Terminal Evaluation Validation form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

1. Project Data

Summary project data	
GEF project ID	10071
GEF Agency project ID	GCP /GLO/882/CBT
GEF Replenishment Phase	GEF-7
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)	FAO
Project name	Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector
Country/Countries	Brazil, Cote d'Ivoire, Guatemala, Honduras, Laos, Thailand, Uganda
Region	Global
Focal area	Climate Change
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives	CCM-3-8 Capacity-Building Initiative on Transparency (CBIT)
Stand alone or under a programmatic framework	Programmatic
If applicable, parent program name and GEF ID	
Executing agencies involved	FAO
NGOs/CBOs involvement	
Private sector involvement (including micro, small and medium enterprises)[1]	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval (MSP) date	10/16/2019
Effectiveness date / project start date	1/1/2020
Expected date of project completion (at start)	10/31/2021
Actual date of project completion	6/30/2022

Project Financing		At Endorsement (US $M)	At Completion (US $M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.05	0.05
	Co-financing		
GEF Project Grant		1.9	1.63[2]
Co-financing	IA own	5.2	7.74
	Government		
	Other multi- /bi-laterals		
	Private sector		
	NGOs/CBOs		
	Other		
Total GEF funding		1.95	1.68
Total Co-financing		5.2	7.74
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		7.15	9.42

Terminal evaluation validation information	
TE completion date	5/11/2022
Author of TE	Marko Katila
TER completion date	1/4/2023
TER prepared by	Nabil Haque

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[1] Defined as all micro, small, and medium-scale profit-oriented entities, including individuals and informal entities, that earn income through the sale of goods and services rather than a salary. (GEF IEO 2022)
[2] At the point of conduct of terminal evaluation.

TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)	Neeraj Negi

Access the form to summarize key project features here: https://www.research.net/r/APR2023.

2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review[3]	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	HS	HS	HS	S
Sustainability of Outcomes		ML	ML	ML
M&E Design		S	S	MS
M&E Implementation		S	S	S
Quality of Implementation		S	S	S
Quality of Execution		S	S	S
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report			_	S

3. Project Objectives and theory of change

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

To accelerate and contribute to getting consistent and accurate forest-related data for improved global and national reporting efforts (p.13 of ProDoc).

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

To strengthen institutional and technical capacities of developing countries on forest-related data collection, analysis and dissemination processes to meet the enhanced transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement (p.5 of CEO Endorsement Request).

3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or project activities during implementation? What are the reasons given for the change(s)?

No changes were reported in the global environmental and development objectives.

3.4 Briefly summarize project's theory of change – describe the inputs and causal relationships through which the project will achieve its long-term impacts, key links, and key assumptions.

Through awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, the project engaged with technical government stakeholders involved in the forest sector to improve data collection, analysis and dissemination, and upgrading of specific products which eventually contributes to the enhanced transparency framework (ETF) under the Paris Agreement (p.13 of ProDoc). Outputs from these interventions include training materials, case-studies and other communication products, reporting platform, a field observation repository, and a roadmap in pilot countries for continuous enhancement of national forest related transparency. These activities and outputs will enhance technical capacity of government counterparts to generate accurate and consistent forest data. Implicitly, this will contribute to improved management of forests in participating countries. The assumptions are that training will be

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[3] The evaluation was commissioned by the evaluation unit of FAO, therefore, the terminal evaluation ratings are repeated.

of high quality to enhance capacities, and regulatory environment and attitudes are conducive for transparency (p.24 of TE). Another key assumption for outcome to impact pathway is that sufficient incentives, political commitment, financial and human resources exist to ensure sustainability.

4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

Please refer to the GEF Terminal Evaluation Review Guidelines for detail on the criteria for ratings.

The outcome ratings (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and overall outcome rating) are on a six-point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory. The sustainability rating is on a four-point scale: Likely to Unlikely.

Please justify the ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 **Relevance and Coherence**	HS

The project supports the national priorities of the beneficiary countries addressed in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). It also supports the reporting process under the UNFCCC, mainly through the provision of forest-related data that can be used to prepare a robust national GHG inventory for the national communications submitted by countries. The project is aligned with GEF's climate change focal area's objective of fostering enabling conditions for mainstreaming mitigation concerns into sustainable development strategies (p.14 of ProDoc). This project was interconnected with other FAO projects but did not overlap with their activities. However, these interconnections influence choice of countries due to the availability of resources and opportunity to leverage related ongoing work (p.25 of TE). Satisfaction surveys and country stakeholder interviews highlighted the importance of including massive online courses (MOOCs) and regional technical webinars being responsive to the organizational and technical capacity development needs. This review concurs with the terminal evaluation rating of 'highly satisfactory' for relevance.

4.2 **Effectiveness**	S

All planned outputs of the projects were delivered. The project had a target of working with 26 national institutions but ended up working with 44 institutions. The number of participants in training and webinars also exceeded the targets. Three Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) were developed on forests and transparency under the Paris Agreement which enrolled a total of 1883 participants from 148 countries (p.28 of TE). Training materials developed by the project include a self-paced course on "Forests and transparency under the Paris Agreement" which is now available in six languages. Furthermore, the project developed 42 global knowledge products developed against a target of six. Capacity-building needs and gap assessment were completed with the National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) assessment tool in 6 pilot countries, which led to the development of country roadmaps that were prepared and approved by the respective governments. The main technical outputs including the best practice case studies were made available through the project websites following a

comprehensive outreach and knowledge management strategy that was also developed by the project. The terminal evaluation rates effectiveness of the project as 'satisfactory' as this review concurs.

4.3 **Efficiency**	S

The terminal evaluation found that the project delivered more with the available resources than originally planned (p.33 of TE). The project effectively leveraged existing resources and ongoing initiatives. Co-financing and other inputs from stakeholders exceeded ex-ante projections. The project was completed within an year of its expected completion date at project start despite facing challenges due to onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This review maintains the terminal evaluation's 'satisfactory' rating for efficiency.

4.4 **Outcome**	S

The terminal evaluation provided evidence on delivering the outputs as planned. The project met most of the conditions presented in the theory of change and it positively contributed to progress towards the defined outcomes. The project has enhanced understanding and capacity of countries to implement the transparency framework of the Paris Agreement. Improvements in the technical and institutional capacity development achievements are not easily attributable to adoption of related best practices, tools and knowledge. However, the project's success in exceeding the target for participation in training programs will likely contribute to positive impact in the long term.

4.5 **Sustainability**	ML

The project's emphasis on sustainability is evident from its focus on capacity development for long term forest related transparency for the Paris Agreement. Participating and non-participating countries will continue to need improvements in their forest monitoring systems and capacity for reporting. According to project stakeholders interviewed for terminal evaluation, knowledge outputs generated by the project are useful in their national context, and there are already some instances of integration and mainstreaming in regulatory framework (p. 34 of TE). Project training materials are available ensuring continuity of learning. The terminal evaluation did not assess the environment, social, socio-political, institutional and governance risks. While the former two did not apply to the project, hints of socio-political and institutional risks were touched lightly in the evaluation. Political commitment and willingness & empowerment of nationally trained officials will determine the lasting impact of the project. In the meantime, the recent launch of the global System for Earth Observation Data Access, Processing and Analysis for Land Monitoring (SEPAL) project is an example of impacts beyond the project. This new project is expected to make use of the lessons learned linked to capacity development from all Capacity Building Initiative on Transparency (CBIT)-Forest projects. The terminal evaluation rates the sustainability of this project to be 'moderately likely' and this review concurs.

5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

Before describing the factors, you may choose to summarize reported outcomes and sustainability here: https://www.research.net/r/APR2023.

5.1 Co-financing. To what extent was the reported co-financing essential to the achievement of GEF objectives? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

FAO grant co-financing came from the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and National Forest Monitoring (NFM) country programs and UN-REDD Technical Assistance. Co-financing amounted to a total of $7.74 million which exceeded the original co-financing target of $5.2 million. As the co-financing came from the implementing agency, there were no delays in materialization which ensured effective project implementation.

5.2 Project extensions and/or delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

The project had started two months later than originally intended. Extension of six months took place to deal with the slowdown caused by COVID-19 pandemic which hit within the second quarter of project implementation. The delay and extension did not affect project outputs and outcomes.

5.3 Stakeholder ownership. Assess the extent to which stakeholder ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability. Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links.

As the project was supporting ongoing FAO initiatives, its resources were easy to integrate which contributed to stakeholder ownership. This was done since the design of the project which ensured smooth implementation.

5.4 Other factors: In case the terminal evaluation discusses other key factors that affected project outcomes, discuss those factors and outline how they affected outcomes, whether positively or negatively. Include factors that may have led to unintended outcomes.

FAO had full control of the project as implementing and executing agency, as well as a co-financing partner. This ensured timely and effective implementation.

6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

6.1 **M&E Design at entry**	MS

The terminal evaluation rated M&E Design as 'satisfactory' which is revised in this review to 'moderately satisfactory'. The description included in the Project Document were detailed in assigning roles and responsibilities, frequency of reports and how M&E budget will be spent (p.37-40 of ProDoc). The terminal evaluation found that outcome indicators did not comprehensively capture capacity development. Examples were shared in the terminal evaluation citing indicator of "Degree of increased institutional capacity" without defining baseline institutional capacity and how 'degrees' will be measured (p.39 of TE). This review finds the scope for an elaborate M&E system to be limited given the short duration enabling activity of the project.

6.2 **M&E Implementation**	S

Information contained in the implementation reports summarized data on completed activities and the output delivery generated through a transparent monitoring and reporting system. Data was gathered on indicators specified at M&E design. Surveys were used to gather information on satisfaction levels after training workshops; and, Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice Survey (KAP) assessments before preparing country roadmaps. These tools provided complementary evidence to assess the project contribution to the delivery of the planned key project outcomes. This review maintains the terminal evaluation rating of 'satisfactory' for M&E implementation.

7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation rating is based on the assessment of the performance of GEF Agency(s). Quality of Execution rating is based on performance of the executing agency(s). In both instances, the focus is upon factors that are largely within the control of the respective implementing and executing agency(s). A six-point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

7.1 **Quality of Project Implementation**	S

The terminal evaluation rated quality of project implementation and execution by the same agency as 'satisfactory' and this review concurs. Implementation of project was through FAO staff which commenced quickly and effectively by building on parallel initiatives. Project management unit was well versed with FAO and GEF procedures and systematic progress reporting using the project results framework and infographics were conducted with stakeholders (p.38 of TE). FAO was also a co-financing partner – in this role it ensured that co-financing was available in a timely manner. It ensured that disbursements were timely. Overall coordination and communication efforts were commended by project stakeholders.

7.2 **Quality of Project Execution**	S

The project implementation and executing agency were the same, and therefore the rating is kept similar with quality of project implementation.

8. Lessons and recommendations

8.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report, including how they could have application for other GEF projects. Lessons must be based on project experience.

The terminal evaluation shared the following lessons learned based on project experience –

i) Adaptive management and quick decision-making by project leadership is important for success of ambitious short-term projects.
ii) Involving the key technical partners from related FAO projects in the conceptualization and design stages of the project enhanced the relevance and ownership of the project and quality of the project design and implementation.
iii) Use of collaborative and self-learning online training with the adoption of the digital certificate to demonstrate competence, have proven to be a success worth wider consideration and further adoption in capacity development work.
iv) The use of several languages in the development of online training modules, forest data platforms and awareness materials enhanced the reach and impact of capacity development.
v) Project outcomes and related indicators should be defined in such a scope that the achievement of the outcome is under project control and can be measured

8.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

i) Training and awareness material and technical outputs can be made promoted in other regions ensuring visibility of transparency related materials. Translating these materials to additional languages can also have wider impact.
ii) Although training approaches have been largely in-person, there is scope to introduce virtual and hybrid approaches that makes training collaborative.
iii) For FAO, it will be strategic to continue supporting and expanding activities identified in the project pilot Country Roadmaps for continuous improvement of forest-related transparency given that FAO has comparative advantage in developing and maintaining open data tools.

9. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

Before rating the quality of the terminal evaluation, click here to summarize your observations on the sub-criteria: https://www.research.net/r/APR2023.

A six-point rating scale is used for each sub-criteria and overall rating of the terminal evaluation report (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory)

Criteria/indicators of terminal evaluation quality	GEF IEO COMMENTS	Rating
1. Timeliness: terminal evaluation report was carried out and submitted on time?	The terminal evaluation was completed a month before the delayed project closing.	S
2. General information: Provides general information on the project and evaluation as per the requirement?	The context for the global project was captured well through the general information about the project.	S
3. Stakeholder involvement: the report was prepared in consultation with – and with feedback from - key stakeholders?	Stakeholder list was provided, and the project used complementary satisfaction surveys.	S
4. Theory of change: provides solid account of the project's theory of change?	The project's theory of change was described and illustrated.	S
5. Methodology: Provides an informative and transparent account of the methodology?	Methodology for the evaluation was clearly presented including its limitations.	S
6. Outcome: Provides a clear and candid account of the achievement of project outcomes?	Each of the project outcomes and outputs were discussed in detail.	S
7. Sustainability: Presents realistic assessment of sustainability?	Discussion on sustainability was not adequate. It would have been better to include sustainability assessment for pilot countries.	MS
8. M&E: Presents sound assessment of the quality of the M&E system?	Although M&E at design was not discussed separately, there were elements of it in the report.	S
9. Finance: Reports on utilization of GEF funding and materialization of co-financing?	GEF funding and materialization of funding was presented clearly.	S
10. Implementation: Presents a candid account of project implementation and Agency performance?	The challenges of implementation were not adequately covered including those posed by the pandemic.	MS

11. Safeguards: Provides information on application of environmental and social safeguards, and conduct and use of gender analysis?	Although environmental and social safeguards did not apply for the project, the gender analysis was robust.	S
12. Lessons and recommendations are supported by the project experience and are relevant to future programming?	The lessons and recommendations were based on project experience, although the latter may not be applicable to projects not focused on capacity building.	S
13. Ratings: Ratings are well-substantiated by evidence, realistic and convincing?	The report was efficient in presenting evidence for ratings, and also summarized them well in tables.	HS
14. Report presentation: The report was well-written, logically organized, and consistent?	The report was well organized and easy to read.	S
Overall quality of the report		S

10. Note any additional sources of information used in the preparation of the terminal evaluation report (excluding PIRs, TEs, and PADs).

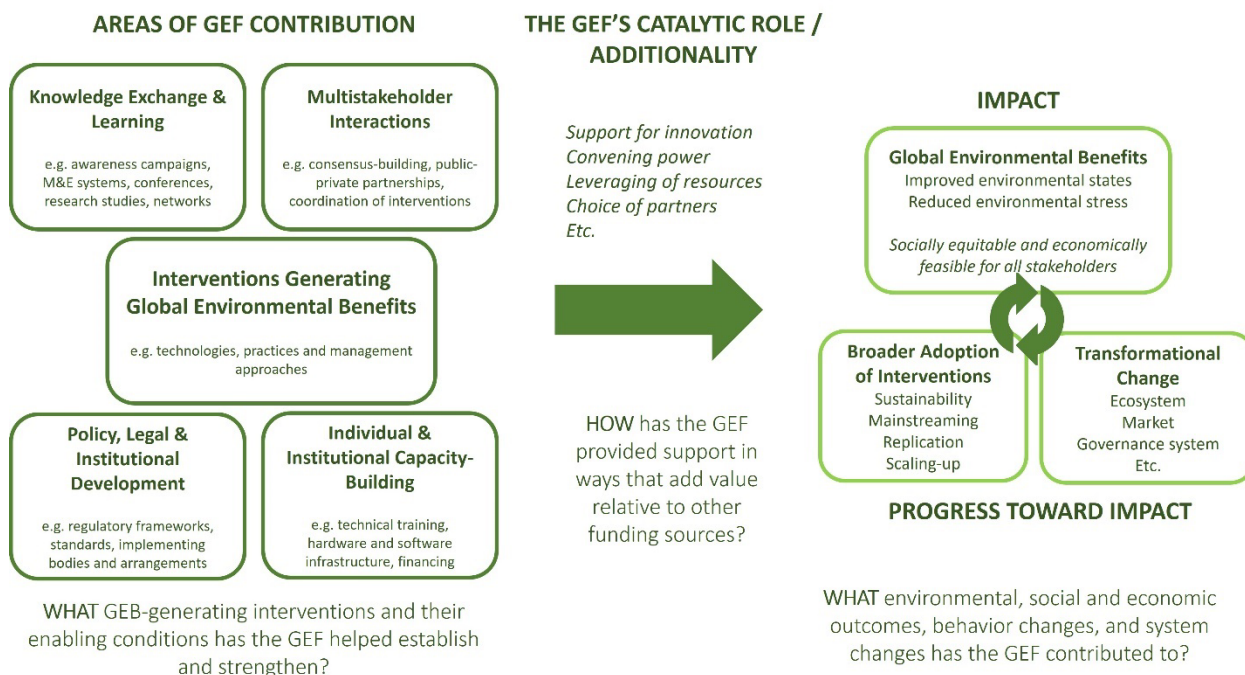## ANNEX 1. GEF IEO THEORY OF CHANGE FRAMEWORK

Figure 1. The GEF IEO's updated Theory of Change Framework on how the GEF achieves impact

The general framework for the GEF's theory of change (figure 1) draws on the large amount of evaluative evidence on outcomes and impact gathered over the years by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office. The framework diagram has been updated to reflect the IEO's learning since OPS5 (GEF IEO 2014, p. 47-50) about how the GEF achieves impact, as well as the evolution of the GEF's programming toward more integrated systems-focused and scaled-up initiatives.

The framework outlines the three main areas that the IEO assesses in its evaluations: a) the GEF's contributions in establishing and strengthening both the interventions that directly generate global environmental benefits, and the enabling conditions that allow these interventions to be implemented and adopted by stakeholders, b) the GEF's catalytic role or additionality in the way that the GEF provides support within the context of other funding sources and partners, and c) the environmental, social and economic outcomes that the GEF has contributed to, and the behavior and system changes that generate these outcomes during and beyond the period of GEF support.

The circular arrow between impact and progress toward impact, as before, indicates how bringing about positive environmental change is an iterative process that involves behavior change (in the form of a broader group of stakeholders adopting interventions) and/or systems change (which is a key characteristic of transformational change). These three areas of change can take place in any sequence or simultaneously in a positively reinforcing cycle, and are therefore assessed by the GEF IEO as indicators of impact.

Assessing the GEF's progress toward achieving impact allows the IEO to determine the extent to which GEF support contributes to a trajectory of large-scale, systemic change, especially in areas where changes in the environment can only be measured over longer time horizons. The updated diagram in particular expands the assessment of progress towards impact to include transformational change, which specifically takes place at the system level, and not necessarily over a long time period.

The updated diagram also more explicitly identifies the link between the GEF's mandate of generating global environmental benefits, and the GEF's safeguards to ensure that positive environmental outcomes also enhance or at the very least do not take away from the social and economic well-being of the people who depend on the environment. Thus the IEO assesses impact not only in terms of environmental outcomes, but also in terms of the synergies and trade-offs with the social and economic contexts in which these outcomes are achieved.

ANNEX 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Intervention	Any programmatic approach, full-sized project, medium-sized project, or enabling activity financed from any GEF-managed trust fund, as well as regional and national outreach activities. In the context of post-completion evaluation, an intervention may consist of a single project, or multiple projects (i.e. phased or parallel) with explicitly linked objectives contributing to the same specific impacts within the same specific geographical area and sector. https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019
Activity (of an intervention)	An action undertaken over the duration of an intervention that contributes to the achievement of the intervention's objectives, i.e. an intervention is implemented through a set of activities. E.g. training, (support to) policy development, (implementation of) management approach.
Outcome	An intended or achieved short- or medium-term effect of a project or program's outputs. https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019
Impact	The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a project or program, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019
Environmental outcomes	Changes in environmental indicators that could take the following forms: • Stress reduction: reduction or prevention of threats to the environment, especially those caused by human behavior (local communities, societies, economies) • Environmental state: biological, physical changes in the state of the environment http://www.gefieo.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf
Social and economic outcomes	Changes in indicators affecting human well-being at the individual or higher scales, e.g. income or access to capital, food security, health, safety, education, cooperation/ conflict resolution, and equity in distribution/ access to benefits, especially among marginalized groups.
Synergies	Multiple benefits achieved in more than one focal area as a result of a *single intervention*, or benefits achieved from the interaction of outcomes from at least two separate interventions in addition to those achieved, had the interventions been done independently.

	http://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016
Trade-offs	A reduction in one benefit in the process of maximizing or increasing another benefit. http://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016
Broader adoption	The adoption of GEF-supported interventions by governments and other stakeholders beyond the original scope and funding of a GEF-supported intervention. This may take place through sustaining, replication, mainstreaming, and scaling-up of an intervention and/or its enabling conditions (see definitions below). http://www.gefieo.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf
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.https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019
Replication	When a GEF intervention is reproduced at a comparable administrative or ecological scale, often in different geographical areas or regions. http://www.gefieo.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf
Mainstreaming	When information, lessons, or specific aspects of a GEF initiative are incorporated into a broader stakeholder initiative. This may occur not only through governments but also in development organizations and other sectors. http://www.gefieo.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf
Scaling-up	Increasing the magnitude of global environment benefits (GEBs), and/or expanding the geographical and sectoral areas where they are generated to cover a defined ecological, economic, or governance unit. May occur through replication, mainstreaming, and linking. http://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-scaling-impact-2019
Transformational change	Deep, systemic, and sustainable change with large-scale impact in an area of major environmental concern. Defined by four criteria: relevance, depth of change, scale of change, and sustainability. http://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-transformational-change-2017
Additionality	a) Changes in the attainment of direct project outcomes at project completion that can be attributed to GEF's interventions; these can be reflected in an acceleration of the adoption of reforms, the enhancement of outcomes, or the reduction of risks and greater viability of project interventions. b) Spill-over effects beyond project outcomes that may result from systemic reforms, capacity development, and socio-economic changes. c) Clearly articulated pathways to achieve broadening of the impact beyond project completion that can be associated with GEF interventions. https://www.gefieo.org/sites/default/files/ieo/council-documents/files/c-55-me-inf-01.pdf