

Terminal Evaluation Review form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office, APR 2016

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		4034	
GEF Agency project ID		3868	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-4 LDCF	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		UNDP	
Project name		Improving the Resilience of the Agriculture Sector in Lao PDR to Climate Change Impacts	
Country/Countries		Lao PDR	
Region		Southeast Asia	
Focal area		Climate Change - Adaptation	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) National Adaptation Programmes Of Action (NAPA)	
Executing agencies involved		Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), through National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFR)	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		5 pilot site Provincial councils - beneficiaries	
Private sector involvement		n/a	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		October 2010	
Effectiveness date / project start		January 2011	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		December 2014	
Actual date of project completion		October 2015	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.10	0.10
	Co-financing	0.10	0.10
GEF Project Grant		4.55	4.55
Co-financing	IA own	2.58	2.58
	Government	5.14	5.14
	Other multi- /bi-laterals		
	Private sector		
	NGOs/CSOs		
Total GEF funding		4.45	4.45
Total Co-financing		7.72	7.72
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		12.36	12.36
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		October 30, 2015	
Author of TE		Carl Mossberg and Dr. Khosada Vongsana	
TER completion date		January 31, 2017	
TER prepared by		Punji Leagnavar	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)		Molly Watts	

2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	HS	S	-	S
Sustainability of Outcomes		ML	-	ML
M&E Design		S	-	MS
M&E Implementation		S	-	MS
Quality of Implementation		S	-	MS
Quality of Execution		HS	-	S
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report		N/A	-	MS

3. Project Objectives

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The project's global environmental objective, as stated in the request for CEO Endorsement, is that "Food insecurity resulting from climate change in Lao PDR minimized and vulnerability of farmers to extreme flooding and drought events reduced." (CEO Endorsement, p.6)

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The project's development objectives, as stated in the request for CEO Endorsement, is to minimize food insecurity resulting from climate change in Lao PDR and reduce the vulnerability of farmers to extreme flooding and drought events (TE, p.17). The Global Environmental Objective and the Development Objective are similar in nature, and the project didn't have a great distinction between them.

The following were the project outcomes:

- Knowledge base on Climate Change impacts in Lao PDR on agricultural production and food security strengthened
- Capacities of sectoral planners and agricultural producers strengthened to understand and address climate change – related risks and opportunities for local food production and socio-economic conditions
- Community-based adaptive agricultural practices demonstrated and promoted within suitable agro-ecological systems
- Adaptation learning as a long term process

3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation?

There were no changes in the objectives or outcomes noted. The project did however, reduce the number of project pilot sites during the start-up because of time delays.

4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

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

Relevance can receive either a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating. For Effectiveness and Cost efficiency, a six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess. Sustainability ratings are assessed on a four-point scale: Likely=no or negligible risk; Moderately Likely=low risk; Moderately Unlikely=substantial risks; Unlikely=high risk. In assessing a Sustainability rating please note if, and to what degree, sustainability of project outcomes is threatened by financial, sociopolitical, institutional/governance, or environmental factors.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 Relevance	Rating: Satisfactory
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The project was relevant to the GEF-4 LCDF objectives, specifically the goals of the Climate Change Adaptation focal area. The TE notes that the project: “focus of safeguarding Lao PDR’s food security against future climate risk by pursuing a range of adaptive agricultural and off-farm practices is aligned with the scope of expected interventions as articulated in the LDCF programming paper and decision 5/CP.9. As climate impacts fall disproportionately on the poor, the project recognizes the link between adaptation and poverty reduction (GEF/C.28/18, 1(b), 29)” (TE, p.8).

The project beneficiaries were two-fold. One, the agricultural communities that have adapted resilience agriculture, and two, the government Ministries and Agencies that concentrate on climate change and risk reduction. The project was relevant to both parties. For the local communities, the project shared resilient farming systems and implemented resilient agricultural techniques (cropping, etc.) that the communities could then integrate for higher yield returns. The project was also relevant for the government of Laos PDR since it provided them with key knowledge and tools on disaster management and planning.

Lastly, the project was relevant to the Government of Laos PDR. The government developed a food security focus as part of its National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2006-2010) and aligned the work of the Technical Working Group on ‘Food and Livelihoods Security and Agricultural Productivity’, National Steering Committee on Climate Change (established by the Prime Minister in 2008) to address these topics. This project specifically aimed to integrate climate risk data into the hazard and vulnerability databases of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO). It helped those agencies strengthen their information and knowledge base on climate change impacts. The project results feed into the Climate Change Strategy for Lao PDR which at the time of the CEO Endorsement was being developed. The Strategy will include a specific component on adaptation in the agricultural sector (TE, p.8).

4.2 Effectiveness	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TER and TE rates effectiveness as satisfactory. The project mostly achieved its outcomes as anticipated. The following is a description of the effectiveness for each outcome:

- *Outcome 1: Knowledge base on Climate Change impacts in Lao PDR on agricultural production and food security strengthened*

This outcome has been mostly achieved. The main objective of this outcome was to increase the knowledge base of climate impacts through several outputs, including designing a long-term early warning system, creating locally produced climate change models for Laos PDR, making land-use planning based on climate risk scenarios and warning indicators, and making sure risk is integrated into national information systems. The project developed a target that *‘All stakeholders identified during PPG and inception phases have access to an efficiently organized and up to date knowledge and information network for climate change impacts on agriculture and food security’*. It was able to achieve this, as all 39 representatives in the PPG received info and capacity building trainings on climate change. As well, the project was able to meet its goal of *‘National and provincial level stakeholders using improved climate and vulnerability information’*, as 80 people (about 49 parties ~ 59%) from government were trained on disaster risk and using the manuals that were developed. (PIR 2015, p.15). The one area the outcome fell short was to develop *‘Resources available to maintain knowledge base after end of the project’* (an outcome target/indicator). The Government of Laos has not allocated the 50% of funding to continue the knowledge network for climate change, which was the original target (PIR, p.17-18).

- *Outcome 2: Capacities of sectoral planners and agricultural producers strengthened to understand and address climate change – related risks and opportunities for local food production and socio-economic conditions*

This outcome was achieved and the project was able to go beyond its initial targets. For example, a target for the outcome was that *‘4 planners from at least 6 sectors / sub-sectors relevant to agriculture, food security and CC are able to effectively apply climate risk information in annual and multi- year planning exercises...’* The project was able to go beyond this target within the first reporting period, as the PIR reports that: *“976 persons (including 262 women) were trained in different subjects related to climate change. This covered far more than 4 planners from each of the sub-sectors targeted”* (PIR 2015, p.20). The project was also able to train 80% of government agency staff (the target was 75%) on climate risk information, equipping them to apply this into planning and implementation of future projects (PIR, p.24).

- *Outcome 3: Community-based adaptive agricultural practices demonstrated and promoted within suitable agro-ecological systems*

The project was able to achieve almost all of its targets. Of its successes, the project set out to have *“100 practical field-based adaptation interventions (food security, water management, flood and drought control) are trialed in the 4 pilot districts”*. It was able in the end, to achieve 103 interventions. Although the project did not create a target for which to monitor beneficiary participation, the PIR reports that 15,112 people have participated in activities to promote community-based adaptive agriculture, a staggering number for this project.

The project targeted farming households and tried to raise awareness of adaptive management for agro-ecosystems in 13,500 households. In the end, the project was only able to create awareness and access to extension services for 5436 households, amounting to 40% of what was originally planned. The project also targeted a 25% improvement in farm yields from adaptation/diversification measures. While entire set of farm production was probably not tracked or aggregated production of several farm crops were tracked. Rice yield increased by 63%; goat herd by 64%; cow herd by 47%, etc. (PIR, 2015).

- *Outcome 4: Adaptation learning as a long term process*

The project also achieved its targets for Outcome 4. This outcome focused on the long-term learning and knowledge that has been fostered by the project. It measured the achievement of the outcome based on two different targets: (1) a project internal M+E system covering all components and all project locations systematically provides quantitative and qualitative data, and information on coded lessons learned and a website has been established linked to wider dissemination through regional and global networks; and (2) By the end of the project 2 regional conferences on CC+AA are organized. The project developed an internal M&E system, launched a website, and held two regional conferences.

4.3 Efficiency	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE rates efficiency as *satisfactory*. This TER also finds that efficiency is rated as satisfactory because of slight delays in administrative and financial procedures. These delays pushed back activities during the start-up and implementation phase of the project. The TE has noted that the delays affected each of the separate outcomes (TE, p.7-8). The project documents do not indicate any mishandling or inefficiencies in terms of the financial management of the project.

4.4 Sustainability	Rating: Moderately likely
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Financial sustainability – The TE notes that the financial sustainability of the project is moderately likely for several reasons. The main reason for this is because the government has not committed to support the project with more funds. This is likely to kill any momentum that the project had at the present moment. The TE says that: “At all levels of the Government, the lack of funding has been stated as the main reason for difficulties to apply results beyond the ending of IRAS” (TE, p.30).

Socio-political sustainability – The TE rated socio-political sustainability to be moderately likely. This TER rates it as moderately unlikely. The TE conducted a feasibility assessment of the project villages and predicted that some interventions (especially water management/harvesting techniques) will be used beyond the life of the project; however, there were important external factors that would enable the

continuation of other project activities. The additional capital for farming equipment is essential to purchase and maintain mechanized sowing machines, and to purchase high yielding seed varieties. Many farmers in the villages have limited incomes and are not able to invest in these new approaches. The access to credit is one way to help them purchase new inputs, however, the credit system is not as mature (TE, p.31)

Institutional and governance sustainability – This TER rates this as moderately likely. The project documents indicate that the government’s institutional framework and governance is weak and in constant flux. Government officials (especially those that previously worked on the project) are often transferred to other positions and with that goes the knowledge of the project, and the institutional history. In addition, enforcement of the law is weak and the use of the land usually comes without proper screening, leading to increased degradation in many forest areas. This means that the risk for disasters to rise as a result of inappropriate land use might continue (TE, p.40).

Environmental sustainability – The things that would impact the environmental sustainability of the project are that there is future land degradation due to human influences, and that climatic variability leads to more flooding and erosion in Laos PDR. Because of these two factors, the TE and the TER agree that the environmental sustainability of the project is moderately likely.

5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

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, then 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?

The TE did not include the final budget with co-financing due to reasons of external auditing (TE, p.27). At the time of the CEO Endorsement the project estimated USD 7,718,548 of co-financing, primarily from the Government (USD 4,764,969), UNDP (USD 2,575,259) and the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute. The project documents, however, indicate that cofinancing materialized and that outcomes were not affected.

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 did experience delays in the start-up period (6 months) and during implementation. At the start of the project, the team realized that the project would be too short to cover the 5 districts it wanted to, so it reduced that number to 4 districts. Also, the formal approval processes and recruitment of positions caused those delays to incur. Later, the project wanted to introduce an additional activity (technical trials) so it was extended from April 2015 to October 2015. (TE, p.23).

The PIR 2013 noted that there was a causal linkage between the achievement of the intermediate outputs and the delays. It states: “The project start up experienced a delay and

although it is approaching a mid-point of implementation, a total delivery rate is only 30% and it targeted only 10% of identified beneficiaries (over 30,000 people)” (PIR 2013, p.39). However, in the end, the project was able to make up for the slower pace and accomplish many of its targets.

5.3 Country ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links:

The TE finds that the ownership among the beneficiaries/villages was good in the beginning of the project and during the preparation of activities, specifically as it related to community-based risk management plans. However, as the decision making was increasingly made in the capital and the community plans were all printed there, the village ownership and use of the plans has decreased. This directly impedes on project sustainability and a sense of ownership, as the plans were developed with the villages, but then ultimately were not shared with them.

6. Assessment of project’s Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory=no shortcomings in this M&E component; Satisfactory=minor shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Satisfactory=moderate shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Unsatisfactory=significant shortcomings in this M&E component; Unsatisfactory=major shortcomings in this M&E component; Highly Unsatisfactory=there were no project M&E systems.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

6.1 M&E Design at entry	Rating: Moderately satisfactory
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The M&E Design at entry is rated as satisfactory, however, this TER does note some shortcomings and thus gives it a moderately satisfactory rating. The logframe at the CEO Endorsement was comprehensive and the objectives, outcomes and outputs were logical and also complimentary. Although the indicators were SMART, they were separated to show either the ‘cover, impact, or sustainability’ of the project. These might have been mislabeled, since for example, the impact indicators didn’t measure impact (long term impact) of the project, so much as outputs. One example is ‘Indicator 2.2. Impact: Number of targeted agricultural officers, extension workers, farmer cooperatives and TSC (Technical Service Center) members in target districts have an advanced understanding of key climate change risk and impacts on agricultural production and socio-economic conditions.” (CEO Endorsement, p.21). The TE notes that some of the targets were set too high, e.g. 50% of costs for operation included in sector budgets. A target of 25% improvement in farmers’ yields was pursued how the indicator was too broad – and it would be difficult to aggregate different sets of farm crops to a single farm yield metric. With that the project could potentially focus on achieving the target numbers/quantities and focus less on the quality of execution. (TE, p.19)

The total M&E budget was USD 120,000, which is high for a project of four years. However, this also including external auditing costs, which other GEF projects are not mandated to do.

6.2 M&E Implementation	Rating: Moderately satisfactory
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The project was able to integrate an adaptive management program. During the MTR, there were many recommendations that were given that the project later adapted. These included anything from implementing additional M&E activities (Annual Work Plans per district, strategic workplans, etc.) to the re-design of project activities (community ponds, early warning systems, etc.) (TE, p.25). The M&E process, however, has been recorded as a little slow at times, and requires permanent re-enforcement to get the information from the project sites back to the Ministry (PIR 2015, p.43). As well, some of the information monitored were not completed (evaluations of field activities and value of training programs) (TE, p.6).

7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation includes the quality of project design, as well as the quality of supervision and assistance provided by implementing agency(s) to execution agencies throughout project implementation. Quality of Execution covers the effectiveness of the executing agency(s) in performing its roles and responsibilities. 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	Rating: Moderately satisfactory
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The quality of project implementation on behalf of UNDP is rated as moderately satisfactory. The TE rated it as satisfactory, and this TER downgrades that rating. The functional part of the project implementation worked. However, the recruitment of staff (technical experts and project staff) was not timely. There was noted to be frequent turnover at UNDP which has created a vacuum of communication for the project partners. The Head of the UNDP Environment Unit changed frequently and the learning curve for the new management about the project took time away from implementing the project. The TE notes that the delays of the project due to staff may have affected the delivery of outputs in the beginning of the project cycle (TE, p.29).

7.2 Quality of Project Execution	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE rates quality of project execution as satisfactory. It notes that the first two years of the project experienced some delays due to late recruitments in the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI). The project was also slow to take off and begin on the part of the executing agency. (TE, p.29) These were the only shortcomings listed in the TE. However, these drawbacks were small compared to the overall work of the NAFRI that was reflected in other project documents. The progress reviews state that the Government of Laos demonstrated a strong commitment to implementing the project and had shown the ability to improve capabilities in terms of their engagement. As well, the PIR 2015 stated that NAFRI had strong coordination abilities and implemented the project with solid coordination mechanisms on the national and sub-national levels (PIR 2015, p.40).

8. Assessment of Project Impacts

Note - In instances where information on any impact related topic is not provided in the terminal evaluations, the reviewer should indicate in the relevant sections below that this is indeed the case and identify the information gaps. When providing information on topics related to impact, please cite the page number of the terminal evaluation from where the information is sourced.

8.1 Environmental Change. Describe the changes in environmental stress and environmental status that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

The environmental changes that were noted in the project concentrated on building awareness and skills for climate resilient agriculture. Changes in environmental stress/status were not documented. Changes in agricultural returns because of newly integrated climate resilient techniques are described below.

8.2 Socioeconomic change. Describe any changes in human well-being (income, education, health, community relationships, etc.) that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

The socioeconomic impacts that the project produced was income generation from farming system diversification. Specific figures for the yield/livestock increases observed include: a 63% increase in rice, 64% increase of goats, and a 47% increase in cattle. The PIR 2015 notes that “on average, the improved rice seed increased seasonal profits by 78% and 3% under rain-fed and irrigated conditions, respectively” (PIR 2015, p.10).

8.3 Capacity and governance changes. Describe notable changes in capacities and governance that can lead to large-scale action (both mass and legislative) bringing about positive environmental change.

“Capacities” include awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, and environmental monitoring systems, among others. “Governance” refers to decision-making processes, structures and systems, including access to and use of information, and thus would include laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc. Indicate how project activities contributed to/ hindered these changes, as well as how contextual factors have influenced these changes.

a) Capacities – the project did a lot to build awareness and knowledge about climate resilience in the agricultural sector. Some of the specific impacts concerning capacity building are: 80 government officials were trained on community-based disaster risk management; over 30 government agencies were engaged in consultation and review of policies; 266 people were trained in climate science and community adaptation; and 5,436 households reached by government extension programs (PIR 2015, p.25-28).

b) Governance – The project resulted in climate resilience receiving a higher profile in the National Economic Development Plan (2016-2020) and the Government of Laos PDR strategy papers for donors and international agencies (PIR 2015, p.5). On a village governance level, the project completed 34 land use plans, with drought and flood zones, for targeted sites.

8.4 Unintended impacts. Describe any impacts not targeted by the project, whether positive or negative, affecting either ecological or social aspects. Indicate the factors that contributed to these unintended impacts occurring.

No unintended impacts were observed.

8.5 Adoption of GEF initiatives at scale. Identify any initiatives (e.g. technologies, approaches, financing instruments, implementing bodies, legal frameworks, information systems) that have been mainstreamed, replicated and/or scaled up by government and other stakeholders by project end. Include the extent to which this broader adoption has taken place, e.g. if plans and resources have been established but no actual adoption has taken place, or if market change and large-scale environmental benefits have begun to occur. Indicate how project activities and other contextual factors contributed to these taking place. If broader adoption has not taken place as expected, indicate which factors (both project-related and contextual) have hindered this from happening.

No adoption of GEF initiatives were observed.

9. Lessons and recommendations

9.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects.

The TE provides some learned lessons from the project:

- Overall, it was found that the project term was too short. The project should be developed with long term objectives and with a reasonable amount of project time allocated for each activity (the TE found the current project's time period to be too short);
- The first steps of the project are in awareness raising, education and testing; the other outputs have to be about creating sustainability and there should be time integrated into the project to do so;
- Institutionalize the results of the project into current or future Government of Laos activities; it will increase ownership and potentially sustainability (TE, p.11)

9.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

The TE also provides recommendations for the Government of Laos PDR and UNDP:

- In order to scale the project, and build on momentum, the agencies should organize visit to present the results of the project to major donors, and multilateral agencies/banks
- If there is a new program built off the project it should include a greater water management component
- Find financial support for the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute in its efforts to set up a new Research Centre linked to adaptation
- Inform and promote the use of resilience in agriculture products through the Government Sub Sector Working Group of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Subsector Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (TE, p.10)
- There should be links between different Government actors to cooperate further on the project objectives
- Study tours, and seminars can be effective to inform and share experiences with the rest of the region and encourage south-south cooperation
- Practical solutions/demonstrations should always be tested on the ground in cooperation with farmers (TE, p.41)

10. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

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	GEF IEO comments	Rating
To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	The report presented an assessment of the outcomes in often times generic language without much quantitative information or robust analysis. The quality of English also presented a problem in understanding the conclusions and analyses.	MS
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	The report is consistent with the project documents and the findings from the last PIR which occurred shortly before the TE. However, it presented information that didn't correlate to the ratings at times. For example, instead of focusing on the effectiveness of the outcomes, it discusses recommendations to carry the activities forward. (TE, p.32)	MS
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	The TE mentions all dimensions of sustainability but does not go into depth about each of them (or speaks in generalities); and the English makes it difficult to understand what the author is trying to say.	MU
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	The lessons learned were presented with evidence and they were for the most part comprehensive	S
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	The TE does not provide a breakdown of costs per activity or for co-financing	MU
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	The TE gave a good analysis of the M&E at design, but did not provide much information on the M&E implementation	MU
Overall TE Rating		MS

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

Co-financing letters