

Green Climate Fund Evaluation Standards

In decision B.BM-2021/07, the Board adopted the Evaluation Policy for the GCF. Among other things in the same decision, the Board requested the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) to develop standards in collaboration with the Secretariat. The GCF Evaluation Standards were produced in May 2022.



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I. Context and purpose of the Green Climate Fund Evaluation Standards

1. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) Evaluation Policy provides for an evaluation function that “helps the Fund credibly and objectively assess and measure its performance, results, effectiveness and efficiency in delivering its mandate, including its contribution to promoting a paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways.”¹ The Policy provides that “the IEU [Independent Evaluation Unit] will develop standards, in collaboration with the Secretariat, and the Secretariat will develop guidelines to implement the Policy, in collaboration with the IEU, that ensure the Fund is able to inform its overall results, successes and unintended consequences in a credible and measurable manner.”² The GCF Evaluation Standards (hereafter, “the Standards”) are developed to support the implementation and operationalization of the Evaluation Policy.

2. The objective of the Standards is to support and enable the production of state-of-the-art evaluations with high-quality evidence and recommendations. The intention is to provide consistency across the different types of evaluations conducted by GCF stakeholders.³ It is expected that the Standards provide guidance on the key elements that the GCF evaluations should consider as they are designed, developed, implemented and reported to the relevant organizations.

3. To develop the Standards, the IEU undertook various steps that considered the experiences of experts within and outside the IEU. The development process consisted of a number of stages that increased in specificity and precision. First, the IEU undertook a literature review, covering the guidance and prevalent international evaluation practices across relevant organizations.⁴ Second, the IEU specifically reviewed the guidance provided by United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), including the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016) and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2020). These reviews informed the development of initial drafts of the Standards. Following this, the IEU specifically sought written feedback and expertise from UNEG, international experts on evaluations, the evaluation offices of relevant climate funds and a limited number of evaluation offices of accredited entities (AEs) of the GCF. The IEU also sought contributions from and continued engagement with the GCF Secretariat. The solicited feedback from all consulted actors was reflected in the revisions of the document.

4. The 15 Standards are listed in Table 1 and detailed in Section V of this document. Many individual standards are interrelated and may appear to overlap. This is to be expected because of the Standards’ corresponding, mutually complementing and reinforcing nature. The list of standards in this document is not intended to be exhaustive or exclusive. Nor is the list presented in any particular order. Instead, this is a list of standards prioritized by the GCF, although GCF evaluations may also adhere to other relevant standards.

¹ Refer to paragraph 10 in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

² Refer to paragraph 50 and paragraph 58(a) in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

³ Refer to paragraph 07 and appendix 01 in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

⁴ The IEU reviewed the evaluation standards and principles of the following organizations more closely: Asian Development Bank, Adaptation Fund, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Evaluation Cooperation Group, Global Environment Facility, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Mastercard Foundation, Oxfam International, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Evaluation Group, the World Bank and the World Food Programme.

Table 1. Green Climate Fund Evaluation Standards

1	Independence
2	Impartiality and Objectivity
3	Utility and Value Added
4	Ownership and Participation
5	Credibility and Rigour
6	Transparency
7	Learning
8	Human Rights, Gender Equality and Environmental Considerations
9	Confidentiality
10	Cost-effectiveness
11	Ethics
12	Integrity
13	Accountability
14	Competence
15	Respect and Beneficence

5. This document contains two appendices. Appendix I provides a series of suggested questions and indicators that those commissioning and conducting evaluations could ask themselves when assessing the application of the Standards. Appendix II provides a list of non-exhaustive good practices that evaluators may refer to while implementing the Standards.

II. Applying the GCF Evaluation Standards

6. As per paragraph 50 of the approved Evaluation Policy, the IEU shall develop standards in collaboration with the Secretariat. The Secretariat will develop guidelines to implement the policy in collaboration with the IEU. These standards and guidelines are intended to ensure that the Fund can inform its overall performance – including results, impacts and unintended consequences – in a credible and measurable manner. It is expected that the guidelines will draw upon the Standards. These guidelines are expected to allow for operationalization of the Standards into Secretariat-led and AE-led evaluations and create an additional mechanism for the GCF to uphold the Evaluation Policy across its evaluation function.

7. As stated in the GCF Evaluation Policy, all GCF stakeholders will apply and incorporate the Standards in their evaluation work as appropriate and relevant.⁵ As part of the mandate to

⁵ Refer to paragraph 07 and paragraph 18 in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

improve the quality of evaluations in the GCF, the IEU will conduct assessments of the quality of evaluations and the application of the Standards. It is imperative to note that the Standards operate within the scope of the GCF Evaluation Policy. The IEU, being the custodian of the Evaluation Policy, will provide reports to the Board on issues related to implementing the Evaluation Policy (including the application of the Standards).⁶

8. The GCF Evaluation Policy recognizes three types of evaluations: IEU-led evaluations, Secretariat-led evaluations and AE-led evaluations. For IEU-led evaluations, the Head of the IEU would enforce the Standards and monitor their application. The GCF Secretariat would be expected to apply the Standards in Secretariat-led evaluations. In the case of AE-led evaluations, the GCF Evaluation Policy indicates that the independent evaluation offices of the AE, or the AE by drawing on the independence of their evaluation function where such independent evaluation offices do not exist, would be responsible for this type of evaluation.⁷ Therefore, these offices would also have to ensure that the Standards are applied.

9. The target audience of this document consists of both those who commission and conduct evaluations and those who receive the findings and recommendations from the evaluations, including all levels and all types of evaluations as indicated in the GCF Evaluation Policy.⁸ Applying and implementing the Standards is a shared responsibility. All those engaged in commissioning, hosting, designing, conducting and managing evaluation activities should understand and adhere to the Standards. The Standards are also applicable in the context of the different roles and responsibilities of GCF stakeholders, as defined in the GCF Evaluation Policy.⁹ More specifically, the Standards are primarily intended to support those commissioning evaluations and the evaluators who conduct GCF evaluations. Those receiving the evidence and recommendations from these evaluations should also be familiar with the Standards to ensure that they were produced and developed to the highest level of quality.

10. Not every standard would be applicable for every evaluation. Nevertheless, the evaluator and those commissioning the evaluation will have to explain why a standard was not relevant for a particular evaluation. This discussion should be incorporated into key documents in the evaluation process, such as the terms of reference (TOR) and the inception, draft and final reports.

III. Training and capacity-building

11. GCF stakeholders may require training to strengthen their knowledge and awareness relating to the following subject matter: definition and applicability of the Standards, potential methodologies to apply and assess the application of the Standards, how the Standards are applied to different types of GCF funding proposals and projects and, lastly, the roles and responsibilities in applying the Standards. The Secretariat will be responsible for building the capacity of AEs, with a particular focus on the capacity-building of direct access entities.

12. As per paragraph 55 of the Evaluation Policy, the IEU will strengthen evaluation capacities in AEs (including direct access entities) and intermediaries to enable evaluation of their Fund portfolio activities. As established in its TOR, the IEU will assume a leadership role in the evaluation community regarding climate change and will actively participate in relevant

⁶ Refer to paragraph 51 in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

⁷ Refer to paragraph 20, paragraph 21 and paragraph 22 in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

⁸ Refer to Section VII. Types of evaluations in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

⁹ Refer to Section VIII. Institutional arrangements, roles and responsibilities in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

evaluation networks. Furthermore, the IEU will work on establishing and leading a community of practice of evaluators working in the climate change field.

IV. Effectiveness and updates

13. The Standards come into effect with the GCF Evaluation Policy in May 2022. The IEU will review and revise the Standards on a continuing basis to reflect lessons learned from their implementation.

V. GCF Evaluation Standards

Standard 1. Independence

14. The independence of an evaluation may be secured by ensuring that it is carried out by entities and persons free of the control of those responsible for the design and implementation of the GCF investment, operations, strategies, policies, management and governance. Independence implies freedom from political influence and organizational pressure. It is characterized by full access to information and complete autonomy in carrying out the evaluation, reporting findings and providing recommendations. The independence of evaluations is necessary for credibility, influences how an evaluation is used and allows evaluators to be impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation process.

15. Evaluators and those reporting the findings and recommendations of the evaluation must have the complete freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without risk of adverse effects on their career development and must be able to express their assessment freely. The evaluation process should be independent of the policymaking process and the delivery, management and implementation of the subject under evaluation. Programme/project managers should take a supporting role in the design and implementation of the evaluation, but to ensure independence and credibility they will not manage the evaluation. They will provide documents and data as requested to support the overall evaluation and the evaluators and managers of evaluations.

16. There should be four dimensions of independence in evaluations:

- (a) Structural independence: where each evaluation has its own budget.
- (b) Functional independence: where the evaluation team can determine how to conduct the evaluation.
- (c) Organizational independence: where the evaluation team is positioned outside the organization's reporting line and staff management function.
- (d) Behavioural independence: where the operational unit does not interfere with or influence the process or the interpretation and reporting of the evaluation findings. This dimension would apply even in cases where the operational unit commissions the evaluation of its own project or programme.

Standard 2. Impartiality and Objectivity

17. The evaluation process and products should reflect impartiality, objectivity and an absence of bias at all stages, including planning, formulating the mandate and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, data collection, conducting the evaluation, developing findings and recommendations, and communication.

18. Impartiality means that evaluation team members should not have been (or expect to be) directly responsible for policy-setting, design or management of the evaluation subject.

Moreover, impartiality means that an evaluator should not be biased against what is being evaluated. Any team members with vested interests (anyone involved in an item subject to evaluation or benefiting from its association) must not be members of the evaluation team in order to maintain impartiality. For impartiality to prevail, there must be no bias in procedure, scope and methodology, and such biases must not come into play while considering and analysing achievements and challenges.

19. While developing rigorous evaluations, it must be recognized that the evaluation processes take place within a value-laden system. Every aspect of evaluation – from design and data collection to analysis, reporting and uptake – is embedded in and affected by social contexts, which can sometimes pose unique challenges when addressing rationality. Evaluators should identify and address these issues as much as possible in GCF evaluations, which heavily strive for value neutrality. To achieve a high level of objectivity, evaluators must avoid errors in judgment and must test competing explanations. Evaluations should also strive to acknowledge the specific normative values underpinning them.

20. The views of all stakeholders should be considered. The key elements of impartiality and objectivity are professional integrity and the absence of bias. All evaluations will be operationally and analytical unbiased and adhere to the highest ethical standards (see Appendix II) while upholding the GCF procedures and policies that address conflicts of interest and those specific to the evaluation profession.

Standard 3. Utility and Value Added

21. An evaluation is not an end in itself. It only achieves its purpose if the evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations are considered, taken up and acted upon. Evaluation utility refers to the relevance and timeliness of the evaluation process and findings to learning, decision-making and accountability. Utility is important in order to meet the learning, accountability and decision-making needs of the intended users through reports that are properly structured and well written. By strengthening the utility, the evaluation also builds ownership and commitment to the evaluation by different stakeholders. Evaluations should have a utility that is relevant to the work of the GCF and the work of the entity conducting the evaluation. The utility of an evaluation is measured by how much the evaluation influences the organization's decision-making, including the uptake of findings, lessons and recommendations. The credibility of the evaluation is a prerequisite for utility.

22. The value added is the contribution of the evaluation to dialogue, learning, accountability and improved institutional performance. If an evaluation is to add value, it must be used. Therefore, the evaluation should be available in a timely manner and in a practical format; it must be embedded into the operational process in such a way as to inform operational efforts and choices. Ultimately, the relevance of the evaluation is measured by its utility, value and timing. For an evaluation to be relevant, the organization must clearly intend to use its analysis, conclusions and recommendations to inform decisions and actions. This implies relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making processes and accountability.

Standard 4. Ownership and Participation

23. An evaluation must provide opportunities for stakeholders to participate in and own the evaluation process, its results and its products. Meaningful participation in evaluation processes is encouraged to enhance interest in evaluations and, crucially, the ownership and use of emerging findings and recommendations. Because evaluation is intended to strengthen

dialogue, accountability and learning processes, it is expected to ensure that key stakeholders are engaged in all stages of the evaluation process.

24. The evaluation process should regularly inform stakeholders about the evaluation through formal and informal means to encourage learning. The evaluation team develops partnerships with various stakeholders involved in the subject under evaluation.

25. Participation in the evaluation process and ownership or buy-in of the results of the evaluations will be maximized when GCF stakeholders engage with evaluations. In collaboration with partner countries, the onus is on the GCF to set expectations for both implementers and evaluators. The evaluation team and those commissioning evaluations should encourage and promote stakeholders' and partners' learning and reflection skills while thinking creatively about different ways to foster programme learning to ensure the inclusion of underrepresented groups (e.g. indigenous peoples, women, youth and elderly, the illiterate and the most vulnerable).

Standard 5. Credibility and Rigour

26. An impartial and rigorous methodology is necessary for an evaluation to be credible. Credibility and rigour of methodology and approaches generate high-quality, trustworthy evidence, contributing to sound knowledge. Credibility in evaluation is further manifested in the form of credibility of evidence, analysis and judgment, a manner of data collection that conforms to global standards, the transparency of evaluation processes that involve relevant stakeholders, an ethical approach and robust quality assurance systems. Evaluations should meet internationally agreed norms and standards for evaluation to retain their credibility.

27. Rigour is a prerequisite for the credibility of evaluation findings and, in turn, for evaluation utility. Rigour is to be further ensured in data collection, analysis, and reporting that are systematic and verifiable. Such rigour of evaluation design and the corresponding data collection and analysis enhance the confidence of evaluators to draw conclusions. High-quality evaluation reports establish the reliability and credibility of findings and conclusions by including details of the evaluation design and chosen methodology, including disclaimers describing the limitations of data and methodology used. The evaluation should also include an analysis of the potential negative impacts of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Standard 6. Transparency

28. Transparency in evaluation is an essential element that establishes trust and builds confidence, enhancing stakeholder ownership and increasing public accountability. Essential features of transparency involve clear communication concerning decisions in the evaluation process alongside transparency in conveying the purpose of the evaluation and the criteria applied, the evaluation approach and methods, and the intended use of the findings. The evaluation team must analyse data and present findings transparently while reflecting the different views of various stakeholders. The team must also maintain confidentiality, taking into account the type of information as well as individuals and institutions. The evaluation team must also provide an explicit rationale when they do not incorporate stakeholder feedback.

29. Transparency at the GCF refers to the Fund's obligation to disclose findings publicly and transparently and to share the information (microdata and reports) generated through the

evaluation. The GCF is committed to transparency and making information available to the public.¹⁰ It does this by routinely updating the GCF website with the most recent information.

Standard 7. Learning

30. The GCF is a learning institution and the GCF Evaluation Policy identifies learning as a key purpose of evaluations.

31. Learning refers to the GCF's commitment to understanding the causal relationships and effects of its interventions. Learning also facilitates the integration of evaluation findings in the design, implementation, analysis and measurement of current and future interventions, thereby encouraging learning feedback loops. Learnings derived from real-time impact assessments and evaluations not only inform the AEs in their review processes but also aid them in better adaptative management.¹¹

32. Due to the complexity in social, economic and environmental changes, along with the continuously evolving context in which GCF operations take place, evaluators and those receiving the findings and recommendations of the evaluation must place a strong emphasis on iterative learning. Such learning enables adjustments at the operational and strategic levels, in both the shorter and the longer term.

33. Interim evaluations are used to assess progress towards outcomes and impacts and the likelihood of achieving them, whereas final evaluations provide evaluative evidence covering the entire intervention. To apply the standard of Learning, the questions that evaluators must ask may include, among others, "Are we doing things right?" and "Are the right things being done?" This requires the evaluator and the GCF to question their mandate, beliefs, values and assumptions, including those underpinning the GCF's perception of the problem and its strategies to address them. Evidence from evaluations should inform this learning and questioning. Given the urgency of solving the climate change crisis, the GCF embraces rapid and flexible learning processes and tools, such as evaluations.

Standard 8. Human Rights, Gender Equality and Environmental Considerations

34. The universally recognized values and principles of human rights, gender equality, rights of indigenous peoples and environmental considerations need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation. It is the responsibility of the evaluators and those commissioning evaluations to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, and that they underpin the existing principles, policies and mandate of the GCF. Evaluators should assess the extent to which GCF investments have addressed the above considerations and have incorporated the GCF commitment to these considerations into their design and implementation.

35. During the design, implementation and presentation of evidence and recommendations, evaluators should act with tolerance, sensitivity and respect for cultural differences. Furthermore, this standard urges that evaluations should avoid any form of discrimination based on any group – such as gender; race; colour; national, ethnic or social origin; genetic features; language; religion or belief; political or any other opinion; membership of a national

¹⁰ Refer to paragraph 1, paragraph 6(a), paragraph 6(c) and paragraph 15 in the Information Disclosure Policy of the Green Climate Fund (2016).

¹¹ Refer to paragraph 54 in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

minority; property; birth; disability; age; or sexual orientation – both within the evaluation team and among stakeholders. This Standard also recognizes that evaluations should take an approach that is sensitive to the needs and special conditions of indigenous peoples.

36. GCF evaluations should also consider how to minimize their carbon footprint. Evaluation plans can accommodate efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of the evaluation process. Evaluation teams should indicate how they are planning to offset their carbon footprint.

Standard 9. Confidentiality

37. The confidentiality of evaluation participants should be protected throughout the evaluation process, including during qualitative and quantitative data collection, as well as when storing, analysing and reporting data. The evaluation should also include a discussion on how participants and users would be notified of a data breach, hacking or loss in data sets and research in which their information was recorded. Any data, information and documents, whether in physical or electronic format, obtained during an evaluation shall be protected and kept confidential according to GCF policies and procedures and the GCF's legal framework.

Standard 10. Cost-effectiveness

38. Whenever an evaluation is commissioned, the costing of the evaluation plan is crucial and should be realistic about the requirements and scope of the evaluation. The evaluation process must consider all available options to develop the most cost-effective and robust techniques that will provide the strongest evidence. A realistic, honest and careful planning of the evaluation, as well as the cost-effectiveness of the project, is even more crucial when budgetary resources are limited. Evaluators should objectively assess value for money in terms of the learnings that the evaluations will yield and make a conscious decision based on that assessment. Evaluators are encouraged to carefully consider the appropriate options to decide on the most cost-effective methods that will provide the most robust evidence for the evaluation. The costing of an evaluation should be realistic in relation to the requirements and scope of the evaluation and the realities of the evaluation.

39. The GCF Evaluation Policy provides for the provision of adequate resources for conducting evaluations of all types and at all levels across the GCF.¹² This is also a key international norm to enable organizations to fulfil their evaluation function. At the project level, the GCF Evaluation Policy indicates that the AEs are responsible for ensuring that financial support for interim and final evaluations is budgeted, adequately allocated and available in a timely manner. Further, GCF projects should include a budget line for generating and collecting evaluative data. This budget is exclusive of the interim and final evaluation costs covered by the AE fees. Overall evaluation budgets included within project budgets, consistent with global evaluation international best practices, should range from 2 to 5 per cent of the project budget.¹³

40. The GCF Secretariat is expected to ensure that its strategic and working plans include the human and financial resources necessary to implement the Evaluation Policy and to undertake monitoring and evaluation functions. IEU budget should be linked to the size of the GCF programming envelope since it represents the volume of operations that the IEU will

¹² Refer to paragraphs 29, 41 and 58 in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

¹³ Refer to paragraph 41 in the GCF Evaluation Policy (2021).

evaluate in the future. It is anticipated that the overall annual budget for the IEU will not exceed 1 per cent of the programming envelope of the GCF. The IEU's annual budget will be sufficient to cover its annual workplan as approved by the Board.

41. The funding allocated by the GCF in each of these cases should be managed to ensure cost-effectiveness in terms of adding value to the GCF. The costing and budgeting of each evaluation should be addressed as appropriate and should consider the cost of applying the GCF Evaluation Standards and Evaluation Guidelines.

Standard 11. Ethics

42. Systematic attention to ethics helps balance the goals of evaluations and those involved in commissioning them and carrying them out with the rights and interests of diverse participants and their communities. UNEG defines ethics as “the right or agreed principles and values that govern the behaviour of an individual within the specific, culturally defined context within which an evaluation is commissioned or undertaken.”¹⁴ In practical terms, evaluations must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment and for human rights and gender equality.

43. Ethical considerations are crucial to shaping the design of all evaluation activities. Human dignity, equity and environmental respect underpin the design and implementation of evaluations at the GCF, in line with the GCF mandate which all staff, partners and evaluators are expected to follow (see also Standard 8, above, on Human Rights, Gender Equality and Environmental Considerations). Participants in evaluations must be treated with respect and dignity, which entails robust procedures to protect their privacy and sensitive information, including by offering anonymity and the confidentiality of individual information. Evaluations must practice free, prior and informed consent, especially ensuring that individuals are free to choose whether to participate or not.

44. All proposed evaluations must consider the potential ethical implications of the investment or activities under evaluation, along with plans to mitigate such concerns. Those managing evaluations must remain sensitive to ethical considerations throughout the evaluation, with frequent check-ins and early attention given to any emergent issues. There should be a mechanism for reporting potential ethical problems created by the evaluation or identified by the evaluation, and appropriate actions should be taken in both cases. In the first case, evaluation managers may have to change the evaluation team or methodologies. In the second case, the evaluation team should communicate immediately with the relevant parts of the organization.

Standard 12. Integrity

45. Integrity is the active adherence to moral values and professional standards, which are essential for responsible evaluation practice. Integrity in evaluation requires various elements such as honesty and truthfulness in communication and actions, professionalism, independence, impartiality and incorruptibility. Two aspects that will affect the integrity of an evaluation are ensuring evaluation incorruptibility and practicing sound evaluative judgment.

46. All stakeholders involved in evaluations should consider evaluation corruptibility. This refers to possible ways in which evaluators or those commissioning evaluations may be

¹⁴ United Nations Evaluation Group, “Norm 06 (Ethics)”, *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (New York, UNEG, 2016).

persuaded to support unethical practices in conducting the evaluation or reporting the results of evaluations. Five forms of corruptibility could compromise the ethics of the evaluation and must be prevented:¹⁵

- (a) A willingness to misrepresent the truth and produce positive findings, due to conflict of interest or other perceived payoffs or penalties (such willingness may be conscious or unconscious)
- (b) An intrusion of unsubstantiated opinions because of sloppy, capricious or unprofessional evaluation practices
- (c) “Shaded” evaluation “findings” as a result of the intrusion of the evaluator’s personal prejudices or preconceived notions
- (d) Obtaining the cooperation of clients or participants by making promises that cannot be kept
- (e) Failure to honour commitments that could have been honoured

47. Furthermore, evaluators or evaluations may not be corrupt but may have misunderstood their responsibilities, creating challenges to sound evaluative judgment. This also affects and is related to Standard 5 on Credibility and Rigour. In yet other cases, evaluators may intend to do what is right, correct or ethical but may misunderstand their role and responsibility in the evaluation. The following potential evaluation fallacies may challenge sound judgment:¹⁶

- (a) Clientism: the fallacy that doing whatever the client requests or whatever will benefit the client is ethically correct.
- (b) Contractualism: the fallacy that the evaluator must follow the written contract without question, even if doing so is detrimental to the public good.
- (c) Methodologicalism: the belief that following acceptable inquiry methods assures that the behaviour of the evaluator will be ethical, even when some methodologies may compound the evaluator’s ethical dilemmas.
- (d) Relativism: the fallacy that opinion data collected by the evaluator from various participants must be given equal weight because opinions of peripheral and pivotal participants are assigned the same priority.
- (e) Pluralism/elitism: the fallacy of allowing powerful voices to be given higher priority because the evaluator feels they hold more prestige and potency than the powerless or voiceless.

Standard 13. Accountability

48. Accountability is the obligation to be answerable for all decisions and actions that are taken in an evaluation. The evaluator’s responsibility is to honour commitments and report potential or actual harms observed through the appropriate channels. An evaluator can ensure accountability by being transparent regarding the evaluation’s purpose, design and conduct, while being responsive when questions or events arise. The evaluator should take responsibility

¹⁵ Jody L. Fitzpatrick, James R. Sanders and Blaine R. Worthen, *Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines* (New York, Pearson Education Inc. 2004).

¹⁶ E. R. House, “Principles Evaluation: A Critique of the AEA Guiding Principles”, in *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*, R. Shadish and others, eds., New Directions for Program Evaluation No. 66 (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1995).

for meeting the evaluation purpose. Measures taken for exercising due care alongside ensuring redress and recognition are the responsibility of the evaluator. Accountability also entails giving thorough justification and fair and accurate reporting to stakeholders, including affected people, on decisions, actions and intentions.

Standard 14. Competence

49. Evaluations should be conducted by the best possible team in terms of education, qualifications, skills, and appropriate expertise and experience in evaluation. The evaluation team must possess the competencies and knowledge required to perform their roles in the evaluation. Possessing relevant evaluation competencies is essential to ensure not only the credibility and quality of the process but also the products of the evaluation. The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Ultimately, the evaluator's competence is critical to completing an evaluation.

50. Programme/project managers should support the implementation of the evaluation by providing data and documents; however, to ensure independence and credibility, they should not manage the evaluation. Conversely, the evaluation manager cannot be the manager of the programme/project being evaluated.

51. Evaluators, evaluation managers and evaluation commissioners should continually seek to maintain and improve their competencies in order to provide the highest level of performance in their evaluations. Those responsible for commissioning evaluations should recruit evaluators with the required qualifications, expertise and experience: selection must be transparent and primarily based on competence. Evaluators should accurately represent their level of skills and knowledge. If the evaluation falls outside of their professional training and competence limits, they should decline to conduct the evaluation.

52. A possible good practice could be that the evaluation team comprises internal (for example, IEU staff or staff from an AE's independent evaluation offices) and external experts. Engaging independent external evaluators is a means to avoid undue influence and bias, ensuring objective and credible evaluation results. On the other hand, the evaluation team will benefit from having members who have knowledge of the institution. Evaluations of GCF operations should make the best possible use of local expertise, both technical and evaluative.

Standard 15. Respect and Beneficence

53. Respect involves engaging with all stakeholders of an evaluation in a way that honours their dignity, well-being and personal agency while also being responsive to their sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability, and cultural, economic and physical environments. Evaluations must ensure fair representation is given to different voices and perspectives. Respect in evaluation requires that all relevant stakeholders have access to the evaluation process and product, alongside meaningful engagement and fair treatment of all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes.

54. On the other hand, beneficence in this context means striving to do good for people and the planet while averting harms arising from evaluation as an intervention. Beneficence in evaluation requires explicit and ongoing consideration of risks and benefits alongside warranting to maximize benefits and ensuring to do no harm. The aim is to ensure that evaluations do no harm while making an overall positive contribution.

Appendix I. Suggested checklist for application of GCF Evaluation Standards

1. Commissioning, planning and design	Yes	No	Comments	Relevant standards
Are those conducting the evaluation free from conflict of interest?				Independence
Do those who carry out the evaluation have the required qualifications, expertise and experience to conduct the evaluation competently, including awareness and knowledge of the GCF Evaluation Standards and Evaluation Guidelines?				Competence
Is the proposed approach to gathering evidence the most cost-effective?				Cost-effectiveness
Are the time frame and resources realistic for achieving the intended purpose and outcomes, including engaging local stakeholders and communicating findings to different stakeholder groups?				Cost-effectiveness; Credibility; Participation
Have you considered and addressed the GCF Evaluation Standards and Evaluation Guidelines when drafting the terms of reference (TORs)?				All standards
Are expertise and mechanisms in place for taking timely actions if the GCF Evaluation Standards or Evaluation Guidelines are not followed?				All standards
Do your evaluation plans and TORs allocate sufficient resources and time to ensure all relevant stakeholders are engaged throughout the evaluation in providing feedback on the design and implementation approaches?				Cost-effectiveness; Credibility; Participation; Utility; Transparency
Are methods and tools for data collection, site selection and key informants based on objective criteria to ensure the absence of bias?				Impartiality
How is the evaluation expected to be used?				Utility

Do your evaluation plans and TORs identify appropriate audiences for evaluation findings and allocate sufficient resources for dissemination in appropriate channels and formats?				Utility
Will the evaluation promote a culture of mindfulness of differences in social values and cultures?				Ethics; Human Rights
2. Implementation, including data collection	Yes	No	Comments	Relevant standards
Have you informed staff and evaluators of reporting responsibilities and mechanisms for conflicts of interest?				Transparency; Independence; Credibility
Is there a plan for redress outlined so that stakeholders or the evaluators can report any non-adherence to the GCF Evaluation Standards and Evaluation Guidelines?				Accountability; Transparency
Can participants in the evaluation provide feedback during the evaluation process or seek redress?				Ownership and Participation
Is the evaluation being implemented following the agreed TORs?				Impartiality
Are the evaluators and those being evaluated following the GCF Evaluation Standards and Guidelines?				All standards
Does the evaluation plan have clear protocols for the storage and destruction of data after the evaluation?				Confidentiality
Is the identity and confidentiality of evaluation participants protected throughout the evaluation process?				Confidentiality
Is there a protocol to notify users/participants in case of data breaches?				Confidentiality

Are the evaluators trained to understand the local context, evaluation subject matter and gendered and other cultural norms to ensure appropriate sensitivity when undertaking the evaluation?				Competence; Human Rights
Are the questions for surveys, focus groups or interviews value neutral, culturally and age appropriate, and not likely to cause stress to participants?				Credibility and Rigour
Are evaluators working collaboratively and being respectful of the knowledge and experience of participants and stakeholders?				Ethics
Is the evaluation minimizing its carbon footprint (e.g. in travel arrangements and carbon offsetting of emissions)?				Environmental Considerations
Is there any provision for monitoring and addressing adverse issues identified throughout the data collection (e.g. drug abuse, illness or disease, domestic violence, or harm to natural systems or ecosystems)?				GCF Policies; Transparency; Integrity
Are power imbalances recognized and addressed? Are participatory and empowerment approaches favoured?				Participation; Human Rights
Did the evaluation promote and ensure a working culture shaped by ethical principles, such as honesty, fairness and respect?				Ethics; Integrity; Respect; Human Rights
Have (intended and unintended) consequences of the evaluation processes and results been monitored and addressed?				Cost-effectiveness; Transparency
3. Reporting	Yes	No	Comments	Relevant standards
Has the obligation to provide a clear and transparent accounting of the findings been made clear to those preparing the reporting?				Transparency; Ownership and Participation

Are quality assurance processes in place to ensure that the final report fully represents the findings and conclusions of the evaluators and has not been amended without their consent?				Transparency
Does the inception report include a detailed assessment of the risk of applying, or not, the GCF Evaluation Standards and proposed mitigation actions?				All standards
Does the evaluation report explain how stakeholders were engaged throughout the evaluation process in the evaluation approach or methodology?				Ownership and Participation
Do the report findings appropriately reflect the various perspectives and voices of the multiple stakeholders involved?				Ownership and Participation
Are potential negative impacts of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations explicitly considered? Have benefits and harms been weighted?				Credibility and Rigour; Transparency
How is the evaluation expected to influence the organization's decision-making and the GCF?				Utility and Value Added
4. Dissemination and communication				
Are the findings being communicated to relevant stakeholders, ensuring that limitations are clearly noted?				Dissemination
Does the evaluation have a learning plan?				Learning
Are those contracting the evaluations publicly disseminating all evaluation products and considering which are the most appropriate forms and languages to use to ensure accessibility for different audiences, including local populations?				Transparency; Credibility; Learning
Are evaluation products being disseminated promptly to optimize their use and relevance?				Utility and Value Added; Learning

Are evaluation findings presented in formats and channels appropriate for all audiences?				Learning
Are the evaluation findings and recommendations relevant and valuable to the work of the GCF and the work of the entity conducting the evaluation?				Utility and Value Added

Appendix II. Good practices for implementing GCF Evaluation Standards

1. Independence

- Independence is achieved when evaluation activities are independent of managers responsible for programme design and implementation.
- As defined in the GCF Evaluation Policy, self-evaluations should have independence in the composition of evaluators. Evaluators in this type of evaluation should be free from conflict of interest regarding the programme, project or policy that will be evaluated.
- Those commissioning the evaluation should ensure that the evaluators are free of conflict of interest, in both independent and self-evaluations. The procurement and recruitment process of evaluators should also be free of outside interference, following only the GCF's or the accredited entities' procurement and human resources procedures. Procurement and recruitment of evaluators should be conducted in a way that the selection is free from conflict of interest. For instance, selection panels may be independent of managers responsible for programme design, management and implementation.
- Those supervising the implementation of evaluations should ensure that evaluators are given access to all information and stakeholders.
- Some organizations require that the evaluators sign a form indicating they have no conflict of interest.
- Evaluators should have full discretion in submitting their report directly to those commissioning the evaluation.

2. Impartiality and Objectivity

Evaluation teams:

- Should be independent to avoid undue influence and bias while ensuring objective and credible evaluation results
- Should not have been, or expected to be, directly responsible for the policy-setting, design or management of the evaluation subject
- Must have the complete freedom to conduct the evaluation work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development and must be able to express their assessment freely
- Should conduct evaluations with professional integrity, in an unbiased fashion, and be ready and willing to issue strong, high-quality and uncompromising reports, free of any restriction imposed by Management and the Board
- Must have the competencies and knowledge required to perform their roles successfully

The Evaluation Manager or the person managing the evaluation:

- Must ensure that the evaluation is implemented as per design; if challenges arise during any steps in the evaluation process (e.g., after a field mission) and changes are necessary, these changes should not undermine impartiality
- Should prepare the TORs following the GCF Evaluation Standards and Evaluation Guidelines to ensure the absence of bias in terms of scope and design
- Should ensure that the selected methods and tools for data collection, site selection and key informants are based on objective criteria, to prevent bias; these criteria should be shared and discussed with key participants and stakeholders and be presented in the TORs, inception reports and final evaluation reports

3. Utility and Value-Added

- The evaluation topic should be aligned with the organization's programming to be relevant, useful and provide value added.
- The evaluation should be planned to provide timely information to key stakeholders – for example, to allow for adaptive management or mid-course corrections.
- The use of the evaluation must be built into the design phase and reflect the diversity of intended audiences and uses.
- There must be “a clear message from the top” about the utility of evaluative evidence. Senior managers and governance structures need to constantly question operational and strategy teams on how learning from evaluative evidence has affected the design of the operations and strategy.
- The management of the organization and the governing bodies should ensure that evaluative evidence is used to inform the design and implementation of future operations and strategies, as well as for mid-course correction of those under implementation. One way to ensure this is for the evaluation function to have “mechanisms” that monitor the feedback loops through action plans developed by management.
- Programme/project managers commissioning the evaluation need to have a clear plan for using the evaluation results.
- Evaluation managers must ensure early integration of the evaluation with the programme design and implementation.
- The consumers/intended audience of the evaluation results should be identified, to ensure a feedback loop is established so that the evaluation results can inform future decision-making.

- Expanded networks and alliances with partner organizations' clients and programme participants, young people, universities, governments, donors, civil society and other stakeholders can be encouraged to enable the systematic use of knowledge in addressing national, regional and global priorities.
- Liaising with the knowledge management systems is very useful to ensure that the evaluative evidence generated from the evaluation is accessible at the right time, in the appropriate format and for those who need it.
- The full utility of an evaluation hinges on dissemination, learning and follow-up. Therefore, recommendations should be presented in a form that enables different decision-makers to clearly identify their responsibility and track follow-up action in the GCF.
- Learning is an essential measurement of utility. The institution should have adequate resources for learning activities.

4. Ownership and Participation

- The evaluation plan should include a clear discussion of stakeholder engagement. The absence of such analysis risks reducing the utility of an evaluation or even creating resistance to evaluation findings and reducing ownership.
- When selecting and planning an evaluation, a key entry point is to engage stakeholders in reflecting on what to evaluate and which questions to focus on.
- Stakeholder engagement in the detailed planning of an evaluation can constitute a platform for capacity-building and be the source of additional data. It can also enhance stakeholders' interest in the evaluation findings and contribute to the methodological rigour of the evaluation.
- Establishing and nurturing relationships that optimize collaboration among and between evaluators, commissioners of evaluation, programme managers and key stakeholders (within the bounds of independence and impartiality) contributes to the ownership and validity of evaluation findings and creates opportunities for using resources efficiently. All stakeholders should ensure that such a relationship is established and sustained.
- To the extent possible, stakeholders should be invited to participate in the evaluation to increase ownership and enhance the validity of the findings. The GCF encourages methodological innovation and creativity in evaluation – particularly when they empower participants and harness the power of technology– to generate compelling insights and new ways of thinking.
- Evaluations should include local expertise to enhance the validity of findings and build local capacities. In this way, evaluations can help stakeholders at every level develop capacities to monitor and manage progress.

- Participants must be treated with respect and dignity. This entails robust procedures to protect privacy and sensitive information, including offering anonymity and confidentiality of individual information.
- All evaluation designs, approaches and practices should demonstrate cultural sensitivity, including recognizing differences in beliefs, manners and customs and ensuring that integrity and honesty are exhibited in relationships with stakeholders.
- The evaluation must practice free, prior and informed consent, especially by ensuring that individuals are free to choose to participate or not and that no penalty or hardship shall arise from their decision.
- Any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest must be proactively disclosed and managed.
- Evaluations should not be unduly extractive, invasive or burdensome on any individual, organization or community, and instead should seek to optimize their involvement and benefit. This includes consulting with local stakeholders and proactively sharing results.
- With particular attention paid to vulnerable populations, gender-sensitive approaches must also be considered and pursued (see Standard 8 on Human Rights, Gender Equality and Environmental Considerations).
- The evaluation report should consider how to engage stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. The report's findings should appropriately reflect the various perspectives and voices of the multiple stakeholders involved.
- Those findings should be communicated to relevant stakeholders, and limitations should be clearly noted.
- The evaluation should assess the similarities and differences among stakeholder views regarding the findings and recommendations.

5. Credibility and Rigour

- All evaluations should focus on using credible and independent data and methodologies that measure and assess whether, what, how and how much the GCF contributes towards mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
- Having a good monitoring and evaluation system is essential, and information about outputs should be available almost immediately. However, impact-level results may accrue several years after project completion, and evaluations should recognize this.
- Mixed methods in evaluation, from qualitative to quantitative approaches, are standard across the evaluation profession, and they should be employed by all GCF evaluations.
- Evaluations should draw on multiple sources of evidence, including quantitative and qualitative evidence derived from both primary and secondary data sources.
- Combining quantitative and qualitative methods in an integrated manner and at multiple levels fosters richness of understanding.

- To ensure credibility and rigour, it is critical that the evaluations are well articulated for testing development hypotheses and that the causal pathway is well defined.
- Early in the evaluation process, the evaluators and those commissioning the evaluation should determine which components of the programme logic are evaluable. In some cases, one might not choose to evaluate all pieces of a multifaceted intervention but might instead look for opportunities to do smaller-scale evaluations within a larger project to increase learning on the effectiveness of one intervention relative to another.
- To enhance the credibility of the evaluation, a quality assurance process can ensure that the final report fully represents the findings and conclusions of the evaluators.
- Evaluations should include a responsible data management protocol and practice for the storage of data and their destruction after the evaluation. The identity and confidentiality of evaluation participants should be preserved throughout the qualitative and quantitative data collection, data storage, analysis and reporting stages. If there are data breaches/hackings/losses, users and participants should be notified.
- Credibility and rigour are enhanced when evaluators understand the local context, particularly in terms of cultural norms, to ensure appropriate sensitivity when undertaking the evaluation.
- Those commissioning and undertaking evaluations should make every effort to familiarize themselves and use the cutting-edge evaluative methods to enhance methodological and analytical rigour.

6. Transparency

- Evaluation teams are selected in a transparent way through pre-established processes.
- Evaluation products should be publicly accessible and easily readable.
- It should be made clear to the evaluators that their key obligation is to provide a clear and transparent accounting of the findings.
- Sources on which findings are based must be clearly stated, and their reliability and validity should be transparently assessed. For example, records of interviews should be kept to make it possible to trace back to the sources behind a particular finding.
- The findings and conclusions of an evaluation should be coherently anchored in the analysis and documented in evaluation reports.
- Each recommendation should find its genesis in the conclusions contained in the evaluation.

- A range of internal and, for some evaluations, external stakeholders should review and comment on draft deliverables. Their comments and suggestions should be considered and, when appropriate, incorporated in the subsequent versions. The evaluator should maintain a clear audit trail of stakeholders' comments and responses.
- Major stakeholders and their interests, both in the subject of the evaluation and the evaluation itself, should be clearly set out in the TORs, along with a plan for their consultation and engagement during the evaluation.

7. Learning

- Evaluation questions should consider the fundamental assumptions underlying project design.
- Evaluations should identify the mechanisms to share findings widely and facilitate the integration of the evaluation's conclusions, lessons and recommendations.
- Evaluations should consider learning right from the design of the evaluation and foster an enabling environment to promote learning.
- The evaluation should establish feedback loops from evaluation to policymakers, operational staff, beneficiaries of GCF investments and the public to learn lessons from the evaluation.
- Evaluations should also include adequate resources for learning activities that create an environment among those participating in the evaluation, for learning not only about the evidence concluded but also about the evaluation itself.
- After completing an evaluation, those commissioning the evaluation should provide a space for primary users to deepen their understanding of the evaluation findings and recommendations.
- In addition to the evaluation report, those commissioning the evaluation should prepare easy-to-read communication products on evaluation findings and recommendations and disseminate them widely. Synthesis of evaluations is also considered a good practice.

8. Human Rights, Gender Equality and Environmental Considerations

- Evidence has shown that vulnerable groups and other stakeholders of GCF investments may be impacted in different ways, even though they are exposed to the same risks. Evaluations should consider this while collecting and analysing data and while identifying lessons and reaching conclusions.

- Ensuring an evaluation that is sensitive to human rights, gender equality and environmental considerations is not limited to including relevant indicators. It also means using sensitive methodologies and methods, which may entail rethinking and adapting existing tools by unpacking the units of analysis (e.g. household, community) in a differentiated and disaggregated way.
- Data collection should be sensitive to the different stakeholders of the GCF investment and should be disaggregated accordingly to capture different experiences and perceptions by the different groups. The data-collection methods should also be sensitive to the intersecting factors among stakeholders, such as ethnicity, age or socioeconomic class.
- Evaluations should take a sensitive approach even for investments that were not considered responsive to human rights, gender, indigenous peoples or environmental considerations in their design.
- Proposed evaluation recommendations should be sensitive to how they will impact different groups and stakeholders. Evaluations should include an analysis of how recommendations will or may impact these groups.
- The evaluation team should include team members with expertise on these topics.

9. Confidentiality

- Evaluators must respect participants' right to provide information in confidence and ensure that participants fully understand the scope and limits of confidentiality.
- Evaluators must ensure that sensitive data are protected and that they cannot be traced to their source or connect statements made in the report with the individuals who provided the relevant information.
- Information about a participant obtained during an evaluation must be kept confidential unless consent is given in advance by the participant.
- If a participant asks for confidentiality, their protection should be carefully considered when publishing an evaluation document, including the omission of their name in the appendices relating to participant interviews.
- Evaluations shall never attribute confidential information to the participant in any manner that may harm or jeopardize them, unless the provider of such information gives explicit authorization. Indeed, it is generally expected that evaluation reports will not attribute statements that can disclose a respondent's identity. Attribution of statements is usually made on an exceptional basis.
- Evaluations must obtain free, prior and informed consent from the participants to use private information.
- Consent should capture any information about how the evaluation data will be released and published alongside the limits of confidentiality.

- Consent should be verbal or written, and the participants should not feel pressured or coerced into providing consent or participating in the evaluation.
- Evaluations must ensure that participants are informed about how the evaluation will use their data.
- When evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered, it must be reported discreetly alongside being proactively investigated.
- The data-collection and management process must include procedures to protect the privacy of evaluation participants.
- Storage and handling of the completed data-collection materials must protect confidential information, and access must only be given to those with a legitimate role in the evaluation. Evaluators should destroy confidential data after the evaluation is over. Participants must be informed of any breach of personal data.
- Adequate training on the importance of confidentiality should be provided to those collecting data, with specific attention paid to their responsibility for protecting participants' privacy.
- Staff should also be trained in collecting, managing and storing confidential data.

10. Cost-effectiveness

- Evaluators should be honest about the relevant costs associated with accommodating and implementing evaluation methodologies and staffing evaluation teams with the required expertise.
- The decision to invest in an evaluation should be made while consciously considering whether the learning derived from the evaluation represents value for money.
- Two major limitations commonly faced by evaluations include a lack of relevant and appropriate data and a lack of clarity in the investment design. Addressing these limitations will require either a high budget or adjusting the expected precision of the evaluation.
- Subjects or investments to be evaluated should be selected deliberately, with an eye towards the value of the potential learning and buy-in of key stakeholders vis-à-vis the available budget to be invested in the evaluation.

11. Ethics

- Evaluators should adhere to high standards of ethics and professional conduct, over and above compliance with the rules and regulations governing the activities being evaluated.

- Members of the evaluation team should exercise personal and professional integrity, including avoiding conflicts of interest.
- Evaluators must have personal and professional integrity while respecting the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence so that the data cannot be traced to their sources.
- Data collection must conform to the ethical standards of research disciplines. Evaluators should receive free, prior and informed consent and permissions from participants in advance of data collection.
- Evaluators must be sensitive to the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environments in which they work, including being sensitive to discrimination and gender inequality issues.
- Evaluators should apply formal or informal ethical review processes before conducting an evaluation, particularly when planning primary data collection with potentially vulnerable people or in sensitive contexts.

12. Integrity

- Evaluators must recognize the critical role they play in overall accountability and should be guided by a professional sense of integrity and conduct.
- Evaluators should be independent, impartial and incorruptible. They should exercise strict adherence to evaluation ethics and standards.
- Evaluators should communicate honestly, truthfully and openly with clients and relevant stakeholders concerning aspects of the evaluation, such as findings, procedures, limitations or changes that may have occurred.
- Evaluators should professionally engage in credible and trustworthy behaviour, alongside competence, commitment and ongoing reflective practice.
- Evaluations must be conducted with the highest integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment, human rights, gender equality, and the “do no harm” principle for humanitarian assistance.
- Evaluators should honestly and truthfully negotiate when estimating the necessary amount of work, related payment and actual workload performed.
- Evaluators should prevent conflicts of interest to the greatest extent possible, including those related to possible future developments. Where conflicts of interest become apparent or are evolving, they must be disclosed and dealt with honestly.

- Commissioners of evaluation functions should have sufficient organizational independence by positioning themselves separately from management functions. The head of the evaluation unit or office should ensure that evaluations are managed and conducted independently, free from organizational pressure.
- Commissioners of evaluations should promote and ensure an organizational culture that is firmly rooted in and fully embodies ethical principles. This is achieved by fostering a culture of fairness, transparency and learning while aligning the structures and processes of the organization so they are truly guided and inspired by ethical considerations.
- Commissioners of evaluations should nurture an atmosphere characterized by honesty, fairness and respect. They should be aware of and reflective about how people treat each other. Where helpful, exchanging views with others to build consensus should be promoted.

13. Accountability

- Accountability in evaluation requires a rigorous methodology for assessing developmental results, impacts, and the performance of the concerned partners.
- For accountability to exist, any successes, unexpected results, shortcomings and failures highlighted during the evaluation should be disclosed to relevant partners and the general public without interference from any vested interest.
- Evaluators should be transparent regarding the evaluation's purpose and actions taken, establishing trust and increasing accountability for performance to the public, particularly those affected by the evaluation.
- Evaluators should also demonstrate that the evaluation is conducted in a rigorous, fair and balanced manner. Any judgments made should be based on sound and complete evidence that can be verified in the inception and evaluation reports.
- Evaluators should anticipate the possibility of discovering wrongdoing, fraud or misconduct and clarify upfront to whom such cases should be reported. While doing so, the evaluators should report their findings to the appropriate investigating authority and adhere to the highest standards of confidentiality.
- Protocols for responsible data management should be applied, as prescribed by the commissioning entity.
- Commissioners of evaluations should establish clear and accessible procedures to report conflicts of interest, abuse, misconduct or other serious ethical concerns identified during an evaluation and to seek redress where relevant (e.g., through establishing referral pathways for a complaint mechanism outside of the evaluation unit). This mechanism would be able to address concerns and provide support and advice.

- Communication with commissioners and other stakeholders should be open and transparent on all aspects of the evaluation process, including limitations. This includes raising ethical dilemmas for discussion and/or action at the earliest possible opportunity and communicating how ethical considerations are handled in the evaluation reports and other products.
- Accountability requires having adequate resources (human, financial and physical) in place to ensure that the evaluation function can fulfil its mandate and meet established ethical standards.

14. Competence

- Those responsible for commissioning evaluations should recruit evaluators who possess the essential skills for conducting evaluation studies and managing evaluation teams.
- The selection of evaluators should be a transparent process based on competency and should consider their relevant educational qualifications, expertise and evaluative experience.
- Selected evaluators should have a relevant educational background, qualifications and training in evaluation, preferably an advanced university degree or equivalent experience in the relevant disciplines, with specialized training in evaluation, project management and advanced statistical research.
- Evaluators should have a strong foundation in evaluation methods, tools and approaches. They should know how to carry out data collection and analysis, establish the relevance and strength of evidence to support conclusions, and have experience in working methods for triangulating data and evidence from multiple sources to reach an overall evaluative conclusion.
- Evaluators must understand the difference between independently verified and self-reported data. They should be up to date on new methodologies and possess proven competencies in line with the standards of the evaluation profession.
- Evaluators should promote evidence-based learning through applying a utilization-focused approach alongside establishing an evaluation culture of learning and continuous improvement.
- Evaluators shall make the best possible use of local expertise, both technical and evaluative.
- Evaluators should continually undertake professional development and exchange to strengthen qualifications and expertise for competent and ethical evaluation practice. This can be achieved through formal training, professional dialogue, supervision or informal collegial discussions, particularly concerning ethical challenges in evaluation.

- The commissioners of evaluations should possess sufficient knowledge of ethics, human rights and gender equality to be able to assess the knowledge of evaluators who are being commissioned to undertake an evaluation. They should also have the ability to take a leadership role in maintaining the integrity of the selection process when engaging an evaluator.
- The commissioners of evaluations should have sufficient technical skills and knowledge to assess the technical quality of a proposal submission, as well as have the ability to support the use of evaluations for learning and accountability.

The heads of evaluation units or offices should possess additional competencies beyond those listed above, such as the following:

- Technical and professional skills, including a more substantial knowledge base on evaluation so they can provide substantive guidance on global issues and evaluation trends
- Mastery of evaluation ethics within complex contexts
- Management skills, including overseeing coordination and providing supervision
- Facilitating networking, mentoring and coaching evaluators, promoting a positive work environment, and conveying a deeper understanding of how to foster learning
- Enhanced communication and interpersonal skills and the ability to promote an organizational learning culture

15. Respect and Beneficence

- Evaluators must be sensitive to the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environments in which they work. Evaluations must be conducted legally.
- Considering the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality.
- It is crucial for members of the evaluation team to familiarize themselves with the cultural and social values and characteristics of the recipients and intended beneficiaries. In this way, they will be better equipped to understand and respect local customs, beliefs and practices throughout the evaluation work.
- Evaluations should be carried out in a participatory and ethical manner. The welfare of the stakeholders should be given due respect and consideration in terms of human rights, dignity and fairness.
- Evaluations must be gender and culturally sensitive and respect the confidentiality, dignity and right to protection as sources of those interviewed.

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- Different voices and perspectives should be represented fairly in evaluation products. Evaluation design should allow for the voices of the most vulnerable to be heard.
 - It is good practice to have meaningful engagement and fair treatment of all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes – from design to dissemination – so that they can actively inform the evaluation approach and products rather than being solely a subject of data collection.
 - Evaluators must empathize while working collaboratively with all stakeholders and treating all evaluation participants equally.
 - Evaluations should be conducted in a way that honours evaluators' professional expertise and personal dignity.
 - Evaluation teams should comprise members with appropriate representation regarding sex and a broad mix of backgrounds, skills and perspectives, including national and international expertise.
 - It is good practice to ensure that all team members are aware of and reflect on organizational standards for “doing no harm”, including non-discrimination policies and zero tolerance for sexual harassment, abuse, exploitation and stigmatization. Awareness-raising measures should be implemented, including around available reporting mechanisms and processes.
 - Evaluators must apply professional scepticism and be alert for risks, but they should also proceed without fear or favour and carefully, respectfully and intelligently uncover truths.
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