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Agenda Item 11

THE GEF EVALUATION POLICY

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed the document “The GEF Evaluation Policy: 2026”:

- (1) Approves the GEF Evaluation Policy contained in Section 2 of this document, which supersedes the previous 2019 GEF Evaluation Policy.
- (2) Authorizes the GEF Independent Evaluation Office to proceed with its dissemination and implementation.

SECTION 1. BACKGROUND: UPDATE TO THE GEF EVALUATION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. In line with recognized good practice of periodically reviewing policy frameworks, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has undertaken a comprehensive review and update of the GEF Evaluation Policy. Since its adoption in 2019, the policy has provided a robust foundation for independent evaluation. However, significant institutional developments within the GEF, and evolving international evaluation standards underscore the need for a revised policy.

2. The revised policy retains the overall structure and core principles of the 2019 policy while introducing key enhancements. It streamlines the evaluation governance framework, strengthens safeguards for independence, and clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the Council, the Secretariat, and the IEO. It also aligns with current international good practice, reflecting approaches adopted by other multi-lateral institutions, including the Caribbean Development Bank the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Food Programme, that have recently updated their evaluation policies.

RATIONALE FOR REVISING THE POLICY

The revision of the policy responds to the following considerations:

- (1) Institutional maturity and strategic evolution.** Since 2019, the GEF has: (i) progressed through two replenishment phases; (ii) expanded its programming modalities; (iii) strengthened its results architecture; and (iv) increased its ambition in global environmental leadership. The revised policy provides a stable governance foundation for implementing the evaluation strategy and work program.
- (2) Alignment with international evaluation standards.** International evaluation norms and peer institutions have increasingly emphasized clear structural and behavioral independence and leaner, principle-based evaluation policies. The revised policy reflects updated standards issued by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC), the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of multilateral development banks, and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).
- (3) Clearer separation of policy and operational guidance.** The 2019 policy combined governance provisions with detailed procedural guidance. Experience has shown that:
 - Policy should define the mandate, principles, safeguards for independence, and oversight arrangements, all of which are likely to remain stable in the medium term; and
 - Operational guidance should be maintained in evaluation manuals, quality assurance frameworks, and strategies, that can be updated more flexibly.

Accordingly, the revised policy streamlines governance provisions and relocates operational detail to appropriate guidance documents.

- (4) **Strengthening independence safeguards.** While independence has long been a cornerstone of the GEF evaluation function, evolving good practice necessitates a clearer articulation of key dimensions: (i) organizational independence; (ii) budgetary safeguards; (iii) protection of evaluative judgment; and (iv) reporting arrangements. The revised policy clarifies these safeguards to reinforce the independence and credibility of the IEO.

KEY UPDATES TO THE EVALUATION POLICY

3. The revised policy maintains the core foundations of the 2019 Evaluation Policy, including the dual objectives of accountability and learning; the central role of an independent evaluation function anchored in the IEO’s direct reporting to the Council; alignment with internationally recognized norms and standards; the continued use of established evaluation criteria; and a clear governance framework defining roles and responsibilities across the GEF partnership. Together, these elements ensure continuity in both the purpose and institutional architecture of an independent evaluation function.

4. Building on this foundation, the revised policy introduces targeted enhancements. These include a clearer articulation of independence encompassing organizational, operational, and behavioral dimensions; explicit recognition of both summative and formative evaluation functions; the addition of coherence as an evaluation criterion; and provisions for the ethical and transparent use of artificial intelligence. At the same time, consistent with a clearer separation between governance and implementation, detailed procedural requirements--such as minimum requirements, SMART¹ indicator guidance, and glossary elements-- will be elaborated in implementation guidelines to be developed following policy approval.

CONCLUSION

5. The revision of the Evaluation Policy represents an important step in modernizing the governance of evaluation within the GEF. It clarifies institutional roles and reinforces independence safeguards, and provides a framework that can be operationalized through a multi-year strategy and rolling work program for the IEO. When implemented in this manner, it will strengthen both accountability and learning.

¹ Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

SECTION 2



THE GEF EVALUATION POLICY



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Abbreviations

AI	artificial intelligence
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	civil society organization
ECG	Evaluation Cooperation Group
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
MAR	management action record
MDB	multi-lateral development bank
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD-DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFP	operational focal point
OPS	overall performance study
PPR	portfolio performance report
RBM	results-based management
SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

1 Evaluation at the GEF

1.1 Introduction

1. **This Evaluation Policy outlines the guiding principles for evaluation across the Global Environment Facility (GEF) partnership and all GEF-financed activities, and establishes the governance framework for the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO).** The policy is aligned with the [GEF Instrument](#), which provides that “the Council shall...ensure that GEF policies, programs, operational strategies and projects are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.”² It is consistent with internationally accepted standards, including the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC) Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance as well as the good practice standards recommended by the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the multilateral development banks (MDBs) and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). This policy is also consistent with the broader framework of GEF policies and will be operationalized through guidelines on specific issues, a medium-term evaluation strategy, and an associated four-year rolling work program.

2. **The GEF Evaluation Policy establishes the institutional framework for evaluation, defines stakeholder responsibilities, and ensures evaluations align with international standards.** It clarifies the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, while establishing requirements for evaluating GEF-funded projects and programs in accordance with internationally recognized principles, norms and standards. Any proposed amendments to the policy will be presented by the IEO to the Council for decision, following consultation with relevant stakeholders, to ensure both accountability and broad-based input.

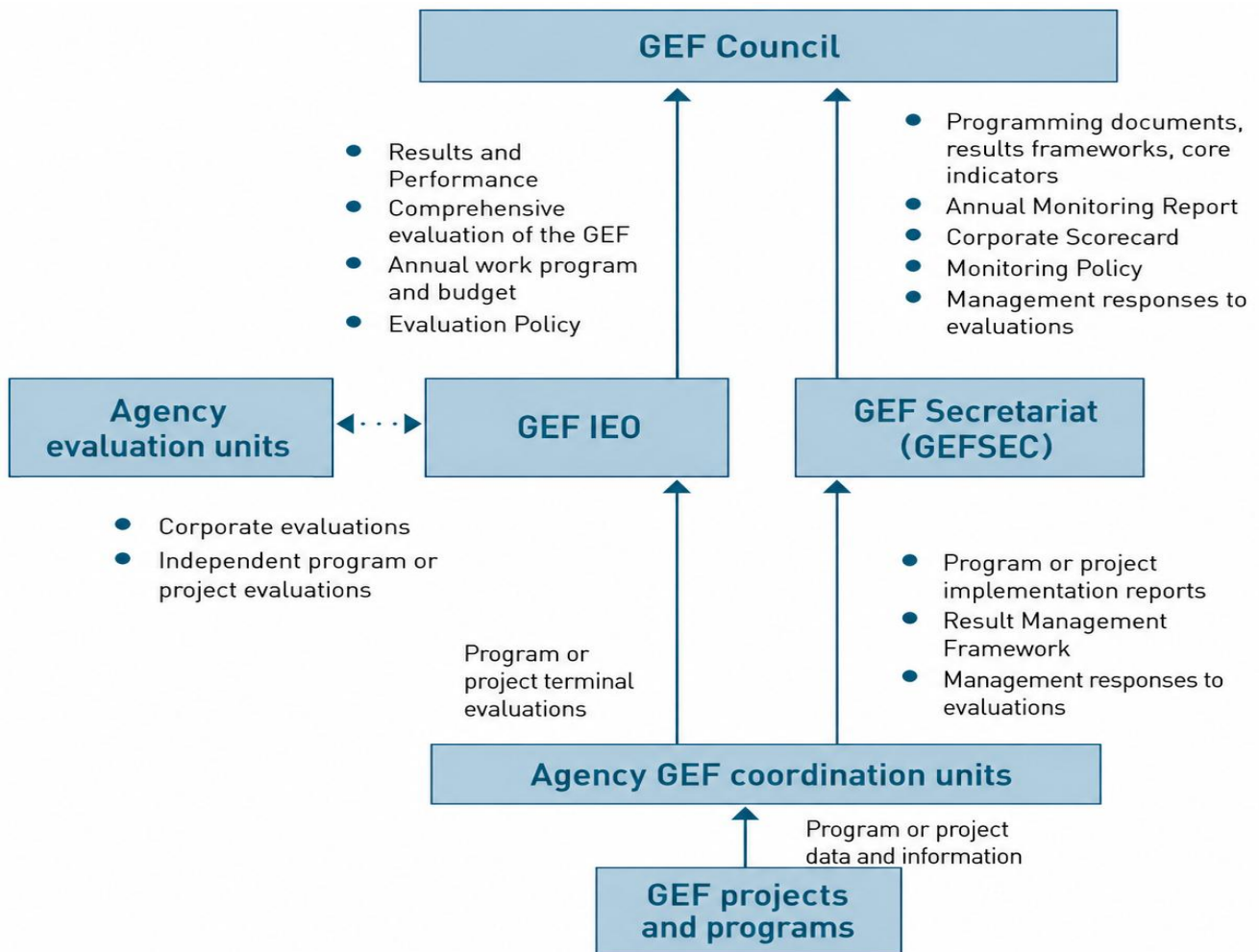
3. Evaluation at the GEF has two overarching objectives:

- (a) To promote **accountability** by providing evidence on the performance and results of GEF-financed activities; and
- (b) To promote **learning**, feedback, and knowledge sharing on results and lessons among the GEF and its partners, thereby informing decision-making, and the design of current and future policies, strategies, processes, projects, programs, and other GEF-financed activities.

4. **The GEF Instrument requires the GEF Council to ensure that GEF projects, programs, policies, and operational strategies are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.**³ Meeting this requirement entails providing feedback to GEF decision-making processes at the institutional, policy, program, and project levels. Corporate monitoring and evaluation within the GEF are based on regular reporting to the Council, providing a basis for informed decision-making, policy development, and accountability (Figure 1).

³ Note that this policy discusses monitoring only as it relates to evaluation.

Figure 1: Simplified Flowchart of Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting in the GEF



1.2 Evaluation Purpose, Function, Types, and Use

5. **Purpose.** An evaluation is conducted to determine why, how, and to what extent intended and unintended results are achieved, as well as their impact on stakeholders. It serves as a catalyst for organizational change, strengthens accountability, and contributes to the generation and application of knowledge, thereby fostering continuous learning and improvement within the GEF and across its stakeholders.

6. **Function.** Evaluations may be summative or formative, depending on the stage of implementation at which they are conducted. **Summative** evaluations provide independent assessments of performance and results, including the achievement of outcomes and impacts, to

support accountability to the GEF Council and stakeholders. **Formative** evaluations generate forward-looking and real-time evidence to inform learning, adaptive management, and the continuous improvement of strategies, policies, programs, and projects. All evaluation types, as listed below, may incorporate both functions, as appropriate to their timing and purpose.

7. **Types.** Following are the main types of evaluations conducted by the IEO in support of accountability, learning, and decision-making across the GEF partnership. The Office may introduce additional evaluation types as needed to respond to organizational priorities or specific requests from the Council.

- i. *Corporate evaluations*, including the Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS⁴) of the GEF conducted every four years to inform replenishment cycles, as well as evaluations of GEF strategies, policies, focal areas, and corporate programs, assessing overall performance, relevance, coherence, and effectiveness;
- ii. *Thematic evaluations*, assessing a selection of interventions addressing a specific theme, issue, or focal area across the GEF portfolio, to generate cross-cutting lessons and inform policy and strategy;
- iii. *Sub-regional and country cluster evaluations*, assessing portfolios of one or more Agencies within national or subregional contexts, including alignment with country priorities, coherence with partners, and sustainability of outcomes;
- iv. *Project evaluations*, including the validation of terminal evaluations conducted by relevant GEF Agencies at the completion of project implementation, to assess performance, results, and the likelihood of sustainability;
- v. *Program evaluations*, including evaluations of GEF focal areas, programmatic approaches and multi-project interventions, to assess strategic relevance, coherence, and effectiveness;
- vi. *Performance evaluations*, comprising aggregate assessments of the portfolio of completed GEF projects, examining trends in relevance, coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness in delivering expected results;
- vii. *Process evaluations*, examining the functioning of GEF participating organizations, instruments, financing modalities, and management practices, to improve efficiency, coherence, and institutional effectiveness;
- viii. *Impact evaluations*, assessing the long-term environmental and socio-economic effects of GEF interventions, whether intended or unintended, direct or indirect, including through analysis of attribution and contribution.

8. In addition, IEO prepares synthesis and accountability instruments such as the portfolio performance report (PPR) and the management action record (MAR), which tracks portfolio performance and the implementation of evaluation recommendations, respectively, and may

⁴ Overall Performance Study.

undertake real-time and early warning evaluations to support adaptive management.

9. **Use.** Evaluations inform decision-making in the development of policies and strategies, as well as the programming, implementation, and reporting of activities, projects, and programs. They contribute to institutional learning, support evidence-based policy and strategy formulation, enhance accountability, and improve both development and organizational effectiveness. In addition, evaluations provide critical input across the planning, programming, budgeting, implementation, and reporting cycle, ensuring that decisions are informed by rigorous evidence and lessons learned.

1.3 Follow-up to IEO Evaluations

10. **Management responses and Council oversight ensure that IEO evaluation recommendations are addressed through clear, actionable, and time-bound measures.** In response to the recommendations of each evaluation, the GEF Chief Executive Officer (CEO) coordinates the preparation of the management response with Agencies and other relevant stakeholders, as needed, for GEF Council consideration. Management responses clearly indicate whether management agrees, partially agrees, or disagrees with the IEO evaluation recommendations, along with a rationale. The responses should include an action plan for each recommendation with specific, time-bound actions and clearly assigned responsibilities for implementation. The IEO may comment in the MAR on the management response to ensure recommendations have been adequately addressed. The GEF Agencies ensure that recommendations from IEO evaluations that are relevant and/or apply to them are considered for decision-making and action within the Agencies. The Council discusses and reviews the evaluation reports, the recommended actions, and the management responses. The Council takes decisions on evaluation recommendations and associated management responses. Through these decisions, it considers the proposed action plans and their time frames for implementation by the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies.

11. **The MAR is the GEF's main mechanism for tracking and reporting progress in the implementation of IEO recommendations.** As part of this process, GEF management prepares an annual self-assessment of progress in implementing agreed action plans. The IEO subsequently validates this self-assessment and presents an annual progress report to the Council.

1.4 Knowledge Sharing from Evaluations

12. **For all evaluations, strategic, audience-focused knowledge dissemination is essential to ensure that evaluation findings drive uptake, innovation, and impact.** Findings and lessons must be proactively disseminated in formats that are tailored, accessible, and actionable for diverse target audiences. Effective knowledge management enables the GEF to systematically capture, synthesize, and translate evaluation insights into informed decision-making, innovation, and measurable change. Accordingly, each evaluation report should be supported by a clearly defined dissemination and uptake strategy, aligned with the needs and capacities of its intended users, to maximize relevance, use, and impact.

13. The main purposes of knowledge creation and information sharing from GEF evaluations are to:

- (a) **Promote learning** by enhancing outreach to the project, program, and country levels through easily accessible learning products;
- (b) **Support the application of lessons** learned to improve the performance and impact of GEF activities; and
- (c) **Strengthen feedback loops** to improve the design and development of projects and programs.

14. **Broad and adaptive dissemination of evaluation findings enhances awareness, credibility, and support for the GEF's global environmental impact.** GEF partners are expected to use adaptive, interactive, and multichannel approaches to disseminate evaluation findings widely, reaching audiences within and across the GEF Agencies, the broader GEF partnership, environmental organizations, academia, research institutions, civil society, and the public. By effectively sharing lessons and insights, evaluations can significantly enhance understanding of global environmental benefits, strengthen confidence in GEF operations, and mobilize greater support and engagement for GEF initiatives.

2 Principles, Criteria, and Indicators

2.1 Principles

15. **Evaluation is guided by internationally recognized principles, norms, and standards.** Specifically, the GEF and its Agencies refer to the international evaluation principles, norms, and standards prepared by the ECG, MDBs, OECD DAC, and UNEG. While there is broad agreement on internationally recognized norms and standards, variations exist due to the diverse objectives and priorities of individual development partners, resulting in differences in emphasis and application across GEF Agencies. The GEF Evaluation Policy accounts for these differences by defining a set of key principles and criteria shared across the GEF partnership. In addition, the policy establishes mandatory minimum requirements, detailed in implementation guidelines, that Agencies must follow when conducting evaluations of GEF-financed activities to ensure consistency, credibility, and quality across all evaluations.

16. **International evaluation standards recognize that adequate resources are critical for effective evaluation.** In line with this principle, the costs of evaluation activities are incorporated into the IEO budget, the Agency fee system, and project and program budgets. These costs include any additional financial implications of addressing the minimum requirements and responsibilities of this policy. All GEF Agencies receive project/program allocations and Agency fees, to be used in accordance with the provisions of the Fee Policy for GEF Partner Agencies. Project allocations cover requirements for monitoring and self-evaluation activities, including implementation reports, midterm reviews, and terminal evaluations. Consistent with internationally recognized good practice, budgetary resources should be clearly identified and allocated separately for monitoring and evaluation activities.

17. **At the GEF, the following internationally recognized principles are systematically applied to all evaluations.**

- (a) **Independence.** Evaluations must be conducted independently from the policy-making process, implementation support and mid-term review, as well as from the delivery and management of initiatives. This principle applies to both the IEO and GEF Agencies, whose evaluation functions are expected to operate with comparable safeguards to ensure independence from operational roles. Adherence to this principle includes the following:
 - **Organizational independence.** The IEO is structurally separate from GEF line functions and reports directly to the Council. This ensures that IEO staff operate free from the influence of GEF management, the GEF Council, or any entities responsible for activities under evaluation. GEF Agencies are expected to maintain a similar degree of structural independence from operational functions to safeguard the integrity of their evaluation work. The IEO Director is safeguarded from undue pressure, as the Council alone is responsible for the Director's

selection, term, performance assessment, and removal.

- **Operational independence.** The IEO defines its work program in consultation with relevant stakeholders, while retaining full independence in setting priorities, designing processes, selecting and adapting methodologies, conducting evaluations, and formulating and presenting findings directly to the GEF Council. The IEO Director has responsibility and final approval for all evaluation reports submitted to the Council. The IEO manages its budget as approved by the Council in accordance with GEF procedures, and the Director has sole authority over the recruitment and management of IEO staff, without influence from GEF management. GEF Agencies are expected to ensure that their evaluation functions operate with comparable independence in the definition of work programs, conduct of evaluations, and reporting of findings, consistent with their governance arrangements.
 - **Behavioral independence.** IEO staff conduct evaluations objectively, ensuring that professional or personal relationships do not influence their judgment. The IEO Director ensures that evaluation team members have had no prior involvement in the design, implementation, supervision, or review of the activities being evaluated. For evaluations financed or managed by GEF Agency coordination units, Agencies must ensure the independence of evaluators, including by applying conflict-of-interest provisions, maintaining appropriate separation between operational and evaluation functions, and establishing contractual arrangements that safeguard independence. Even where evaluators are contracted by the operational unit responsible for the project or program, that unit must not interfere with the evaluation process or influence the interpretation and reporting of findings.
- (b) **Credibility.** Evaluations must be credible and based on reliable data and observations. Evaluation reports should reflect consistency and dependability in data, findings, judgments, and lessons learned with reference to the quality of the instruments, procedures, and analysis used to collect and interpret information.
- (c) **Utility.** Evaluations must serve the information needs of intended users. Partners, evaluators, and units commissioning evaluations should endeavor to ensure that the work is well informed, relevant, and timely, and that it is clearly and concisely presented to be of maximum benefit to intended users. Evaluation reports should present the evidence, findings, issues, conclusions, and recommendations in a complete and balanced way. They should be oriented toward both results and action.
- (d) **Impartiality.** Evaluations must give a comprehensive and balanced presentation of the strengths and weaknesses of the project, program, policy, process, strategy, or organizational unit being evaluated. The evaluation process should reflect impartiality at all stages and consider the views of all stakeholders. Units commissioning evaluations

should endeavor to ensure that the selected evaluators are impartial and unbiased.

- (e) **Transparency.** Transparency is an essential feature at all stages of the evaluation process and involves clear communication concerning decisions for the program of work and areas for evaluation, the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied, the evaluation approach and methods, and the intended use of the findings. Documentation related to evaluations must be freely available, easily accessible, and readable for transparency and legitimacy.
- (f) **Integrity.** Evaluations must provide due regard to the welfare, beliefs, and customs of those involved or affected, avoiding or disclosing any conflict of interest. Evaluators must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information on the facts confidentially. Evaluators must honor the dignity, well-being, and self-worth of individuals and acknowledge the influence of culture within and across groups. Integrity requires that management and/or commissioners of evaluations communicate clearly, remain open to the findings, and do not allow vested interests to interfere with the evaluation.
- (g) **Participation.** GEF evaluations must ensure participation in line with existing policies including the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement. Evaluation teams should interact with representatives of key stakeholders involved in the project, program, or topic being evaluated. The participation of in-country stakeholders involved in project implementation and project beneficiaries should be ensured.
- (h) **Equality.** Evaluations should follow the whole-of-society approach applied across the GEF project cycle. They will examine how changes in natural resource use and decision-making linked to GEF interventions affect disadvantaged groups. Wherever feasible, evaluations should use sex-disaggregated data and reflect the considerations from the Policy on Gender Equality. Evaluation offices commissioning evaluations shall ensure merit-based selection of evaluation teams.

AI Considerations

18. **Evaluations may, where appropriate, use artificial intelligence (AI) and other data-driven methods to enhance the efficiency, depth, and timeliness of evaluation processes.** The use of AI shall be undertaken in a phased and carefully governed manner, beginning with pilot applications (e.g., in document review, data synthesis, and pattern recognition) and subject to periodic review. The use of AI is intended to augment, not replace, professional evaluative judgment. All findings, conclusions, and recommendations shall remain the responsibility of qualified evaluators, in accordance with established evaluation standards.

19. **All applications of AI in GEF evaluation shall adhere to core ethical principles, including transparency, accountability, fairness, and respect for confidentiality and data protection.** Evaluators shall ensure that AI systems and outputs are explainable, auditable, and appropriately managed to mitigate risks of bias or misinterpretation, particularly in complex environmental and

social contexts. AI shall not be used as the sole basis for evaluative conclusions, especially where qualitative judgment and stakeholder perspectives are essential. The use of AI will be subject to periodic review and benchmarking to ensure alignment with evolving international good practice.

2.2 Criteria

20. In line with OECD-DAC guidance (OECD 2019⁵) evaluations in the GEF explore six major criteria, from which a subset may be selected according to purpose, scope, and information needs of the evaluation.

- (a) **Relevance**—the extent to which the intervention design and intended results are aligned with local and national environmental priorities and policies, consistent with GEF strategic priorities and objectives, and remain suited to the conditions of the context, over time.
- (b) **Coherence**—the extent to which GEF-supported interventions are compatible with, and reinforce, relevant national policies, partner activities, and global environmental commitments. It examines both internal coherence—alignment across GEF strategies, programs, and instruments—and external coherence with country systems and other actors.
- (c) **Effectiveness**—the extent to which the intervention achieved, or expects to achieve, its intended results (outcomes, including global environmental benefits), taking into account the key factors influencing the results.
- (d) **Efficiency**— the extent to which an intervention delivers, or is expected to deliver, results in an economic and timely manner, reflecting how well resources (funds, expertise, time, and other inputs) are converted into outputs, outcomes, and, where feasible, impacts, relative to appropriate alternatives in the given context. This includes consideration of timeliness and operational efficiency, including the effectiveness of management and implementation processes.
- (e) **Impact**—the extent to which the intervention has generated, or is expected to generate, significant higher-level effects, whether positive or negative and intended or unintended.
- (f) **Sustainability**—the continuation/likely continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has come to an end, and its potential for scale-up and/or replication. Interventions need to be environmentally as well as institutionally, financially, politically, culturally, and socially sustainable.

21. Additional criteria may be applied on a case-by-case basis, depending on the specific evaluation and evolving international good practice standards. Examples may include equity, gender equality and inclusion, innovation, scalability, resilience, additionality, and transformational change.

⁵ OECD (2019) Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Criteria – Definitions and Principles for Use.

2.3 Indicators

22. **Projects and programs must implement SMART—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound—monitoring and evaluation indicators aligned with GEF results frameworks to ensure evaluability and performance assessment.** In line with the GEF results frameworks and core corporate indicators established with each replenishment, projects and programs are required to adopt robust monitoring and evaluation systems featuring SMART indicators. These indicators support evaluability and provide a clear basis for assessing performance against objectives, with results systematically reported in terminal evaluations.

23. **GEF results are measured using indicators based on the Results Measurement Framework to ensure comprehensive performance assessment.** At the GEF, results are tracked primarily through global environmental benefit indicators aligned with the results frameworks approved in each replenishment. Social and economic co-benefits that contribute to these environmental outcomes are also systematically assessed. Indicators will be disaggregated in accordance with GEF policies and results-based management (RBM) frameworks. Where feasible, and accepted by local communities, geographic coordinates of project sites should be collected and used in monitoring and evaluation.

24. **The evaluation plan of jointly implemented projects must specify the evaluation arrangements agreed by the participating Agencies at CEO endorsement.** The respective responsibilities of partners for ensuring the evaluation of jointly implemented projects should be defined and agreed upon at the time of preparation to ensure cost-effectiveness, synergies, and the avoidance of duplication in evaluation reporting. It is the responsibility of the lead Agency for facilitating this process and securing agreement among all participating Agencies at the design stage.

2.4 Access to and Disclosure of Information

25. **IEO staff should be granted full, timely and unrestricted access to records, personnel, and project sites necessary for the conduct of independent evaluations in accordance with applicable GEF and Agency policies and rules governing such access.** This includes access to official records and to staff of the GEF Secretariat and Agencies, for evaluation purposes. Relevant Agency representatives will facilitate visits by IEO staff to project sites, as well as meetings with stakeholders and government representatives.

26. **These principles also apply to other evaluations conducted within the GEF partnership.** Entities responsible for conducting evaluations within the GEF partnership should ensure that evaluators are granted timely and appropriate access to relevant records, personnel, and project sites, in accordance with applicable policies and rules.

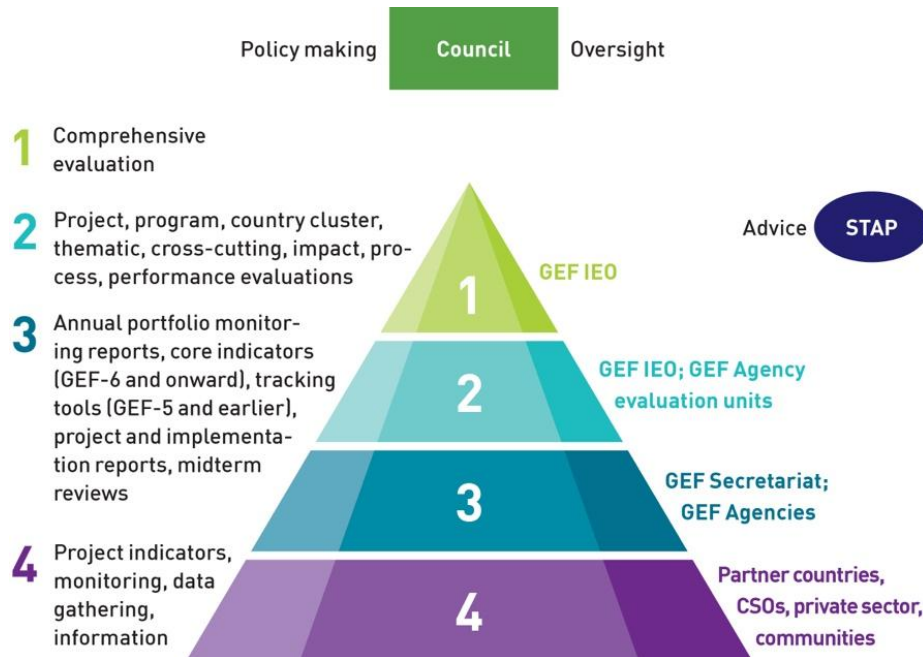
27. **Evaluation reports should be transparently disclosed and widely shared to ensure openness, accountability, and broad stakeholder access.** In accordance with the GEF Policy on Access to Information which states that “The Ethics Committee, the Ethics Officer, the Independent Evaluation Office, the Secretariat, and the Trustee are subject to the World Bank Policy on Access to

Information.” GEF Agencies shall disclose evaluation reports in accordance with their respective Agency policies and guidelines. GEF evaluation reports shall be made publicly available through multiple platforms, including websites, knowledge products, and dissemination events, and should be shared broadly and free of charge, with findings and lessons accessible to all stakeholders. Evaluation reports should provide transparent information on data sets, sources, methodologies, and analytical approaches.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

28. **Clear roles and coordinated responsibilities underpin the GEF’s monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making system across the GEF Secretariat, the IEO, the GEF Council, the GEF Agencies, and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP).** The GEF Secretariat develops and submits to the GEF Council the plans and framework for monitoring progress against agreed-upon objectives. The IEO presents its rolling evaluation workplan to report on the overall performance and effectiveness of the GEF. The IEO also prepares a comprehensive evaluation of the GEF every four years to help the GEF Council make strategic and policy-level decisions. The GEF Council approves the IEO work program and budget, considers its evaluation reports, and takes decisions on the action plans proposed by GEF Management in response to evaluation recommendations. The GEF Agencies and their partners execute project, program, and portfolio monitoring and evaluation plans. The GEF STAP, provides advice inter-alia, on indicators and targets at the stage when policies, strategies, programs, and projects are prepared, as well as technical advice in response to specific requests by the IEO. Figure 2 and Annex 1 summarize the main roles and responsibilities of the key partners for monitoring and evaluation in the GEF. Specific roles and responsibilities for evaluation are detailed for each partner in the following subsections. Specific roles and responsibilities for monitoring are detailed in the [GEF Monitoring Policy](#).

Figure 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Levels and Responsible Agencies in the GEF



3.1 The GEF Council

29. **The Council anchors accountability within the GEF by approving the evaluation policy, overseeing the IEO, acting on evaluation findings, and ensuring financial oversight through the GEF Trustee.** The Council approves the GEF Evaluation Policy, as well as the IEO’s strategy, rolling work program, and budget. It receives independent evaluations conducted by the IEO and takes decisions on the action plans proposed by GEF management in response to evaluation recommendations. The Council uses independent evaluation to complement the larger system of financial oversight and accountability exercised by the GEF Trustee and GEF Agencies. On behalf of the Council, the GEF Trustee maintains appropriate records and accounts of the GEF Trust Fund and provides for their audit in accordance with its rules.

30. **The Council safeguards IEO independence, ensures resource allocation, and promotes transparent use of evaluation findings for informed GEF decision-making.** The Council ensures that the independent evaluation function is adequately resourced to operate effectively and autonomously, allowing evaluators to perform their work without risk to career progression. It actively promotes transparency, stakeholder participation, and the disclosure of evaluation findings. The Council allocates sufficient time at meetings to discuss evaluation issues and, together with the GEF CEO and the IEO Director, oversees the systematic use of evaluation products—including findings, conclusions, recommendations, and lessons—to inform decision-making on GEF programs,

policies, and strategic priorities.

31. **The Council appoints a professionally qualified Director to lead the IEO.** It establishes a Council Selection and Review Committee to oversee the process of appointing the Director and for conducting his/her performance objective reviews. While the IEO Director's appointment is for a six-year, non-renewable term, based on business needs or unusual circumstances, the Council may extend the tenure by one additional year for a maximum term of seven years. At the end of this term, the Director is not eligible to join the GEF in any capacity. The Director may be removed solely by the GEF Council and only on duly established grounds.

32. **The GEF Council can adopt principles, norms, and standards for those parts of the GEF for which it is directly responsible, i.e. the GEF Secretariat, the IEO, and the STAP.** Each GEF Agency operates under its own governance system, with rules and procedures governing the implementation and evaluation of its activities, over which the Council does not exercise direct oversight. However, with respect to the use of GEF resources, the Council may establish minimum standards and procedures applicable to all GEF-financed activities, and retains authority over their application.

3.2 GEF Independent Evaluation Office

33. **The IEO operates as an organizational unit fully independent of GEF Secretariat Management and GEF Agencies.** It develops the GEF evaluation policy for Council approval and establishes minimum evaluation requirements across the GEF partnership. The IEO also prepares an evaluation strategy and rolling work program, through which evaluation priorities are defined, for Council approval. It validates terminal evaluations of projects and programs conducted by the GEF Agencies, undertakes a broad range of independent evaluations, and disseminates evaluative evidence within and beyond the GEF. These functions support transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making across the GEF partnership.

34. **The IEO is led by a Director who ensures independent leadership and accountability to the Council.** The Director is responsible for the effective functioning of the IEO and manages its resources, budget, and personnel in accordance with applicable rules, implementing the strategic decisions of the Council. The Director has sole responsibility for all personnel decisions within the IEO and provides overall direction, ensures effective resource management, and strengthens institutional relationships. The Director engages directly with the Council, participates in Council, Assembly, and replenishment processes on evaluation matters, and responds to Council requests. The Council has direct access to the Director. The Director may communicate directly with Council members during and between Council meetings, convene meetings as appropriate without prior clearance from any party outside the IEO, and propose decisions to the Council on a no-objection basis between sessions. The Director may also propose to the Council any measures deemed necessary for the effective functioning of the IEO.

35. **The IEO operates within a structured planning and budgeting framework.** Each year, the Director presents to the Council, a work program and budget request for approval, based on a four-year rolling framework and within the budget envelope approved during the replenishment process.

The work program is developed in consultation with the GEF partnership and Agencies and implemented over the replenishment period to ensure comprehensive evaluation coverage that supports accountability, learning, and evidence-based decision-making. Monitoring and evaluation budgetary needs of the GEF Agencies and Secretariat are addressed separately through the GEF corporate budget and project fees.

36. The IEO pursues the goals of improved accountability and learning through two main functions:

- (a) **An evaluative function.** The main function of the IEO is to independently evaluate the effectiveness of the GEF at the project, program, portfolio, strategic, and institutional levels.
- (b) **A normative function.** The IEO is tasked to set minimum evaluation requirements and evaluation standards within the GEF to ensure improved and consistent measurement of GEF results.

37. **The IEO conducts strategic and institutional evaluations, validates project assessments, and fosters collaboration across the GEF partnership.** It undertakes evaluations primarily at the strategic level, including focal areas, programs, and cross-cutting themes, alongside institutional evaluations. It also validates project terminal evaluations for Agencies, following established evaluation guidelines. To avoid duplication and promote synergies, the IEO collaborates with Agency evaluation units and facilitates cooperation across the partnership. It also supports the development and implementation of procedures and guidelines aligned with internationally recognized good practice standards, thereby strengthening the quality, credibility, and utility of evaluation across the partnership.

38. **The IEO supports Council oversight through regular, evidence-based reporting on evaluation findings.** The IEO Director reports directly and regularly to the Council, and presents periodic reports summarizing data, analyses, findings, conclusions, and recommendations from completed evaluations. Evidence is generated by the IEO or drawn from Agency evaluation units and independently verified using monitoring data, academic literature, interviews, field visits, remote sensing, and other credible sources. The IEO also conducts post-completion evaluations for selected projects and reviews Agency-submitted terminal evaluation reports to ensure comprehensive assessment of outcomes and performance.

39. **The IEO ensures impartiality in evaluation through strict safeguards against conflicts of interest.** Evaluations are conducted by staff and consultants who have had no prior involvement in the projects or policies under review. To ensure impartiality, the Director ensures that no IEO staff member shall be assigned to evaluate any project, program, portfolio, strategy, or policy for which they were previously responsible in design, implementation, or supervision. Similarly, the IEO does not engage consultants—whether individually or through private firms or nonprofit organizations—who have previously participated in the design or execution of a project, program, portfolio, strategy, or policy, to carry out evaluation analyses or prepare evaluation reports on the same.

40. **The IEO ensures the independence, objectivity, and integrity of the evaluation process through clear procedural safeguards.** These safeguards apply across all stages of evaluation to ensure that data collection, analysis, and evaluative judgments on findings, conclusions and recommendations remain free from conflicts of interest or undue influence from management at

any level. The IEO seeks feedback on draft reports from all consulted stakeholders, ensuring due diligence and verification of evidence. While the Secretariat, Agencies, and other stakeholders may provide comments on draft and final evaluation reports, they cannot approve, withhold, request changes to, or otherwise alter the reports. Final IEO evaluation reports are submitted directly and simultaneously to both the GEF Council and the GEF Secretariat, safeguarding transparency and independence. All evaluation reports are approved by the IEO Director and represent the views of the IEO.

41. **The IEO ensures evaluation quality through robust assurance mechanisms aligned with international standards.** These mechanisms cover all stages of the evaluation process, including the design of approaches and methodologies, data collection and analysis, and the clear and accurate reporting of findings and conclusions. This ensures rigor, credibility, and consistency in evaluation outputs.

42. **The IEO ensures follow-up to evaluation recommendations through the management action record (MAR) system.** The MAR compiles evaluation recommendations, management responses and action plans at least annually and is circulated to the GEF Secretariat to rate and report on implementation progress. The IEO provides an independent assessment of progress in the implementation of management action plans.

43. **The IEO promotes knowledge sharing by producing accessible, high-quality outputs and actively disseminating evaluation findings.** It ensures that its reports meet high standards of accessibility, clarity, and presentation. The IEO develops targeted learning products based on evaluation findings and disseminates them widely through multiple channels, including the IEO website, publications, conferences, communities of practice, and web-based platforms and social media.

44. **The IEO advances innovation in evaluation by adopting cutting-edge methodologies and fostering collaboration across a global network.** The IEO endeavors to remain at the forefront of emerging and innovative methodologies in environmental evaluation, continuously strengthening its approaches to enhance rigor and relevance. It actively consults and collaborates with a wide range of partners to build and sustain a network of evaluation professionals, leveraging diverse expertise to add value to GEF operations, improve performance, and strengthen results across the GEF.

3.3 GEF Secretariat

45. **The GEF Secretariat ensures quality at entry and accountability in delivery.** The Secretariat reviews all projects and programs prior to their approval to ensure they meet GEF monitoring and evaluation requirements, including the use of SMART indicators and targets to ensure alignment with focal area objectives. The Secretariat is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the results of the overall GEF portfolio, in accordance with the results frameworks set by the Council in each replenishment period.

46. **The GEF Secretariat engages with the IEO at different stages of the evaluation.** It provides comments at various stages such as the approach paper and the draft report. It is also responsible for responding in a timely manner to requests for information and support to evaluations, including independent evaluations. The GEF Secretariat prepares management responses and associated action plans in response to IEO evaluation recommendations for Council decision. It ensures the systematic follow-up and implementation of evaluation findings and recommendations in relation to GEF policies, programs, and procedures. The Secretariat ensures that results and lessons are adequately reflected in public information about the GEF. This includes activities to gather and disseminate good practices to improve portfolio quality. In support of evaluation, the Secretariat responds promptly and comprehensively to all IEO requests for information relating to GEF projects, programs, and policies. It also coordinates the GEF management response to IEO evaluations.

3.4 GEF Agency Operational Units

47. **In line with the Minimum Standards for GEF Partner Agencies, GEF Agencies should maintain robust monitoring systems aligned with GEF results frameworks to ensure consistent tracking of performance across projects and programs.** GEF Agencies are responsible for developing comprehensive monitoring plans with appropriate performance and results indicators for projects and programs, and for systematically tracking activities, outputs, and progress toward outcomes. When designated as a program's lead Agency, an Agency is responsible for monitoring the overall program as well as the child projects it directly implements, while participating Agencies remain accountable for monitoring their respective child projects. To enable consistent analysis of results across Agencies, project logical frameworks and/or theories of change should be aligned, as appropriate, with GEF focal area results frameworks, ensuring coherence, comparability, and effective results-based management.

48. **Agencies must undertake mid-term reviews for programs and full-size projects under implementation for adaptive management purposes.** Mid-term reviews are also mandatory for projects above agreed thresholds (currently US\$ 2 million) and are encouraged for other medium-sized projects and enabling activities where appropriate and feasible. These reports are submitted to the GEF Secretariat as part of annual reporting.

49. **GEF Agencies support the IEO by responding promptly and comprehensively to requests for information and assistance related to the evaluation of GEF activities, and by providing access to relevant project and program documentation.** In accordance with the GEF Policy on Co-financing (2018), Agencies report on the actual amounts, sources, and types of cofinancing and investment mobilized in their midterm reviews and terminal evaluations. The Agencies ensure that the GEF Operational Focal Points (OFPs) are fully informed of and consulted on the conduct of terminal evaluations, receive draft reports of terminal evaluations for comment, and are provided with finalized terminal evaluation reports. GEF Agencies also facilitate and provide support to IEO missions and country evaluation activities.

3.5 GEF Agency Evaluation Units

52. **GEF Agencies ensure independent or validated terminal evaluations and share all evaluation outputs with the IEO for oversight and learning.** Depending on each Agency's institutional structure, rules, and procedures, one of two approaches are applied: (i) the evaluation unit directly conducts project terminal evaluations; or (ii) the evaluation unit validates evaluations managed by operational units. Agencies are responsible for conducting terminal evaluations of the child projects they directly implement within a program, while the lead Agency is responsible for preparing and submitting the terminal evaluation for the overall program. In line with the [GEF Project and Program Cycle Policy](#), all project and program evaluation reports must be shared with the IEO to ensure transparency, consistency, and independent oversight.

53. **GEF Agency evaluation units collaborate with the IEO to ensure high-quality, independent evaluations and to pursue joint learning opportunities.** Agencies engage with the IEO to identify areas of common interest, foster cooperation, and pursue opportunities for joint evaluations. For evaluations addressing GEF-wide issues or portfolios, these units collaborate with the IEO in defining the terms of reference, approach, and scope. They also coordinate with the IEO to uphold norms, standards, and quality requirements for evaluations of GEF-financed activities. GEF Agencies are expected to provide adequate and dedicated financial resources to their evaluation units to ensure that evaluations are conducted independently and without compromise, thereby safeguarding their credibility and rigor.

3.6 GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

54. **The STAP provides scientific and technical support to the IEO.** Upon receipt of specific requests from the IEO, the STAP may contribute scientific and technical input, data, or other information that may be useful to an evaluation and its follow up. Such requests may pertain to opinions on the evaluability of scientific aspects and related methodologies for measuring global environmental impacts in response to evaluation approach papers, terms of reference, or reports.

3.7 GEF Operational focal points

55. **GEF member countries contribute to evaluation through national systems that track and assess local and global environmental benefits.** Multiple entities within these countries play an active role in evaluation in strengthening evaluation and assessment processes. Efforts include improving census and statistical systems, establishing national and project-level baselines, implementing participatory monitoring of environmental and natural resources, and using national communications and inventories to monitor progress toward global environmental objectives.

56. **In line with GEF operational principles on country ownership, evaluation activities will be consultative.** The GEF OFPs are informed of and fully consulted by the GEF Agencies and the IEO on the planning, conduct, and results of any evaluation activity undertaken in their country, including IEO missions. In turn, OFPs respect the independence and integrity of the evaluation process, ensuring that country engagement supports transparency and learning without influencing the

objectivity of evaluative findings.

57. **The GEF OFPs play a key role in facilitating access to staff members of government institutions involved in GEF projects during evaluations.** OFPs may promote the use of, follow-up to, and action on evaluation recommendations related to GEF matters and directed at the regional, national, and project levels. They also play an important role in keeping national stakeholders (including the CSOs involved in GEF activities) fully consulted with, informed on, and involved in the plans, conduct, and results of country-related GEF evaluation activities.

3.8 Other Stakeholders

58. **GEF evaluations engage a wide range of stakeholders to ensure inclusive, relevant, and informed assessment of projects and programs.** Stakeholders—individuals, groups, or institutions with an interest in or affected by a GEF-financed project or program—may include national project or program executing agencies, contracted groups implementing activities, civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector actors and local communities. The nature and extent of stakeholder involvement vary according to the context and their specific role. For instance, academic institutions or private sector entities may contribute technical expertise and external perspectives, while CSOs and community members provide feedback as beneficiaries or representatives of local interests. Such engagement helps ensure that evaluations are comprehensive, contextually grounded, and reflective of diverse stakeholder perspectives.

59. **GEF evaluations promote transparency and meaningful participation of local stakeholders.** In line with the GEF Instrument and the [GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement](#), transparency is ensured throughout the preparation, conduct, reporting, and evaluation of public involvement activities in all GEF projects and programs. This includes full disclosure of all non-confidential information and consultation with relevant stakeholder groups, including representatives of local communities. GEF evaluations should actively involve project stakeholders as participants, contributors, and users as appropriate. Participatory approaches are particularly critical in projects and programs affecting the livelihoods and incomes of local populations, with special attention to disadvantaged groups. This helps ensure that evaluations are inclusive, context-sensitive, and responsive to those most affected.

Annex: Key Roles and Responsibilities of GEF Entities in Evaluation

Partner	Key role/responsibility
GEF Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Oversee the evaluation function and safeguard IEO independence ▫ Approve the overall policy, strategy, work program on monitoring and evaluation ▫ Provide an enabling environment for monitoring and evaluation ▫ Receive independent evaluation reports and review GEF management's response to evaluation recommendations
GEF IEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Prepare medium-term strategy and four-year rolling work program ▫ Conduct evaluations in accordance with the approved work program ▫ Validate terminal evaluations prepared by Agencies ▫ Undertake post-completion evaluations ▫ Assess the quality of project and program evaluations ▫ Establish minimum requirements for evaluation ▫ Prepare the MAR ▫ Share and disseminate evaluative knowledge
GEF Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Set results frameworks at focal area and corporate levels ▫ Monitor the GEF portfolio across Agencies, focal areas, geographic and thematic areas ▫ Report on and incorporate lessons from portfolio monitoring ▫ Propose follow-up actions to evaluation recommendations in the Management Response to the GEF Council ▫ Implement action plan on agreed recommendations and report through the MAR ▫ Review monitoring and evaluation requirements in project and program proposals
GEF Agency operational units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Monitor the Agency's GEF portfolio ▫ Report Agency project, program, and portfolio progress, results, and learning ▫ Ensure monitoring at the project and program levels, as appropriate ▫ Manage project and program implementation adaptively ▫ Systematically involve national partners and share project monitoring and evaluation information at the national level
GEF Agency evaluation units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Conduct and/or validate terminal evaluations of projects and programs ▫ Conduct corporate Agency evaluations ▫ Mainstream the GEF into relevant Agency evaluations
GEF STAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Advise on scientific/technical matters ▫ Provide support on scientific and technical indicators
GEF OFPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Collaborate on monitoring and evaluation at project, program, and portfolio levels
Other stakeholders (CSOs, private sector, communities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Participate in monitoring activities ▫ Provide views and perceptions to evaluations