TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP project

"Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (2021-2024)" (PIMS 02118)

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA[1] ID:	PIMS:02118 SMA: 99286	Grant ID[2] (if applicable):	SB-018738
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	Ecosystems Division (Nov 2021-Jan 2024) Biodiversity and Land Branch (2022-Feb 2023) to Nature for Climate Branch (March 2023) to Climate Change Division, Adaptation and Resilience Branch, Climate Change Mitigation Unit (Feb 2024 onwards)		
Implementing Partners:	<u>**Project Executing Partners:**</u> **UNEP-WCMC** **Religions for Peace (RfP)** <u>IRI Coalition Partners:</u> Rainforest Foundation Norway GreenFaith World Council of Churches Parliament of the World's Religions Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology Indigenous peoples and local communities		
Sources of Funding:	*Country[3](ies):* Government of Norway	*Institution[4] Name/Type:* Norway's International Climate and Forests Initiative (NICFI)	
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 1 (1.4, 1.4.2); SDG 2 (2.3, 2.4); SDG 5 (5.1, 5.5); SDG 6 (6.6, 6.6.1); SDG 13 (13.2, 13.2.1), SDG 15 (15.1, 15.1.1, 15.2, 15.2.1, 15.5, 15.5.1); SDG 16 (16.7, 16.10); SDG 17 (17.6, 17.17)		
MTS (all that apply):		UNEP approval date:	
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved from 2022):* **OR** POW Output(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)*	*POW Direct Outcome:* 2022 – 2023: Climate stability: Outcome (1A): Decision makers at all levels adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways i) Number of countries and/or legal entities that adopt climate change mitigation and/or	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved from 2022):* **OR** POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):*	*MTS 2025 Outcome:* *N/A*

[1] SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.
[2] For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.
[3] Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.
[4] Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund; Other.

	adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction strategies and policies with UNEP support		
	POW Output:		*POW Expected Accomplishment: SP3: EA a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration frameworks at the national and international levels (b) Policymakers in the public and private sectors test and consider the inclusion of the health and productivity of ecosystems in economic decision-making.*
Sub-programme:	Nature Action, Chemicals and Pollution, Environmental Governance, Finance and Economic Transformations	Programme Coordination Project:	Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
Expected start date:	November 2021	Actual start date:	16/11/2021
Planned completion date:	01/10/2024	Actual operational completion date:	15/11/2024
Planned total project budget[5] at approval:	Rev #1: USD 6,697,537	Actual total expenditures reported as of 13/12/24:	USD691,402.16
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds[6]:	*Cash: USD 6,691,123* *In-kind: USD 840,840*	Secured Extra-budgetary Funds:	*Cash: USD 5,857,057 (loss from NOK depreciation versus USD of USD 767,816.6)* *In-kind: USD 840,840*
		Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of 13/12/2024:	*Cash:* USD 5,691,402.16

[5] Total budget may include; Regular Budget, Environment Fund, Extra-Budgetary, including 'softly-earmarked' etc.
[6] Extra-budgetary funds may include co-finance (cash/in-kind).

First disbursement:	USD 1,086,593.00 (27/12/2021)	Planned date of financial closure:	*Estimated 1 year after operational completion.*
No. of formal project revisions:	#1	Date of last approved project revision:	25/09/2024
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	2	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	16/09/2024
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation *(planned date):*	N/A	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	N/A
Terminal Evaluation *(planned date):*	October 2024	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	January 2025
Coverage – Implementing Country(ies):	Brazil, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Peru	Coverage – Implementing Region(s):	Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean
Dates of previous project phases:	Phase 1: 05/09/2018 to 30/06/2021 (2 years, 9 months, 26 days)	Status of future project phases:	IRI Phase 3 currently under negotiation with the Government of Norway

Source: ProDoc Rev. #1, 25/09/2024

2. Project Rationale

Tropical deforestation is a major contributor to climate change and erodes resilience to it. Tropical deforestation is a key source of greenhouse gas emissions. When forests are cleared and trees are burned or decay, the carbon stored in them is released into the atmosphere. It is estimated that emissions from forests and land amount to 10% of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, when rainforests are cleared, more carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, and less carbon captured and stored. Through photosynthesis, trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and hold it in their trunks and branches.

Tropical deforestation also undermines international poverty reduction and sustainable development efforts. Tropical rainforests provide food, water and livelihoods to a significant proportion of the world's population. Protected upland watersheds are a source of clean drinking water. Forest plants are used in thousands of natural medicines.

While the threats to tropical rainforests are substantial, action to protect, restore and sustainably manage tropical rainforests can be a catalyst for realizing sustainable development, food security, equality, peace and human rights.

Where indigenous and community rights over forests are secure, there is less deforestation than under other management and regulatory regimes.

While the COVID 19 pandemic affected everyone, it has had especially devasting consequences on vulnerable groups who are already at risk. Climate change and environmental degradation significantly impact groups that are already vulnerable or disadvantaged, such as people living in remote areas, the elderly, migrant workers, women, children and youth, poor people, those with chronic health conditions, indigenous peoples, those marginalized through stigma and discrimination, people targeted by racism. The COVID pandemic has also impacted persons with disabilities, those in fragile and conflict-affected zones, sexual and gender minorities, environmental human rights defenders, refugees and asylum seekers. Across these groups, the pandemic has significantly impacted women and girls, across every sphere - from health and economy, to security and social protection.

Since the pandemic, societies have realized that there is a window of opportunity for green recovery from the pandemic by promoting healthy and restored forests in an integrated approach. In addition to building resilience against future pandemics, forests are also an essential component of sustainable and resilient food systems, contributing to the four dimensions of food security and nutrition (availability, access, utilization and stability) both for the forest-dependent communities and globally.

UNEP recognizes that faith-based organizations can play a leading role in supporting sectoral advocacy and support for integrated ecosystem management. In many societies across the world, faith provides an important lens for understanding worldviews, attitudes and behavior regarding major issues such as social and environmental change. Indeed, a majority of people of the world identify with one form of religious tradition or another. Environmental protection is increasingly being framed as a moral and spiritual issue by religious leaders and many faiths from around the world have called on believers to incorporate ecological care into their religious life for the sake of the planet.

Utilizing the agility of these beliefs in addressing environmental and social justice issues, in collaboration with key scientific, economic, public policy, and education partners is crucial for sustainable development. Indeed, environmental organizations are increasingly working collaboratively with faith communities and members of religious communities are increasingly participating in a broader alliance of scientists, policy makers, and non-governmental organizations to influence the direction of social–ecological change. As a result, links between religion-based environmental values and scientific and public-policy disciplines continue to evolve. Faith-based organizations are considered to be highly networked and as being trustworthy to achieve on-the-ground results. Policymakers have begun to look to faith-based organizations to play a greater role in strengthening environmental conservation and natural resources management.

When the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) was launched in 2017, the moral, ethical and spiritual voice, and religious advocacy and organizing was missing from global discussions around protecting rainforests. Policy discussions at the international level and in priority rainforest countries were lacking the voice of diverse religious and spiritual communities. Some compared this missing voice to the “fourth leg” of a stool – a key segment of social, political and economic life needed to achieve a normative shift in values and behavior. IRI aimed to address this gap in order to urgently enable religious leaders to bring the moral, ethical and spiritual dimension more strongly to bear on global efforts and commitments to end tropical deforestation.

UNEP, Norway and key interfaith partners joined forces to establish IRI to test the impact of empowering a network of religious and spiritual leaders to systematically raise their voices together in international and national policymaking fora. The IRI is an international, multi-faith alliance that provides a platform for religious leaders, and traditional leaders to work hand-in-hand with indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), governments, civil society organizations and businesses on actions that protect rainforests and safeguard the peoples that serve as their guardians. The ambition of IRI to be a shared platform for the world’s religions and spiritual traditions to unite in their efforts to end deforestation and to work within their respective faith traditions, networks, communities and institutions to make rainforest protection and restoration a moral and ethical priority.

IRI intends to enable religious leaders and communities to increasingly speak out about the spiritual basis in their respective faiths for action on environmental and social justice issues and to contribute and use their leadership and be a voice to be heard in international and national policymaking.[7]

3. Project Results Framework

The main aim of Phase 1 of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, 2018-2021, was to establish a platform both globally and at the country level in key rainforest countries to catalyze the influence, advocacy and moral commitment of religious leaders and faith-based communities for the protection of tropical rainforests.

In Phase 2, 2021-2024, work at the global level was to focus on establishing IRI Champion and IRI Coalition Partner programs to expand the network of senior religious leaders, faith-based organizations and IPLCs organizations engaged in IRI and public advocating for the protection and restoration of tropical rainforests and IPLCs rights. By mobilizing religious and spiritual leaders and increasing the strategic engagement of key actors, IRI intended to enable high-level, multi-faith coordinated and targeted calls to action at international policymaking forums on forests, climate change, biodiversity, sustainable development and the rights of indigenous peoples.

At country level in Phase 2, the IRI Project was to focus on scaling up delivery for impact, in particular consolidating the IRI country programs operating in Brazil, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia and Peru and linking them more closely to relevant science and evidence to inform policy, including strengthening coherence between relevant national, regional and global initiatives, and further involve IPLCs

7 ProDoc (2021), 1.1 Problem and Situation Analysis and 2.1 Project Description.

for co-creation of knowledge and joint action. Each of the IRI country programs was to develop a draft 5-year plan that would show, in general terms, how it could sequence and prioritize work in all of these areas.

The PRC provided a range of feedback on the initial project document at the start of the project targeting global interventions and adjustments of outputs.[8] The project objective and results framework outlined in the approved project document of 2021 was revised during implementation.[9] It was anticipated in the 2021 project document that during the inception phase (first 6 months of the project) the IRI project management team together with the country teams and stakeholders would update the country analysis, review and develop strategic priorities and activities for each IRI country program, and provide NICFI with updated national annual plans and related results-based budgets (see output 2, activity 2.1.2).

Table 2. Revised Project Objective

Project Objective, ProDoc 2021	Project Objective, ProDoc, Rev. #1, 2024
To build a worldwide and country-specific movement and action for the protection and restoration of tropical rainforests and the defence of IPLCs' rights that are grounded in the values, ethics and moral guidance of faith communities.	To build faith-based movements in program countries (Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Indonesia, and Peru) that mobilize religious leaders on the protection of forests, climate change and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and that are grounded in the values, ethics and moral guidance of faith communities

Sources: ProDoc 2021 and ProDoc, Rev. #1, 2024.

The revision of the project document (Rev.#1) in 2024 was made to reflect the reduction of originally approved budget 6.6 million to 5.8 million due to depreciate of the Norwegian Krone (NOK) against US Dollar (USD). The project document Rev. #1 also formally reflects the revised objective and results framework which are presented in table 2 and 3.

Table 3. Project results framework

Project Outcome	Outcome indicators	Project Outputs	Output indicators
Outcome 1. IRI country programs in Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Indonesia and Peru educate and mobilize religious leaders and, with their support, advocate with public authorities in country programs to protect rainforests and the rights of indigenous peoples, and address climate change.	Number of IRI local or provincial chapters in each program country working on awareness-raising, gender responsive as applicable, campaigns, and actions on rainforests, climate change and the rights of Indigenous Peoples. **(Baseline: 0; Target:92)** Number of religious leaders (male and female) trained by each IRI country program on the protection of rainforests, climate change and the rights of Indigenous Peoples. **(Baseline: 0; Target: 2000)** (Target: 30% of female representation) Number of calls to action and gender responsive, as applicable, policy positions taken by IRI country programs on legislation, laws and policies related to the protection of forests, climate change and the rights of Indigenous Peoples (e.g.	**Output 1.** Trainings and educational materials provided to religious leaders on rainforests, climate change, and the rights of indigenous peoples, and knowledge amongst religious leaders on priority topics is increased.	Number of educational materials (e.g. issue primers, religious teaching guides, faith toolkits, etc.) on rainforests, climate change, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, gender responsive as applicable, launched and disseminated through interfaith networks to religious leaders. **(Baseline: 12; Target: 19)** Number of trainings and capacity building workshops (gender responsive as applicable) held for religious leaders on rainforests, climate change, the rights of Indigenous Peoples. **(Baseline: 0; Target: 50)** Percentage of religious leaders (disaggregated by male and female) that reported in their interviews an increase in awareness and knowledge about forests, climate change and the rights of Indigenous Peoples after engaging with IRI trainings and educational materials. **(Baseline 0%; Target: 60%)** Audio-visual material on the nexus between religion, gender and rainforests, and indigenous women's role safeguarding the rainforests. **(Baseline 0; Target 1)**
		Output 2. Technical assistance provided to IRI country programs focused on education and awareness raising,	Number of IRI country program annual work plans (gender responsive where applicable) developed in consultation with IRI Advisory Councils on education and training, on-the-ground mobilization, strategic

[8] ProDoc, 2021, Rev. #1, Annex 3. Integration of UNEP PRC recommendations.
[9] ProDoc 2018, Results Framework consisted of Outcome 1 and Outputs 1-4. In ProDoc Rev. #1 the project objective and results framework have been revised. The 2024 revised results framework consists of Outcome 1 with Outputs 1-2 and Outcome 2 with Outputs 3-4. The original results framework was included the agreement between UNEP and the Ministry of Climate and Environment for NICFI entered signed by UNEP on 08/11/2021.

	meetings with ministries, statements to Congress, open letters to public authorities, proposal on legislation, etc.) **(Baseline: 0; Target: 37)**	on-the-ground mobilization (local and regional levels), and advocacy with policymakers	communications, and national policymaking. **(Baseline: 0; Target: 15)** Number of Advisory Council meetings held for each IRI country program **(Baseline: 0; Target: 45)** A gender-sensitive social and environmental safeguards policy developed to manage national and local risks associated with IRI **(Baseline: 0; Target: 1)**
Outcome 2. IRI country programs in Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Indonesia, and Peru deliver interventions into priority global events and communicate the moral imperative to protect rainforests and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and address climate change to religious communities and the broader public.	Number of statements, calls to action or interventions by IRI country programs into global events on forests protection and the rights of Indigenous Peoples. **(Baseline: 0; Target: 6)** Number of statements, calls to action or interventions made by IRI country programs at major interfaith forums and assemblies **(Baseline: 0; Target: 2)** Number of people reached by IRI country programs communications campaigns on the protection of forests and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and climate change. **(Baseline: 0; Target: 250,000)**	**Output 3.** IRI country programs interventions and calls to action on rainforests, climate change, and the rights of indigenous peoples delivered into global events.	Number of side events at global conferences that profile the work of the IRI country programs (Baseline: **0; Target: 3)**
		Output 4. Communications products and awareness campaigns (gender responsive when applicable) delivered to engage and inform religious communities and the general public about rainforests, climate change, and Indigenous Peoples' rights.	Number of IRI country programs communications strategies supported with content related to rainforests, climate change, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples to be delivered to religious networks and the general public. **(Baseline: 0; Target: 5)** Number of IRI country specific program websites design and launch supported to inform and engage religious communities about rainforests, climate change, and indigenous rights. **(Baseline: 0; Target: 5)** Number of editorials by IRI country programs on the moral imperative of protecting the forests and the rights of Indigenous Peoples (gender responsive when applicable) placed in prominent news outlets. **(Baseline: 0; Target: 10)**

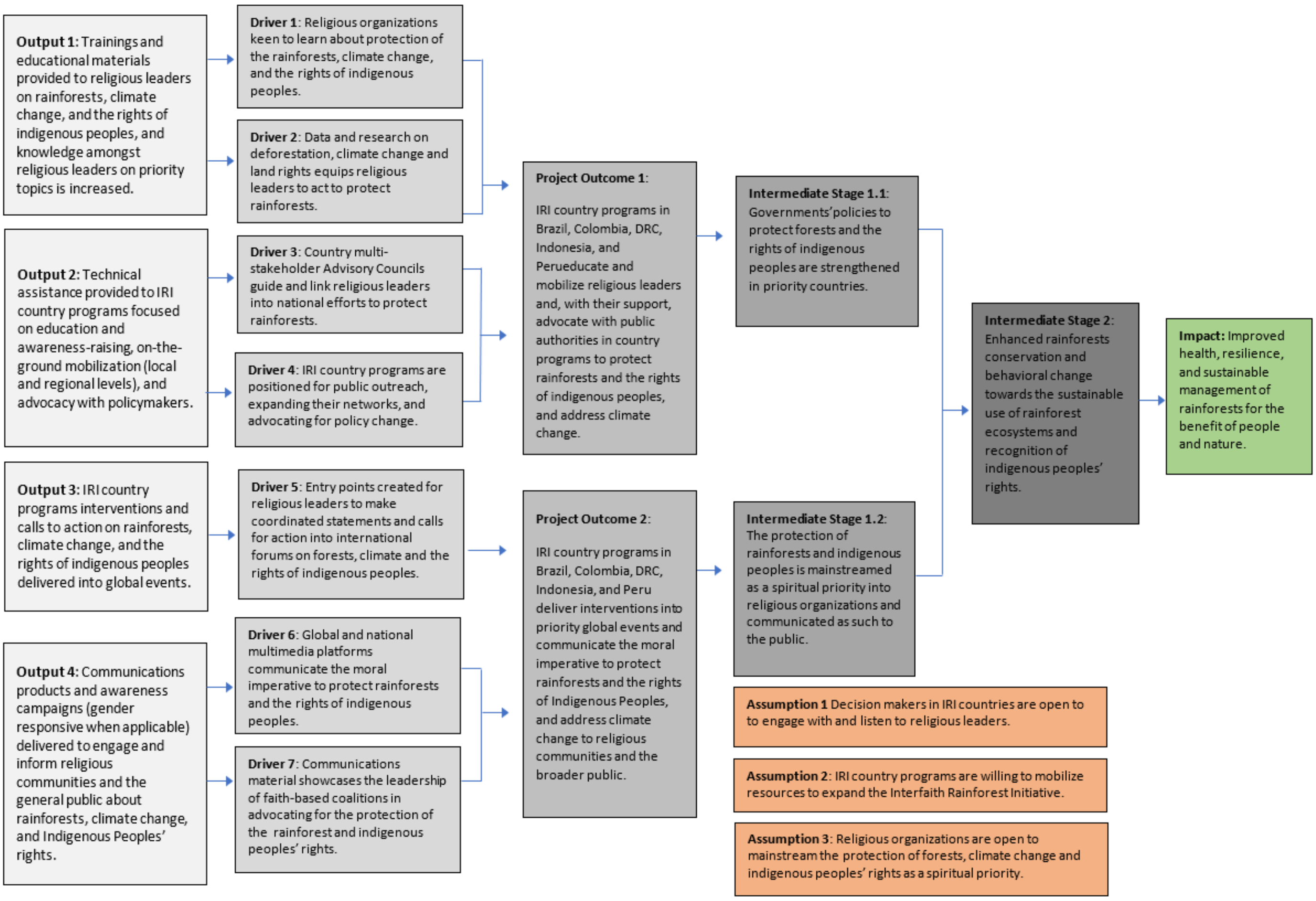
Source: IRI Phase 2, 2021-2024, ProDoc Rev. #1

A diagram of the project's Theory of Change was included in the 2021 ProDoc, see Diagram 1. An updated Theory of Change reflecting the revised results framework of ProDoc Rev. #1 is presented in Diagram 2, which includes Outcome 2.[10]

Diagram 1: Theory of Change

[10] According to the IRI Project Team, the ToC was updated to reflect the new results framework and the overall project revision. However, this was not reflected in the revision document, Rev. #1, since the form did not make provision for it.

Source: IRI Phase 2, 2021-2024, Approved ProDoc 2021, p.45.



Source: Project Management Team (December 2024)

4. Executing Arrangements

As the implementing agency, the intent was for UNEP to provide technical, strategic guidance and is responsible for all oversight and management of the project, and together with donor(s) maintain final authority for approving work plans and budget allocations. At the start of Phase 2, the responsible entity for the project was located in the Biodiversity and Land Branch (November 2022-February 2023). In 2023, the responsibility was transferred to the Nature for Climate Branch (March 2023-January 2023) in the Ecosystems Division. After February 2024 with the establishment of the Climate Change Division, the Nature for Climate Branch moved to Climate Change Division and was renamed Adaptation and Resilience Branch, the managing unit of the project remains with Climate Change Mitigation Unit, the same arrangement as before.

UNEP intended to use the existing outreach networks of complementary programmes such as the UN-REDD Programme, the Global Peatlands Initiative, the Faith for Earth program, the networks of Regional Offices, Subregional and Country/Programme Offices as well as Technical Divisions to ensure the outputs reach a wide audience and are freely available to partners to disseminate through their own networks, thus maximizing additional reach at minimal cost.

The **World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC**) was provide technical guidance and support for Output 1 (Educational materials and training) and actively contributes to the development of the resources and training; UNEP-WCMC supports, at critical moments, the interaction with policymakers at the country and global level (Outputs 2 and 3); leads on the cross-cutting issues of safeguards, quality assurance and monitoring impacts; UNEP-WCMC is to provide logistical and operational support for country level work including: contracting collaborators; administering disbursements to Religions for Peace; monitoring and overseeing financial transactions; assists with procurement and recruitment; and preparing regular status updates on budget allocations and expenditures.

Religions for Peace (RfP, shorthand of World Conference of Religions for Peace) is the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition. It was designed to advance common action among the world's religious communities for peace. The role of RfP in the project also entailed administering disbursements from UNEP-WCMC to country partners.

UNEP-WCMC and **RfP** shared executing partner responsibilities and roles during implementation.

UNEP IRI project management team was envisaged to manage day-to-day coordination and management of the initiative and authorization of resource allocations to implementing partners; financial/project reporting and resource allocation/scheduling of activities; developing work plans to guide national and global level activities in close cooperation with the Global Steering Committee and national partners; monitoring and reporting on the progress of the initiative; establishing and maintaining partnerships with religious, indigenous, scientific, NGOs and governments; in addition to other tasks assigned the project management team.

The team was to be composed of: UNEP Programme Management Officer in charge of the global coordination and UNEP programme management tasks (UNEP in-kind contribution to IRI); a Project Manager (consultant); a Global Advisor (consultant); a Partnership and Outreach Officer (consultant); an Administrative Assistant (UNEP in-kind contribution).[11] The meetings of the IRI project team were held bi-weekly with participation of RfP. Periodically, NICFI would participate in these meetings, i.e., annual meeting.[12]

The Global Steering Committee was expected to include interfaith organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities representatives, civil society representatives, NICFI, development partners, UNEP and other key partners to provide support, oversight of progress, strategic direction and guidance on priority activities, network development, and engagement of religious leaders and faith-based communities globally and in priority countries. It was intended to provide briefings to IRI Champions and IRI Coalition Partners at least twice per year. The Global Steering Committee was intended to offer strategic guidance and support to Advisory Councils and the IRI country program teams. The Global Steering Committee planned to meet at least every quarter to inform strategies, plan and identify opportunities for the program, and will contribute to the development of work plans for the IRI global program (including where to make coordinated interventions). Global Steering Committee meetings will be co-chaired on a rotating basis by one interfaith partner and one other partner in coordination with and convened by the UNEP Project Management Team.

Country Coordinating Organization: Religions for Peace (RfP) serves as the Country Coordinating Organization for the five IRI country programs. It would receive funds from UNEP-WCMC and then coordinate the distribution to country teams and provide them with technical backstopping. RfP would be responsible for staffing the country programs, including recruiting a Country Facilitator for each country program and issuing contracts for staff; they would also disburse payments for country staff and to Country Implementing Organizations for relevant project activities; they generally oversee the delivery of country-level activities, in coordination with the project management team. RfP would be accountable to the Global Steering Committee and all activities are undertaken on behalf of the GSC.

A dedicated Country Programme Coordinator will be contracted by UNEP-WCMC to support RfP in the delivery of the country programmes and in liaising with the Country Implementing Organisations and Country Teams.

Country Implementing Organizations: These are sub-contracted by the Country Coordinating Organization to implement country-level work in each priority country. They are the RfP national offices (Colombia, Brazil, and Peru), CENCO (DRC), and ECONUSA (Indonesia).

IRI Advisory Councils: Country-level advisory councils would be convened in each of the project countries, with representation from key stakeholder groups and relevant faith communities, empowered to guide and advise on the implementation of country-based activities. Beyond the core group of partners, each Advisory Council would have a different composition depending on national context.

IRI Country Facilitators: IRI Country Facilitators would be responsible for leading the IRI country programs and overseeing implementation of the workplan that is developed with and through the Advisory Council. All Country Facilitators were hired through RfP. The IRI Country Facilitators were to report jointly to the RfP and the Global Steering Committee (through the IRI project management team). The IRI Country Facilitator would then be responsible for the day-to-day activities of their respective IRI country programs and manage a small

[11] As of December 20224 the Project Management Team consists of: Three UNEP Staff, two consultants hired by UNEP (a technical advisor and a global advisor/project manager, both for day-to-day operations), one UNEP-WCMC Staff and three RfP staff.

[12] The Prodoc made reference to a National Programmes Coordinator (Consultant), which was not hired and instead of several country coordinating organisations and Religions for Peace would serve as the Country Coordinating Organization for all five country programs.

team to support with project implementation (including support on project administration, communications and other project needs).

5. Project Cost and Financing

The project budget at approval was USD 6,691,123 with UNEP In-kind contribution of USD840,480 for a total planned budget of USD 7,531,603. The revised budget as of the 2024 project revision indicated NOK depreciation versus USD with a total of XB budget of USD5,857,057.39 from the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Government of Norway and total in-kind budget unadjusted of USD840,480 for a total budget of USD6,697,537.39. Due to the financial shortfall incurred in the revised budget framework, the project's activities were revised.[13]

Table 4. Project budget per year

	Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Total**
Total XB Budget	2,194,917.86	2,273,419.50	1,388,720.03	**5,857,057.39**
UNEP in-kind contribution	280,160.00	280,160.00	280,160.00	**840,840.00**
Actual Planned Budget as of 2024	2,475,077.86	2,553,579.50	1,668,880.03	**6,697,537.39**

Source: ProDoc, Rev. #1 2024.

6. Implementation Issues

A number of potential project management risks was identified in the 2021 project document. Out of 29 risks identified, six risks were rated with a high score (impact severity x likelihood (score:20)). These high rated risks, which the evaluation will assess, related to the role of faith-based organizations at country level and included:

- *Difficulty keeping the focus on rainforests rather than just nature in general;*
- *By participating in public advocacy and in some instances speaking out in opposition to government and company policies, faith leaders and indigenous peoples increase their risk to threats, intimidation and physical violence;*
- *The initiative is put in the middle of longstanding national tensions around whether indigenous peoples qualify as a formal religion extending well beyond the mandate of the initiative*
- *The strong focus of IRI on protecting and restoring forests leaves religious leaders and faith-based organizations speaking out on the issues vulnerable to accusations of being against poor and marginalized groups (or smallholder farms) whose livelihoods depend.*
- *Colonial era and history of mistreatment of indigenous peoples and forest communities by mainstream religions in certain countries maybe an ongoing source of tension.*
- *Political or religious tensions and associated unrest in project countries hamper efforts to advance multi-faith dialogue and action.*

UNEP administrative processes were reported to have significantly delayed implementation of the program, including recruitment of a program manager and incurred other delays in paying for basic services of the program (account subscriptions, travel, events, etc.), including receipt of funding from donor.

During project implementation the project budget was reduced due to the depreciation of the Norwegian Krone against the US Dollar, which meant that some project activities had to be redesigned or cancelled.

In-person and virtual training and exchange between IRI country programs in Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Indonesia and Peru were found to be extremely important and effective for transferring lessons learned and best

[13] The project budget was affected by exchange rate fluctuations resulting in a reduction in available funds due to the depreciation of the Norwegian Krone against the US Dollar. Source: ProDoc Rev. #1.

practices, and getting all programs aligned on effective actions and interventions; this could help ensuring that country programs would learn more from each other and avoid duplicating efforts and ensure brand consistency.[14]

There was no mid-term review planned of the project. Instead, UNEP is to carry out a terminal evaluation of the project at operational completion of the project. In 2024 and concurrently with the planning of the terminal evaluation, UNEP-WCPC is conducting an impact assessment of IRI Phase 2. The emphasis of the impact assessment is to assess the main results and impacts of the intervention with emphasis on developing and assessing IRI intermediate States (Intermediate States 1 and 2) and IRI Impact with use of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data would be collected for the purpose of the impact assessment through online survey and semi-structured interviews. The Impact Assessment Framework provides a theoretical and methodological overview of the assessment. The draft impact assessment report is expected to available in December 2024 and included as a reference document to the terminal evaluation.[15]

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

7. Objective of the Evaluation

In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy[16] and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual[17], the Terminal Evaluation is undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The Evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among **UNEP, WCMC-UNEP, Religions for Peace (RfP) and NICFI**. Therefore, the Evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially where a third phase of the project is being considered. Recommendations relevant to the whole house may also be identified during the evaluation process.

8. Key Evaluation Principles

Evaluation findings and judgements will be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the Evaluation Report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

The "Why?" Question. As this is a Terminal Evaluation and a follow-up project is under consideration, particular attention will be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the "*why?*" question should be at the front of the consultants' minds all through the evaluation exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultant(s) needs to go beyond the assessment of "*what*" the project performance was and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of "*why*" the performance was as it was (i.e. what contributed to the achievement of the project's results). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project.

Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association: In order to *attribute* any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes over time and between contexts in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for evaluations. Establishing the *contribution* made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on prior intentionality (e.g. approved project design documentation, logical framework) and the articulation of causality (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A *credible association* between the implementation of a project and observed positive effects can be made where a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be

[14] PIMS Lessons Learned, IRI Project (PIMS 02118), accessed on 2 December 2024.
[15] UNEP-WCMC (2024), Interfaith Rainforest Initiative Phase 2, Impact Assessment Framework, Draft.
[16] https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/41114
[17] https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/42752

inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.

Communicating evaluation results. A key aim of the Evaluation is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant(s) should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the evaluation process and in the communication of evaluation findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all evaluation deliverables. Draft and final versions of the Main Evaluation Report will be shared with key stakeholders by the Evaluation Manager. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The consultant(s) will plan with the Evaluation Manager which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key evaluation findings and lessons to them. This may include some, or all, of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of an Evaluation Brief or interactive presentation.

9. Key Strategic Questions

In addition to the evaluation criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the Evaluation will address the **strategic questions** listed below (no more than 5 questions are recommended). These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution:

(a) Examine the extent to which the partner-based tiered project management structure affected management costs and country ownership?

(b) In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of Indigenous Peoples been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project?

(c) Examine the coherence and synergy of the IRI project with other faith-based interventions, including the 2018 UNEP Strategy “Engaging with Faith-based Organizations”, Indigenous Peoples, nature-based solutions, and climate initiatives in UNEP?

(d) Explore the extent to which scaling-up or replication opportunities for effective and cost-effective implementation of future Faith based forest initiatives at country level?

(e) Review the donor investment and RoI made and potential for future diversified donor investments in country programs such as IRI?

10. Evaluation Criteria

All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the criteria. A weightings table in excel format will be provided by the Evaluation Manager to support the determination of an overall project rating. The set of evaluation criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the availability of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management; (F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance. The Evaluation Consultant(s) can propose other evaluation criteria as deemed appropriate.

A. Strategic Relevance

The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the donors, implementing regions/countries and the target beneficiaries. The Evaluation will include an assessment of the project’s relevance in relation to UNEP’s mandate and its alignment with UNEP’s policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

i. Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy[18] (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

The Evaluation should assess the project’s alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic

[18] UNEP’s Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP’s programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP’s thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as POW Outcomes and POW Direct Outcomes of the Sub-programmes. https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents

Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building[19] (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities

Donor strategic priorities will vary across interventions. The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities. In some cases, alignment with donor priorities may be a fundamental part of project design and grant approval processes while in others, for example, instances of 'softly-earmarked' funding, such alignment may be more of an assumption that should be assessed.

ii. Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

The Evaluation will assess the alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will be considered. Examples may include: UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) or national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no one behind.

iii. Complementarity with Relevant Existing Interventions/Coherence[20]

An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization[21], took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The Evaluation will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include UNDAFs or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Country ownership and driven-ness

B. Quality of Project Design

The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the evaluation inception phase, ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. The complete Project Design Quality template should be annexed in the Evaluation Inception Report. Later, the overall Project Design Quality rating[22] should be entered in the final evaluation ratings table (as item B) in the Main Evaluation Report and a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage should be included within the body of the report.

Factors affecting this criterion may include (at the design stage):

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality

C. Nature of External Context

[19] http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm
[20] This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.
[21] A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.
[22] In some instances, based on data collected during the evaluation process, the assessment of the project's design quality may change from Inception Report to Main Evaluation Report.

At evaluation inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval[23]). This rating is entered in the final evaluation ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an Unfavourable or Highly Unfavourable external operating context, and/or a negative external event has occurred during project implementation, the ratings for Effectiveness, Efficiency and/or Sustainability may be increased at the discretion of the Evaluation Consultant and Evaluation Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

D. Effectiveness

i. Availability of Outputs[24]

The Evaluation will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and making them available to the intended beneficiaries as well as its success in achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any *formal* modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, reformulations may be necessary in the reconstruction of the Theory of Change (TOC). In such cases a table should be provided showing the original and the reformulation of the outputs for transparency. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Evaluation will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision[25]

ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes[26]

The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the project outcomes as defined in the reconstructed[27] Theory of Change. These are outcomes that are intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining intermediate states. As with outputs, a table can be used where substantive amendments to the formulation of project outcomes is necessary to allow for an assessment of performance. The Evaluation should report evidence of attribution between UNEP's intervention and the project outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UNEP's 'substantive contribution' should be included and/or 'credible association' established between project efforts and the project outcomes realised.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Communication and public awareness

[23] Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management by the project team. From March 2020 this should include the effects of COVID-19.

[24] Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2023)

[25] 'Project management and supervision' refers to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments.

[26] An outcome is a change at institutional level, or changes in behaviors, attitudes or conditions achieved from the use (i.e., uptake, adoption, application) of outputs by intended beneficiaries. (UNEP, 2023)

[27] All submitted UNEP project documents are required to present a Theory of Change. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during an evaluation will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any formal changes made to the project design. In the case of projects pre-dating 2016 the intervention logic is often represented in a logical framework and a TOC will need to be constructed in the inception stage of the review

iii. Likelihood of Impact

Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC *(i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact),* the Evaluation will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as intermediate states or long-lasting impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project evaluations is outlined in a guidance note available and is supported by an excel-based flow chart, 'Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree'. Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from project outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.

The Evaluation will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects (e.g. will vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities and/or women and children, be disproportionally affected by the project?). Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental and Social Safeguards.

1. The Evaluation will consider the extent to which the project has played a <u>catalytic role[28] or has promoted scaling up and/or replication</u> as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

Ultimately UNEP and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-lasting or broad-based changes. However, the Evaluation will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals, and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's Expected Accomplishments and the strategic priorities of funding partner(s).

<u>Factors affecting this criterion may include:</u>

- Quality of Project Management and Supervision (including adaptive management)
- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Country ownership and driven-ness
- Communication and public awareness

E. Financial Management

Financial management will be assessed under three themes: *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, *completeness* of financial information and *communication* between financial and project management staff. The Evaluation will establish the actual spend across the life of the project of funds secured from all donors. This expenditure will be reported, where possible, at output/component level and will be compared with the approved budget. The Evaluation will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies. Any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted. The Evaluation will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The Evaluation will assess the level of communication between the Project Manager and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

<u>Factors affecting this criterion may include:</u>

- Preparation and readiness

[28] The terms catalytic effect, scaling up and replication are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. Catalytic effect is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. Scaling up and Replication require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. Scaling up suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while Replication suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

- Quality of project management and supervision

F. Efficiency

Under the efficiency criterion, the Evaluation will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. This will include an assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution.

Focussing on the translation of inputs into outputs, *cost-effectiveness* is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. *Timeliness* refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The Evaluation will also assess to what extent any project extension could have been avoided through stronger project management and identify any negative impacts caused by project delays or extensions. The Evaluation will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches.

The Evaluation will give special attention to efforts made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities[29] with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

The factors underpinning the need for any project extensions will also be explored and discussed. As management or project support costs cannot be increased in cases of 'no cost extensions', such extensions represent an increase in unstated costs to implementing parties.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness (e.g. timeliness)
- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders participation and cooperation

G. Monitoring and Reporting

The Evaluation will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART[30] results towards the provision of the project's outputs and achievement of project outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the Evaluation will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management. The Evaluation will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for Mid-Term and Terminal Evaluation/Review should be discussed if applicable.

ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation

The Evaluation will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period. This assessment will include consideration of whether the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline data that is accurately and appropriately documented. This should include monitoring the representation and participation of disaggregated groups, including gendered, marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as those living with disabilities, in project activities. It will also consider the quality of the information generated by the monitoring system during project implementation and how it was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The Evaluation should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

iii. Project Reporting

[29] Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.
[30] SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

UNEP has a centralised project information management system[31] in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Evaluation Consultant(s) by the Evaluation Manager. Some projects have additional requirements to report regularly to funding partners, which will be supplied by the project team. The Evaluation will assess the extent to which both UNEP and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Consideration will be given as to whether reporting has been carried out with respect to the effects of the initiative on disaggregated groups.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality (e.g disaggregated indicators and data)

H. Sustainability

Sustainability[32] is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The Evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of achieved project outcomes (i.e. 'assumptions' and 'drivers'). Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of project outcomes may also be included.

i. Socio-political Sustainability

The Evaluation will assess the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of the benefits derived from project outcomes. It will consider the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards. In particular the Evaluation will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

ii. Financial Sustainability

Some project outcomes, once achieved, do not require further financial inputs, e.g. the adoption of a revised policy. However, in order to derive a benefit from this outcome further management action may still be needed e.g. to undertake actions to enforce the policy. Other project outcomes may be dependent on a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced for them to be maintained, e.g. continuation of a new natural resource management approach. The Evaluation will assess the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. Secured future funding is only relevant to financial sustainability where a project's outcomes have been extended into a future project phase. Even where future funding has been secured, the question still remains as to whether the project outcomes are financially sustainable.

iii. Institutional Sustainability

The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes (especially those relating to policies and laws) is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure. In particular, the Evaluation will consider whether institutional capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality (e.g. where interventions are not inclusive, their sustainability may be undermined)
- Communication and public awareness

[31] Prior to 2022 it was the Project Information Management System (PIMS) and from 2022 UNEP has the Integrated Planning Monitoring and Reporting (IPMR) solution.

[32] As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-lasting maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment.

- Country ownership and driven-ness

I. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

(These factors are rated in the ratings table but are discussed within the Main Evaluation Report as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other evaluation criteria, above. If these issues have not been addressed under the evaluation criteria above, then independent summaries of their status within the evaluated project should be given.)

i. Preparation and Readiness

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement). The Evaluation will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular, the Evaluation will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. *(Project preparation is included in the template for the assessment of Project Design Quality).*

ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision

In some cases 'project management and supervision' may refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, it may refer to the project management performance of an implementing partner and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive management should be highlighted.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP and the implementing partner(s). The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups should be considered.

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

The Evaluation will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Within this human rights context, the Evaluation will assess to what extent the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equality and Human Rights are adequately taken into account and the intervention adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment[33]. In particular the Evaluation will consider to what extent project design, implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible inequalities (especially those related to gender) in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of disadvantaged

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[33]The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

Note that the project's effect on equality (i.e. promoting human rights, gender equality and inclusion of those living with disabilities and/or belonging to marginalised/vulnerable groups) should be included within the TOC as a general driver or assumption where there is no dedicated result within the results framework. If an explicit commitment on this topic is made within the project document then the driver/assumption should also be specific to the described intentions.

v. Environmental and Social Safeguards

UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening at the project approval stage, risk assessment and management (avoidance, minimization, mitigation or, in exceptional cases, offsetting) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Evaluation will confirm whether UNEP requirements[34] were met to: *review* risk ratings on a regular basis; *monitor* project implementation for possible safeguard issues; *respond* (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting and r*eport* on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken. UNEP requirements for proposed projects to be screened for any safeguarding issues; for sound environmental and social risk assessments to be conducted and initial risk ratings to be assigned, are evaluated above under Quality of Project Design).

The Evaluation will also consider the extent to which the management of the project <u>minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.</u>

vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The Evaluation will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, i.e. either a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards intermediate states. The Evaluation will consider the engagement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long-lasting impact to be realised. Ownership should extend to all gender and marginalised groups.

vii. Communication and Public Awareness

The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Evaluation should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. <u>Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Evaluation will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.</u>

Section 3. EVALUATION APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

The Terminal Evaluation will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the Evaluation implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the evaluation findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) will provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by

[34] For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project design since 2011.

the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

The findings of the Evaluation will be based on the following:

(a) A **desk review** of:

- Relevant background documentation, inter alia, research and articles on forests and tropical deforestation, and the engagement of faith-based organizations and integration of religious and cultural values in promoting nature-based solutions for inclusive green and transformative development;
- Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work and Country Plans and Budgets or equivalent, ProDoc 2021 and ProDoc 2024 Rev. # 1, the results framework and its budget;
- Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence etc. from UNEP reporting databases (PIMS and IPMR);
- Project deliverables;
- UNEP Strategy (2018) Engaging with Faith-based Organizations;
- United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks for Brazil, Colombia, DRC Congo, Indonesia, and Peru;
- Evaluations/reviews of other faith-based project, in particular the Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP Project "Faith for Earth Initiative PIMS 2053", 2019-2023, September 2024 (https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/46285)

(b) **Interviews** (individual or in group) with:

- UNEP Project Manager (PM);
- IRI Project Management Team;
- UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);
- Project executing partners, including UNEP-WCMC and Religions for Peace (RfP);
- Donor (Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI));
- Country Program Coordinator;
- Country Coordinating Organization (RfP);
- Country Implementing Organizations (RfP national offices (Inter-religious councils), in the case of Colombia, Brazil, and Peru), CENCO, in the case of DRC, ECONUSA, in Indonesia;
- IRI Advisory Council;
- IRI Country Facilitators;
- Global Steering Committee;
- Subprogramme Coordinator, Climate Action;
- Relevant resource persons;
- Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, faith-based organizations, local communities, etc).

(c) **Surveys,** data collected from the online impact assessment survey conducted by UNEP-WCMC (online survey made available in Bahasa, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish).

(d) **No field** visits are anticipated.

(e) **Other data collection tools,** as appropriate and relevant.

11. Evaluation Deliverables and Review Procedures

The Evaluation Consultant will prepare:

- **Inception Report:** (see Annex 1 for a list of all templates, tables and guidance notes) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, evaluation framework and a tentative evaluation schedule.
- **Preliminary Findings:** typically in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings. In the case of highly strategic project/portfolio evaluations or evaluations with an Evaluation Reference Group, the preliminary findings may be presented as a word document for review and comment.
- **Draft and Final Evaluation Report:** containing an executive summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the evaluation findings organised by evaluation criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

An **Evaluation Brief** (a 2-page overview of the evaluand and evaluation findings) for wider dissemination through the UNEP website may be required. This communication product and its format will be discussed with the Evaluation Manager no later than during the finalization of the Inception Report.

Review of the Draft Evaluation Report. The Evaluation Consultant will submit a draft report to the Evaluation Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Evaluation Manager will share the cleared draft report with the Project Manager/Implementing Partner, who will alert the Evaluation Manager in case the report contains any blatant factual errors. The Evaluation Manager will then forward the revised draft report (corrected by the Evaluation Consultant(s) where necessary) to other project stakeholders, for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the Evaluation Manager for consolidation. The Evaluation Manager will provide all comments to the Evaluation Consultant for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

Based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the Evaluation Consultant and the internal consistency of the report, the Evaluation Manager will provide an assessment of the ratings in the final Main Evaluation Report. Where there are differences of opinion between the evaluator and the Evaluation Manager on project ratings, both viewpoints will be clearly presented in the final report. The Evaluation Office ratings will be considered the final ratings for the project.

The Evaluation Manager will prepare a **quality assessment** of the first draft of the Main Evaluation Report, which acts as a tool for providing structured feedback to the Evaluation Consultant. The quality of the final report will be assessed and rated against the criteria specified in template listed in Annex 1 and this assessment will be appended to the Final Evaluation Report.

At the end of the evaluation process, the Evaluation Office will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals by the Project Manager. The Evaluation Office will track compliance against this plan on a six-monthly basis for a maximum of 12 months.

12. Evaluation Consultant

For this Evaluation, the Evaluation Consultant will work under the overall responsibility of the Evaluation Office represented by an Evaluation Manager, Susanne Bech, in consultation with the UNEP Project Manager, Chandra Manalu, Fund Management Officer, Rakhee Shah, and the Global Subprogramme Coordinator of the Climate Action Subprogramme, Niklas Hagelberg. The consultant will liaise with the Evaluation Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Evaluation, including travel. It is, however, each consultant's individual responsibility (where applicable) to arrange for visas and immunizations as well as to plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, obtain documentary evidence and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP Project Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultant to conduct the Evaluation as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Evaluation Consultant will be hired over a period of eight months (January to September 2025) and should have the following: a university degree in environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political or social sciences area is required and an advanced degree in the same areas is desirable; a minimum of 9 years of technical / evaluation experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach; a good/broad understanding of faith-based (religious-based) organisations is desired. A theology background is an advantage. Good/broad understanding of forest management, climate change, and indigenous people is also desired. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this consultancy, fluency in oral and written English is a requirement and proficiency in French, Portuguese or Spanish is desirable. Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage. The work will be home-based.

The Evaluation Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the Evaluation Office of UNEP for overall management of the Evaluation and timely provision of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Evaluation Deliverables.

In close consultation with the Evaluation Manager, the Evaluation Consultant will be responsible for the overall management of the Evaluation and timely provision of its outputs, data collection and analysis and report-writing. More specifically:

<u>Inception phase of the Evaluation, including:</u>

- preliminary desk review and introductory interviews with project staff;
- draft the reconstructed Theory of Change of the project;
- prepare the evaluation framework;
- develop the desk review and interview protocols;
- draft the survey protocols (if relevant);
- develop and present criteria for country and/or site selection for the evaluation mission;
- plan the evaluation schedule;
- prepare the Inception Report, incorporating comments until approved by the Evaluation Manager

<u>Data collection and analysis phase of the Evaluation, including:</u>

- conduct further desk review and in-depth interviews with project implementing and executing agencies, project partners and project stakeholders;
- (where appropriate and agreed) conduct an evaluation mission(s) to selected countries, visit the project locations, interview project partners and stakeholders, including a good representation of local communities. Ensure independence of the Evaluation and confidentiality of evaluation interviews.
- regularly report back to the Evaluation Manager on progress and inform of any possible problems or issues encountered and;
- keep the Project Manager informed of the evaluation progress.

<u>Reporting phase, including:</u>

- draft the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that the evaluation report is complete, coherent and consistent with the Evaluation Manager guidelines both in substance and style;
- liaise with the Evaluation Manager on comments received and finalize the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that comments are taken into account until approved by the Evaluation Manager
- prepare a Response to Comments annex for the main report, listing those comments not accepted by the Evaluation Consultant and indicating the reason for the rejection; and
- (where agreed with the Evaluation Manager) prepare an Evaluation Brief (2-page summary of the evaluand and the key evaluation findings and lessons)

<u>Managing relations, including:</u>

- maintain a positive relationship with evaluation stakeholders, ensuring that the evaluation process is as participatory as possible but at the same time maintains its independence;
- communicate in a timely manner with the Evaluation Manager on any issues requiring its attention and intervention.

13. Schedule of the Evaluation

The table below presents the tentative schedule for the Evaluation.

Table 5. Tentative schedule for the Evaluation

Milestone	**Tentative Dates**
Evaluation Initiation Meeting	January 2025
Inception Report	February 2025
E-based interviews, surveys etc.	February-March 2025
Powerpoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	April 2025
Draft report to Evaluation Manager (and Peer Reviewer)	May 2025
Draft Report shared with UNEP Project Manager and team	June 2025
Draft Report shared with wider group of stakeholders	July 2025
Final Report	August 2025
Final Report shared with all respondents	September 2025

14. Contractual Arrangements

The Evaluation Consultant will be selected and recruited by the Evaluation Office of UNEP under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a “fees only” basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies not to have been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize the independence and impartiality of the consultant towards project achievements and project partners' performance. In addition, the consultant will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project’s executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the Evaluation Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

Schedule of Payment for the Evaluation Consultant:

Deliverable	**Percentage Payment**
Approved Inception Report ***(as per Guidance Note)***	30%
Approved Draft Main Evaluation Report	30%
Approved Final Main Evaluation Report ***(as per Guidance Note)***	40%

<u>Fees only contracts:</u> Where applicable, air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the Evaluation Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

The consultant may be provided with access to UNEP’s information management systems (e.g. PIMS, Anubis, Sharepoint, etc.) and if such access is granted, the consultant agrees not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the evaluation report.

In case the consultant is not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Evaluation Office, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Director of the Evaluation Office until the consultant has improved the deliverables to meet UNEP’s quality standards.

If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to UNEP in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of the contract, the Evaluation Office reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultant's fee by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the Evaluation Office to bring the report up to standard[35].

35 This may include contract cancellation in-line with prevailing UN Secretariat rules.

Annex 1: Tools, Templates and Guidance Notes for use in the Evaluation

The tools, templates and guidance notes listed in the table below, and available from the Evaluation Manager, are intended to help Evaluation Managers and Evaluation Consultant to produce evaluation products that are consistent with each other and which can be compiled into a biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report. The biennial summary is used to provide an overview of progress to UNEP and the UN Environmental Assembly.

This suite of documents is also intended to make the evaluation process as transparent as possible so that all those involved in the process can participate on an informed basis. It is recognised that the evaluation needs of projects and portfolio vary and adjustments may be necessary so that the purpose of the evaluation process (broadly, accountability and lesson learning), can be met. Such adjustments should be decided between the Evaluation Manager and the Evaluation Consultant in order to produce evaluation reports that are both useful to project implementers and that produce credible findings.

ADVICE TO THE CONSULTANT: As our tools, templates and guidance notes are updated on a continuous basis, kindly download documents from the link below and use those versions throughout the Evaluation.

https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/INDEPENDENT+EVALUATION+TOOLS+AND+TEMPLATES

List of tools, templates and guidance notes available:

Terminal Evaluation Essential Tools

- 00 Evaluation Tools Description 09.11.21
- 00a_UNEP Glossary of results definitions_December 2023
- 00b_List of Documents for Evaluation 31.01.2024
- 01_Evaluation Criteria 31.01.2024
- 02_Criterion Rating Descriptions Matrix 31.01.2024
- 03_Evaluation Criteria Ratings Table 31.01.2024
- 04_Weighted Ratings Table 31.01.2024
- 05_Evaluation Methodology Guidance 31.01.2024

Terminal Evaluation Inception Report

- 06_Project Identification Table 31.01.2024
- 07_Inception Report Structure and Contents 31.01.2024
- 08_TOC Reformulation Justification Table 31.01.2024
- 09_Quality of Project Design Table 31.01.2024
- 09a_Quality of Project Design Template 31.01.2024
- 10_Stakeholder Analysis Guidance 31.01.2024
- 11_Gender Methods Guidance 31.01.2024
- 12_Safeguards Assessment Template 31.01.2024

Terminal Evaluation Main Evaluation Report

- 13_Evaluation Report Structure and Contents 10.05.22
- 14_Use of TOC in Project Evaluation 31.01.2024
- 15_Financial Tables 31.01.2024
- 16_Likelihood of impact Flow Chart 31.01.2024
- 16a_Likelihood of impact Test Case 31.01.2024
- 17_GEF_Evaluation Main Report Template 31.01.2024
- 18_NonGEF Evaluation Main Report Template 31.01.2024
- 19_Quality Of Eval Report FINAL ONLY 31.01.2024 FOR USE BY UNEP
- 20_Recommendations Quality Guidance 31.01.2024
- 20a_In Report Template Presenting Recs and LL 31.01.2024
- 21_GEF Portal Annex Template 31.01.2024

Terminal Evaluation Process Guidance

- Process 1_Evaluation Process Guidelines for Consultants 31.01.2024
- Process 2_Template for Attestation Letter 31.01.2024
- Process 3_Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form 31.01.2024
- Process 4_Guidelines for Field Work During Coronavirus 31.01.2024
- Process 5_Evaluation Consultants Team Roles 31.01.2024
- Process 6_ Template for Reference Checks 31.01.2024
- Process 7_Letter of Introduction for Visa Applications Template 31.01.2024