



Independent Assessment of the GCF Simplified Approval Process (SAP) Pilot Scheme

1. Context

The GCF Board approved the Simplified Approval Process Pilot Scheme (SAP) at its eighteenth meeting in 2017, with the aim of supporting the GCF's mandate to pursue scalable and transformational action by implementing "*best practices to reduce the time and effort needed in the preparation, review, approval and disbursement procedures for proposals.*" A critical activity in the Board-approved Independent Evaluation Unit's (IEU) 2020 work plan is a rapid assessment of the GCF's SAP. **The IEU will finalize the report by late April or early May and submit it at the Board's twenty-sixth meeting in June 2020.**

2. Purpose

The IEU assessment has two main objectives:

- To critically assess, a review of the SAP pilot prepared by the GCF Secretariat.
- To provide an independent assessment of the SAP pilot.

The IEU assessment will **provide the Board and Secretariat with informed recommendations for their consideration** in developing the next phase of the SAP, including evidence and advice on simplifying the SAP process to improve access to the GCF.

3. Scope

The IEU assessment will focus on:

- **A critical assessment of the Secretariat review.** The assessment will **examine whether the review's findings are unbiased, evidence-based, relevant and sufficient** to inform the Secretariat's recommendations.
- **Implementation of the SAP pilot.** The assessment

will consider whether approved projects satisfy the **GCF mandate** regarding processes and eligibility. Focus will be on the SAP pilot's efficiency, effectiveness, and use of scalability criteria.

- **Value-added of the SAP.** The assessment will explore the design and implementation of the SAP pilot and its aim to reduce the processing time of GCF projects. The assessment will **examine if the SAP process is meeting its objectives and supporting scalable, transformational projects.** The assessment will also consider if the SAP pilot improved the capacity of accredited entities (and direct access entities in particular) to prepare funding proposals.
- **Benchmarking the SAP pilot with other similar processes.** The assessment will **examine similar fast-tracking modalities used by comparable organizations** and consider applying the lessons learned to the SAP
- **Learning to improve the GCF project cycle.** Where applicable to the rest of the GCF portfolio, the assessment will extract lessons learned from the Secretariat's implementation of the SAP pilot.

4. Methods

The assessment will use a mixed-methods approach combining data collection tools, including:

- **Document review** to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. **The IEU team will review all relevant GCF documentation concerning SAP**, such as Board decisions, documents prepared by the Secretariat, project and programme level documents, and other evaluations conducted by the IEU, such as the Forward-looking Performance Review of GCF.



- **Project and Programme data analysis** to inform the key assessment questions, build the evidence base, and identify trends of the SAP project cycle and portfolio compared with those under the regular project approval process. The **IEU team will conduct a more in-depth review of the approved projects in March 2020** to assess how the SAP eligibility criteria were applied, particularly criteria related to the ESS category and the scaling/transformational investment criterion.
- **Phone and in-person semi-structured interviews** and focus groups with a sample of GCF stakeholders. In analyzing responses, consideration should be given to whether the respondent has had direct experience with SAP. The IEU will keep in mind that numerous interviews have already been conducted concerning the Secretariat's review, and therefore, will **seek to target the most relevant respondents and questions**.
- **An analysis of the Secretariat's on-line survey** in its review of the SAP pilot to decide how much of this survey will be used in the IEU assessment.

5. Country visit

The assessment team will conduct a country mission in late March or early April 2020. **The country visit will collect in-depth information and perspectives about country experiences with SAP** and, if possible, compare these experiences with those of projects developed under the regular process. The country will be selected strategically according to the following criteria:

- A country that has projects with characteristics similar to those in the SAP pilot; for example, projects with concept notes or funding proposals, or approved projects managed by DAEs.
- Approved projects in the SAP pipeline (concept notes and funding proposals) that will enhance learning about the SAP pilot.
- Some countries will be excluded from consideration for the potential country visit, for example those recently visited by IEU teams in the context of other evaluations over the past two years.

Country mission approach

The IEU country assessment mission team will include one or more IEU members and the contracted consultancy firm. GCF country focal points, members of relevant accredited entities (international and direct), representatives from delivery partners, civil society organizations and the private sector, will be asked to engage with the IEU assessment. Specifically, they will be requested to provide support by:

- Attending all meetings and helping to set up consultations.
- Supporting engagement with other relevant organizations, especially those involved in climate change or those that may be co-financing such initiatives.
- Providing documentation and supporting, unbiased and credible assessments of the GCF's country ownership approach.

A debrief will be conducted at the end of the country mission and a **factual draft of the mission report will be shared with the relevant national designated authority for comment**. All responses will be treated confidentially and, if considered relevant to the report, will be included anonymously after consent is obtained.

It is important to note that country missions are neither assessments of country performance nor of country programmes.

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