Endorsement document.
35. Examples of activities covered include:
- Inception workshop;
 - Tracking tool measurement, monitoring of Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs), and any associated monitoring expenses;
 - Monitoring of all project indicators, including assessment and inventory stocktaking for chemicals, pollution reduction and/or documenting evaluation of project changes;
 - Periodic monitoring reports;
 - Independent external midterm review; and

- Independent external terminal evaluation.

36. Activities not covered under the M&E budget, and which should be considered part of project management costs:

- Oversight activities on the implementation of a project;
- Regular progress reporting of the project to the CI-GEF Project Agency;
- Consultation with project stakeholders; and
- Financial audit for the project.

37. The technical reports for specific technical components should be part of the project component cost. It should not be charged as an M&E item, nor should it be charged to management costs.

38. Other activities not covered in the M&E budget, but are functions of GEF Agencies⁶ include the following:

- All activities related to the performance of project cycle management services by a GEF Agency which include identification, preparation, appraisal and supervision of projects;
- Midterm review performed by a GEF Agency;
- A review of the terminal evaluation reports that are prepared by an independent consultant hired by the government;
- Quality control and review of tracking tools; and
- Preparation of annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) and other related GEF portfolio reports to GEF Secretariat or to GEF Trustee.

Minimum Requirement 2: Application of M&E Plans

39. Project and program monitoring and supervision will include implementation of the M&E plan, comprising the following:

- SMART indicators for implementation actively used;
- SMART indicators for results actively measure, or if not, a reasonable explanation provided;
- The baseline for the project fully established and data applied to review progress, and evaluations undertaken as planned;
- The organizational set-up for M&E is operational and its budget is spent as planned.

Minimum Requirement 3: Project and Program Evaluation

40. Evaluations will have the following minimum requirements:

- The evaluation will be undertaken independent of project management.
- The evaluation will apply the norms and standards of the Agency concerned.
- The evaluation will assess at a minimum:
 - achievement of outputs and outcomes, and provide ratings for targeted objectives and outcomes;

⁶ The GEF Agency fee should cover all functions performed by a GEF Agency that involve project cycle management services.

- likelihood of sustainability of outcomes at project or program termination, and provide a rating for this; and
- whether Minimum Requirements 1 and 2 were met, and provide a rating for this.
- The report of this evaluation will contain at a minimum:
 - basic data on the evaluation:
 - when the evaluation took place,
 - who was involved,
 - the key questions, and
 - the methodology—including application of the five evaluation criteria;
 - basic data of the project or program, including actual GEF and other expenditures;
 - lessons of broader applicability; and
 - the terms of reference of the evaluation (in an Appendix).
- The report of the evaluation will be sent to the GEF Evaluation Office immediately upon completion, and at the latest, within 12 months of completion of project or program implementation.

Minimum Requirement 4: Engagement of Operational Focal Points

41. Projects and programs will engage operational focal points in M&E-related activities. The following requirements shall be applied:

- The M&E plan will include a specification of how the project or program will keep the relevant GEF OFP informed and, where applicable and feasible, involved, while respecting the independent nature of evaluation.
- During implementation, GEF OFPs will be informed by the Agencies on M&E activities in the projects and programs that belong to their national portfolio.
- The GEF OFPs will be informed of midterm reviews and terminal evaluations and will, where applicable and feasible, be briefed and debriefed at the start and end of evaluation missions. They will receive a draft report for comment, will be invited to contribute to the management response (where applicable), and will receive the final evaluation report within 12 months of project or program completion.
- GEF Agencies will keep track of the application of the conditions specified here in their GEF-financed projects and programs.

VIII. GUIDANCE FOR CONDUCTING MIDTERM REVIEWS AND FINAL EVALUATIONS

42. The guidance below is intended to support the successful completion of the CI-GEF Project Agency midterm reviews and terminal evaluations by providing a clear understanding of the process. Evaluators must also follow all guidance in Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal

Evaluations⁷ (GEF Evaluation Office, 2008), and evaluators should use the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2010⁸ as a resource.

43. A transparent and open procurement procedure should be conducted to select the evaluation team, i.e., independent consultants, in alignment with CI's Procurement Policy. The evaluation team should have appropriate expertise in research methods, evaluation reporting procedures, and the technical subject matter relevant to the project. The team should be independent from policy making or management decisions associated with project activities and have no conflict of interest with CI business. Any conflicts of interests or potential biases should be declared. Evaluators should also be knowledgeable about GEF operational programs and strategies and about relevant GEF policies, such as those on project life cycle, M&E, incremental costs, fiduciary standards and environmental and social safeguards.

Level of Analysis

44. Evaluations will be conducted at the project level of analysis.

Design of Evaluation

45. All evaluations must be initiated through an evaluation inception report, which outlines the evaluation approach, including all relevant aspects of the evaluation design. The design and planning of the evaluation is intended to ensure timely, valid and reliable information. It also provides the project team and stakeholders associated with the project a clear understanding of the evaluation team's basis for the evaluation assessment and a clear roadmap for how the evaluation team will carry out activities necessary to complete the evaluation.

46. Key elements of the evaluation inception report should include:

- Identification of the subject of the evaluation and relevant context.
- Purpose of the evaluation: why the evaluation is being conducted at this time, who needs the information and why.
- Objectives of the evaluation: what the evaluation aims to achieve (e.g., assessment of the results of the project).
- Scope: what aspects of the project will be covered, and not covered, by the evaluation.
- Identification and description of the evaluation criteria (including relevance, effectiveness, results, efficiency and sustainability).
- Key evaluation questions.
- Methodology, including approach for data collection and analysis, and stakeholder engagement.
- Rationale for selection of the methods and selection of data sources (i.e., sites to be visited, stakeholders to be interviewed).
- Work plan, organizational structure, roles and responsibilities, and budget.

⁷ Guidelines for Conducting Terminal Evaluations

<https://www.thegef.org/gef/Guidelines%20Terminal%20Evaluations>

⁸ GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2010 <https://www.thegef.org/gef/Evaluation%20Policy%202010>

- System for data management and maintenance of records.
- Intended products and reporting procedures.
- Potential limitations of the evaluation.

Approach and Methodology for Evaluations

47. The purpose, scope, objectives and key questions will determine the most appropriate approach and methodology for evaluation. The focus of project-level evaluations will be an assessment on project performance– tracking implementation of project activities, results achieved by activities, and stakeholders’ perceptions of those results. A range of qualitative and quantitative methods, including before-and-after comparison, case study analysis, semi-structured interviews, closed questionnaires, focus groups, and context analysis, for performance evaluation might be used. Selected approaches and methods should adhere to a set of standards to ensure credibility of information generated by evaluations:

- Selection of methods guided by scope of evaluation questions;
- Use of data collection and analytical methods that ensure replicability;
- Different result levels are distinguished: input, output, outcome and impact;
- Selection of SMART indicators for tracking progress (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely);
- Gender data, as relevant;
- Data collection and analyses should comply with ethics standards as described in CI’s gender policy and human research ethics policy.

Communication and Engagement

48. Processes and mechanisms need to be included to ensure openness in the conduct of the evaluation. A written summary of the evaluation design should be shared with the Executing Agencies, project staff and stakeholders including the objective, identification of key questions, methods, features of data collection instruments, data analysis plans and dissemination plan. This should inform project staff, partners and stakeholders about the initiation, scope and timing of evaluation. Participation of national experts should be encouraged in the design and implementation of the evaluation. Project staff should also be briefed in advance by the evaluation team on expectations for their participation and cooperation in the conduct of evaluation, e.g., availability for interview, preparation and access to project documentation. Project staff and stakeholders should also receive the evaluation report in a timely manner (within three months after completion of the evaluation) and be provided an opportunity to respond to the conclusions and recommendations given by the evaluators.

Data Management

49. Executing Agencies are responsible for collecting and maintaining all quantitative and qualitative data related to the project.

Evaluation Implementation and Reporting

50. Based on GEF requirements, a midterm review (midterm evaluation) will be conducted half way through the project. For CI-GEF projects, the midterm review must be conducted within 90 days

prior to or following the mid-point of the Period of Performance (as defined in CI-GEF grant agreement). A final evaluation will be done for all GEF full-size projects and medium-size projects within 90 days before the end date of the Period of Performance (as defined in CI-GEF grant agreement).

51. A final report should be shared with the Project Agency, Executing Agencies, project staff, senior CI management and the GEF Evaluation Office within three months of the evaluation's completion. The report should include the following elements:

- Overall scope of evaluation
- Basic data on the evaluation
- Basic data on the project or program
- Results, conclusions and recommendations
- Lessons of broader applicability
- Terms of reference of the evaluation (Appendix)

52. The report should provide action-oriented, practical and specific recommendations. The evaluation report will be made available to project staff, the Executive Management team and governing bodies in three months.

Follow-up on Recommendations

53. Evaluation is useful only insofar as it provides evidence that informs decision-making. The importance of learning from project experiences cannot be underestimated. Specific mechanisms and functions should be developed to ensure evaluation results feed into organizational learning and knowledge management systems. The Senior Director of the GCO charged with evaluation oversight, together with the Project Agency, will be responsible for synthesizing recommendations from completed evaluations and reporting implications to CI Leadership. CI's Leadership decides whether recommendations are accepted, or not, and how recommendations will be integrated in daily operations of the Project Agency, and Executing Agencies in the case that the Executing Agency is a CI program.

Disclosure and Dissemination

54. A summary of the evaluation including the purpose of evaluation, evaluation questions, a description of methods and approach, conclusions, and recommendations will be made publicly available with exceptions where protection of proprietary material is required. Results from the report should be shared with stakeholders and other partners within six months of project completion and made publicly available in an accessible form.