Guidance in Support of the Operationalization of the Evaluation Policy

# Ex Post Evaluation

Technical Evaluation Reference Group
ADAPTATION FUND

This guidance note is part of a series of technical guidance from the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) supporting reliable, useful, and ethical evaluations aligned with the Adaptation Fund's Evaluation Policy. AF-TERG guidance documents are intended to be succinct, but with sufficient information to practically guide users, pointing to additional resources when appropriate. Additional AF-TERG evaluation resources on various topics can be accessed at the online AF-TERG Evaluation Resource Webpage. Feedback is welcome and can be sent to AF-TERG-SEC@adaptation-fund.org.

The Adaptation Fund was established through decisions by the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. At the Katowice Climate Conference in December 2018, the Parties to the Paris Agreement decided that the Adaptation Fund shall also serve the Paris Agreement. The Fund supports country-driven projects and programmes, innovation, and global learning for effective adaptation. All of the Fund's activities are designed to build national and local adaptive capacities while reaching and engaging the most vulnerable groups, and to integrate gender consideration to provide equal opportunity to access and benefit from the Fund's resources. They are also aimed at enhancing synergies with other sources of climate finance, while creating models that can be replicated or scaled up. www.adaptation-fund.org

The Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) is an independent evaluation advisory group accountable to the Fund Board. It was established in 2018 to ensure the independent implementation of the Fund's evaluation framework, which will be succeeded by the new evaluation policy from October 2023 onwards. The AF-TERG, which is headed by a chair, provides an evaluative advisory role through performing evaluative, advisory and oversight functions. The group is comprised of independent experts in evaluation, called the AF-TERG members. A small secretariat provides support for the implementation of evaluative and advisory activities as part of the work programme.

While independent of the operations of the Adaptation Fund, the aim of the AF-TERG is to add value to the Fund's work through independent monitoring, evaluation, and learning, www.adaptation-fund.org/about/evaluation/



AF-TERG, [2022]. [Title of the Report]. Adaptation Fund Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG),

Washington, DC.

The unedited [type] report was finished [Date].

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| **AF-TERG** | Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund |
| **Fund** | Adaptation Fund |
| **M&E** | Monitoring and evaluation |
| **OECD DAC** | Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |

# 1. What is this guidance note?

The purpose of this guidance note is to support the preparation of the ex post evaluations that are realistic and fit-for-purpose to support evaluations in accordance with the Adaptation Fund's Evaluation Policy. The intended audience for this guidance note is people who plan and manage Fund evaluation activities, with particular attention on those preparing ex post evaluations for Fund Implementing Entities (IEs), the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG), and the Fund secretariat and Board. However, this guidance note may also be useful to others interested in the topic of ex post evaluations of sustainability in the climate change adaptation community and beyond.

Ex post evaluations and other post-project studies undertaken by multilateral and bilateral development agencies, as well as other international actors, vary widely in their scope and approach. This guidance note explains how ex post evaluations at the Fund work in terms of approach and practical logistics. Additional information on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders are provided in Annex 1, and additional resources for users are provided in **Annex 3.**

# 2. What is an Ex Post Evaluation?

The Adaptation Fund Evaluation Policy defines ex post evaluation as, "Evaluation to assess longer-term impact, sustainability, and learning taking place three to five years after closure of Fund-financed projects." This definition is narrower than definition used by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD DAC), which defines ex post evaluation as an "evaluation of a development intervention after it has been completed." (2002).

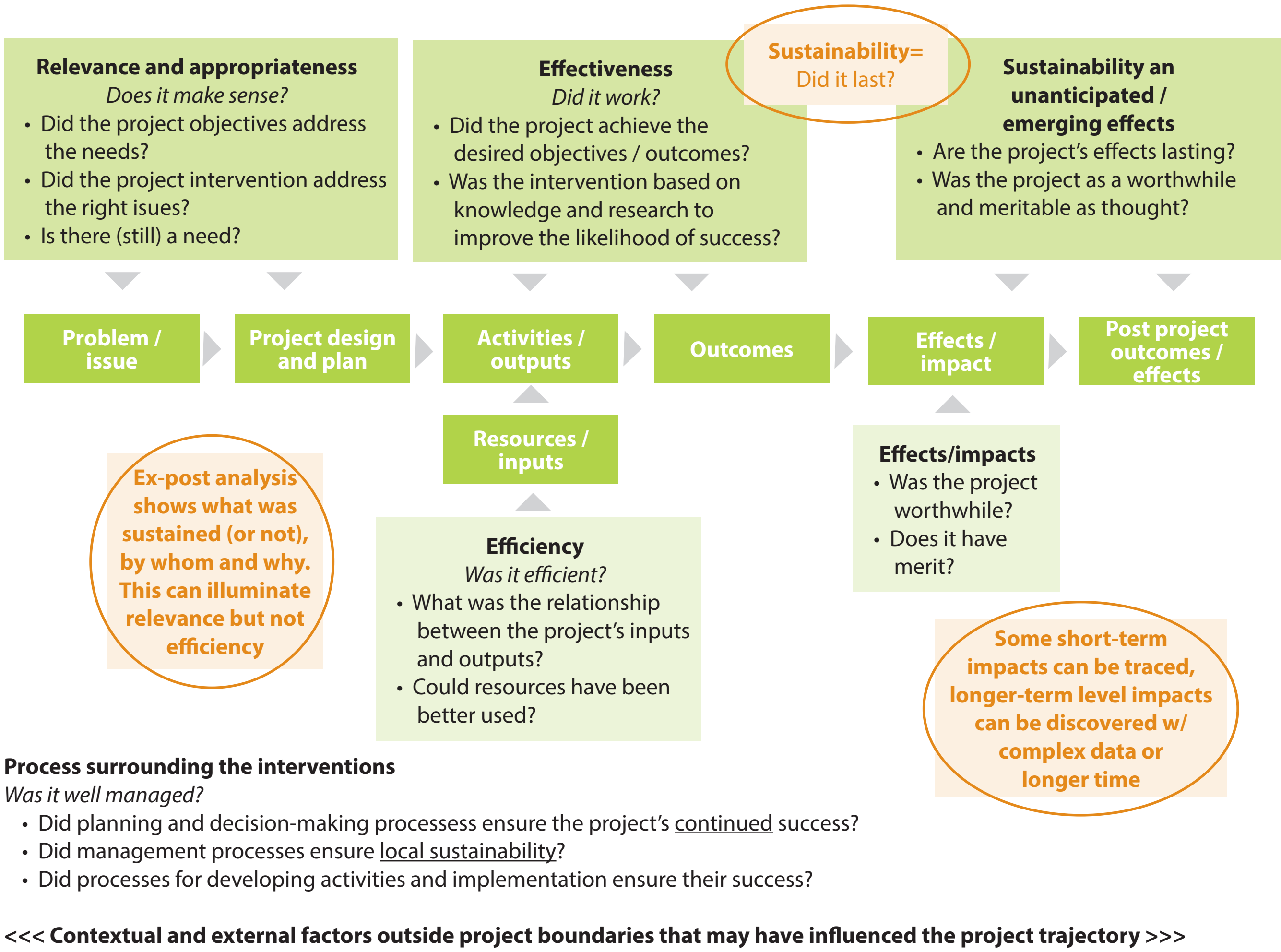
Ex post evaluations are not mandatory for all Fund projects; at present, two eligible projects a year are selected by the AF-TERG in consultation with the Board secretariat. The costs of the ex post evaluations are covered from the organizational evaluation budget of the AF-TERG.

The ex post evaluation initiative of the Fund resulted from a request from the Board to develop post-implementation learning and impact evaluation for Fund projects and programmes. Ultimately, these evaluations seek to provide learning on climate change actions and accountability of results financed by the Fund. The AF-TERG then developed an approach for these evaluations that emphasized sustainability and impact.

The Fund's expected impact is, "Adaptive capacity enhanced, resilience strengthened and the vulnerability of people, livelihoods and ecosystems to climate change reduced," [1] and ex post evaluations supported by the Fund take specific steps to evaluate vulnerability and resilience. **Figure 1** provides an overview of the scope of a traditional ex post evaluation with the areas of emphasis for the Fund circled. Like thematic evaluations, which are also overseen by the AF-TERG, ex post evaluations generate learning that contributes to achieving the Fund's longer-term mission and goal, as well as the longer-term interests and needs of implementing entities. Furthermore, the benefits of these evaluations are summarized in **Section 3**.

1. https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Adaptation-Fund-Strategic-Results-Framework-Amended-in-March-2019-2.pdf

## Figure 1: Types of Ex Post Evaluations




Source: Adapted from WHO 2019.

# 3. What are the benefits of an Ex Post Evaluation?

Ex post evaluations may generate a variety of benefits for different stakeholders. They include the following:

✓ Capture the change induced by a project following financial and administrative closure.

✓ Increase upwards accountability to donors and decision makers and downwards accountability to intended project participants.

✓ Assess the extent to which selected projects contribute to AF intended impacts and any unintended impacts over time.

✓ Provide evidence that can improve the design of adaptation projects, strategy, and management for decision-makers at the Fund, among implementing partners, and for countries with Fund-supported projects.

✓ Verify estimates provided by sustainability ratings (ground-truthing) at the project's midterm review and terminal evaluation, informing similar estimates of sustainability for future projects.

✓ Enhance learning from the project to improve M&E quality, risk management, sustainability strategy and execution, and exit planning.

✓ Increase understanding of the emergence of maladaptation in interventions and raise awareness among stakeholders in order to reduce their future likelihood in programming.

✓ Identify promising elements of sustained outcomes that can be utilized more widely in projects with adaptation components.

✓ Increase transparency and generate information for country-level reporting to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement.

# 4. When are Ex Post Evaluations conducted?

As required by the Board, the AF-TERG will conduct ex post evaluations three to five years after closure of selected Fund-financed projects to assess and inform learning from longer-term impact and sustainability. At present, the AF-TERG conducts two ex post evaluations per year of eligible projects.

# 5. Who is involved in Ex Post Evaluations?

**Annex 1** provides a table that lists **Roles and Responsibilities for the AF-TERG and Implementing Entities** for a Fund-supported ex post evaluation spanning the period from project completion to the uptake of ex post findings. In addition to activities carried out by the AF-TERG and the Implementing Entities, there are also roles for other stakeholders:

- **Project partners:** These organizations, groups and people involved into the project implementation will be engaged with the ex post process as data providers and are invited to participate in the co-creation / training workshop that determines the scope of the evaluation.

- **Frontline adapters:** These individuals, groups, communities and/or organizations, which receive support from the project, may provide useful data and feedback, and they should receive a summary of the findings of the evaluation that they supported.

- **Government partners:** The Designated Authority (Adaptation Fund focal point for the country) and officials from government agencies that were involved in the project or have an interest in the findings, are invited to the co-creation / training workshop that determines the scope of the evaluation and to the de-briefing on the evaluation findings.

- **Board Secretariat:** The Board Secretariat receives a copy of the evaluation summary and recommendations that pertain to programming and management at the Fund to inform its strategic support.

# 6. How to Plan for a Fund Ex Post Evaluation?

Involvement in an ex post evaluation starts long before a project is selected. Proper data archiving at project completion can broaden the number of tools that can be used, increase the robustness of findings, and make the evaluation team's job much easier. Examples of critical information for ex post evaluation include comprehensive monitoring and evaluation data, participant lists, and sampling frames.

# 7. How are Fund Ex Post Evaluations conducted?

**The ex post evaluation process usually consists of six steps:**

**1. Preparation.** Preparation for ex post evaluations begins with projects properly archiving project data and information – see **Box 1**. It also includes allocating funding for ex post evaluations, which are budgeted by the AF-TERG under the Fund's evaluation function.

### BOX 1: Project Information/Data Archiving

It is highly recommended that Implementing Entities archive all project data and information for five years following project closure in an accessible, identifiable location. This not only ensures that project secondary (background) data is available to support potential ex post evaluation if the project is selected for such an exercise, but It is good practice as part of accountable project management. Project documentation includes the project application and design documents, baseline report, annual reports, mid-term review (MTR), a final (terminal) evaluation, project board / steering committee membership and meeting notes, participant lists for trainings, project-related social media archives, press releases, and engineering documentation and permits for any project-supported infrastructure as well as sampling frames, theory of change and any exit strategy documentation.

Next, the AF-TERG identifies eligible projects and selects candidates based on the criteria provided below in **Figure 2**. Implementing entities whose projects are selected for ex post evaluations (see Section 3 above) are informed within three months of approval of the selection.

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The AF-TERG commissions and manages its ex post evaluations. Those involved in commissioning and managing an ex post evaluation should refer to the Fund's additional resources for evaluation, including the Evaluation Policy, the guidance notes for Commissioning and Managing an Evaluation, Evaluation Principles, Evaluation Criteria, Evaluation ToR, Evaluation Inception Report, and Evaluation Reporting.

**2. Inception:** Following the selection of the project for an ex post evaluation, project stakeholders, the AF-TERG, and the evaluator(s) participate in a co-creation and training workshop (see Annex 1 for roles and responsibilities). The workshop has three purposes:

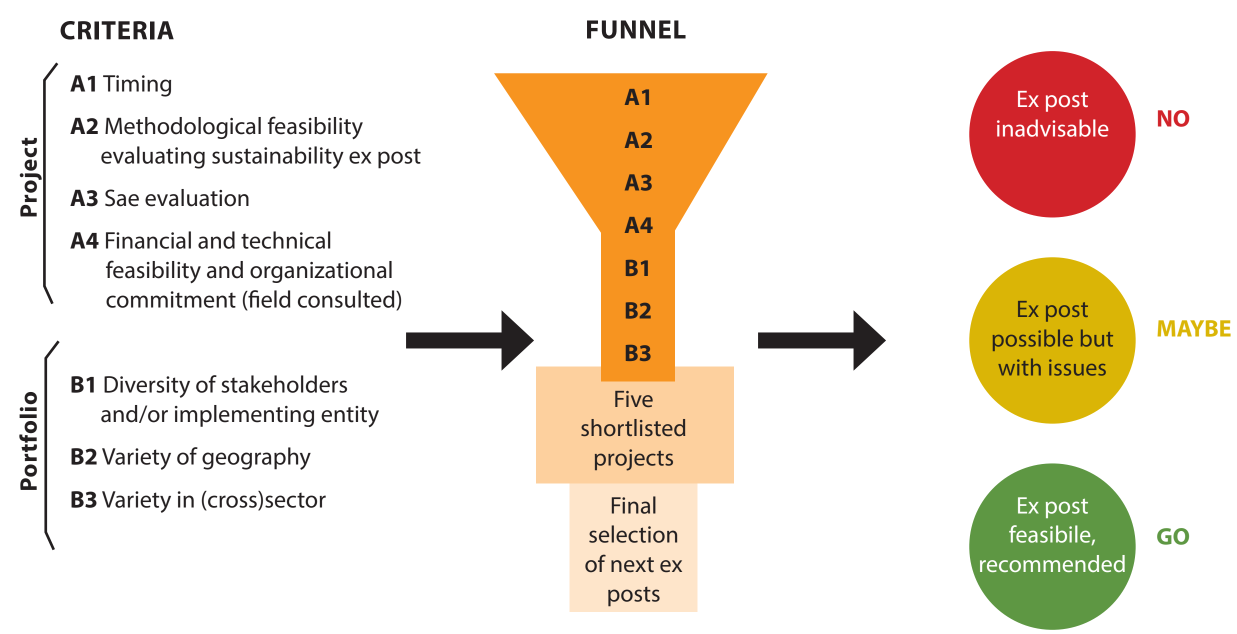
1) Familiarize the evaluators and stakeholders with the evaluation framework

2) Determine which outcome or outcomes from the project will be evaluated

3) Select a methodology (or methodologies) for the evaluation based on the country context, the project sector and design, and available data availability (see Annex 2 for an overview of relevant possible approaches).

The evaluator(s) then prepare an inception report for review and feedback by the AF-TERG. (see the Fund's [Evaluation Inception Report Guidance Note]).

### Figure 2: Selection framework for ex post evaluations




Source: AF-TERG 2022.

**3. Implementation:** In this step, the evaluation team applies the AF-TERG ex post evaluation framework to the project outcomes. The framework is intended to provide answers to two high-level evaluation questions:

1) How sustainable have the selected project outcome or outcomes been over time since project completion?

2) If a selected project outcome has been sustained, in what ways is it climate-resilient?

Given the centrality of sustainability and resilience for the longitudinal assessment that characterizes ex post evaluations, **Box 2** below explores these and related concepts in more detail.

### BOX 2: Sustainability and Resilience

Sustainability is defined by the OECD DAC as "The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed….The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time."

The Fund's Evaluation Policy uses the criterion of Human and ecological sustainability and security, which is defined as "the extent to which the intervention is likely to generate continued positive or negative, intended and unintended impacts beyond its lifetime, taking into consideration, social, institutional, economic, and environmental systems."

Resilience is defined by the IPCC as "The capacity of interconnected social, economic and ecological systems to cope with a hazardous event, trend or disturbance, responding or reorganising in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure. Resilience is a positive attribute when it maintains capacity for adaptation, learning and/or transformation." The AF-TERG has adopted the IPCC definition for climate change resilience in the ex post evaluation methodology by highlighting how the (sustained) outcomes sit in larger human and natural systems, and how it influences their respective structures and functions.

The connection between sustainability and (climate) resilience in the ex post evaluation method is through examining the relevance of the (sustained) outcome(s) and the respective vulnerabilities that it/they address(es). Irrelevant outcomes will not be sustained, and irrelevant interventions will not be climate-resilient. Furthermore, sustained outcomes must address underlying targeted vulnerabilities, including those tied to climate, in order to be considered adaptation.

(continued)

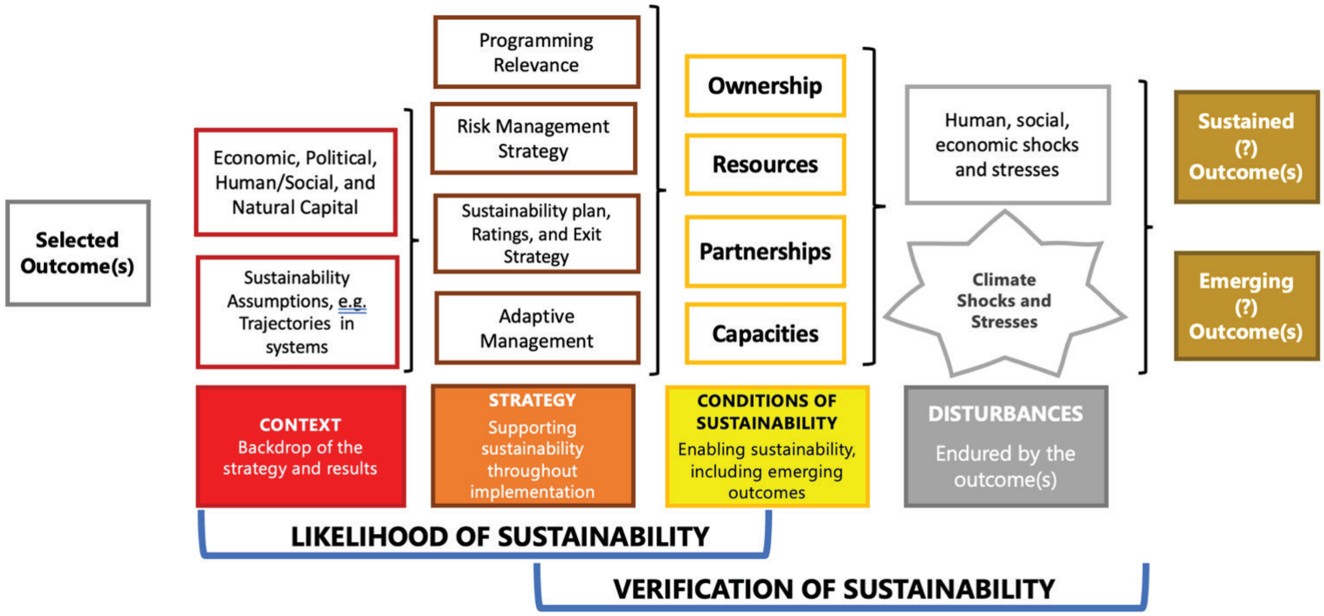
Although the Fund distinguishes between sustainability and resilience, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably by project stakeholders. However, the distinction is important: a project outcome can lead to (fleeting or temporary) climate resilience without being sustainable, or be sustainable or sustained without being resilient to the climate shocks and stresses it was designed to withstand.

For example, a seawall to protect the shoreline from a storm surge may work well for several hurricanes; it is sustainable in that context. However, if the wall causes erosion and loss of habitat and sand, then it is offsetting the benefits in one location with costs to another, so it is not climate-resilient. Alternatively, if a drought-tolerant crop has been introduced (sorghum) to replace a less drought-tolerant crop (corn), this measure is climate-resilient in that context. However, if there is no market for sorghum, and local farmers don't have desirable uses for it, they will not continue to grow it, and it will not be a sustainable alternative).

Sources: AF Evaluation Policy; OECD 2019; IPCCC AR4.

To answer the first evaluation question on sustainability, selected outcome/s are assessed. This is first completed through a desk review of the context and strategy that informed the likelihood of sustainability during the project and the conditions set up prior to administrative closure of the project (**Figure 3**). The ex post then verifies – through further data collection and fieldwork – the extent to which the outcome or outcomes have, in fact, been sustained 3-5 years after project closure by: a) verifying the expected conditions of sustainability exist in the project's operational context; and b) determining whether new pathways to results were created/emerged by efforts of local and national actors as a result of the project. Ex post evaluators look both at what was sustained of the original project and what new ways emerged to make results last since closure. They also trace unintended results – both positive and maladaptive.

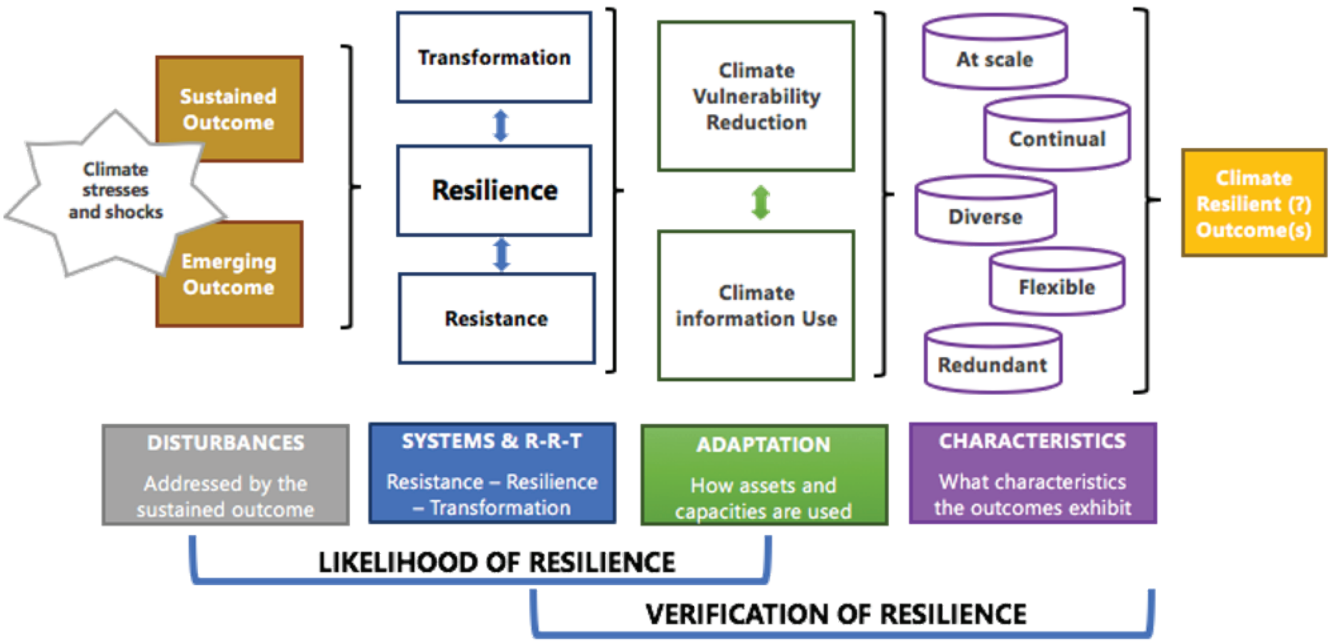
**Figure 3:** **AF-TERG Ex Post Evaluation Focus Part I – Sustainability of Outcome(s)**




The second part of the AF-TERG ex post evaluation approach is a unique resilience framework (see **Figure 4**) used to examine the resilience of an outcome that is identified as being sustained. This assessment of the resiliency of both human and natural systems is fairly uncommon, as is the review of climate disturbances that have been experienced over time. As with the sustainability component, evaluators conduct a desk review to explore likelihood (of resilience in this case) and then collect evidence in the field to verify that projected likelihood.

In the context of the specific climate disturbances surrounding the sustained outcome, the resilience framework first examines how the project sits within human and natural systems, and their nexus, or the relationship between them. The tool also explores how the project strategy is exhibited in those systems (resistance-resilience-transformation, RRT). It then assesses how the project used assets and capacities to bring about adaptive changes, such as the use of climate information and reduction of climate vulnerability. Finally, the framework explores which "RRT characteristics" the selected outcome exhibits, such as diversity and redundancy, and to what extent they support the climate resilience of the outcome. The resource page for ex post evaluations at the Fund includes a description of RRT characteristics and the first two pilot ex post evaluations conducted by the Fund where they were applied.

**Figure 4: AF-TERG Ex Post Evaluation Focus Part II – Resilience of Sustained Outcome(s)**




Both **qualitative** and **quantitative** data are useful for generating the evidence for ex post evaluation. Ideally, a mix of both data types is possible to deliver a more comprehensive picture, including specific measures of the targets planned for relevant longer-term indicators, and analysis of why there were or were not achieved. If quantitative data options are limited, qualitative methods can be used but more triangulation is needed across respondents and sites. **Primary** and **secondary** data sources can be used. However, at this stage the challenge may be also in the availability of and access to primary respondents given transitioning from previous posts; nonetheless, many project participants remain in their villages to interview and involvement of the Implementing Entities and their local partners knowledgeable about the original project is key. Suitable data collection approaches need to be customized. Several factors should be considered, such as the availability of data, costs of use, and skills necessary for collection, among others. Extra effort is needed to trace original respondents or those engaged in the project once it has been completed, as they may be no longer available. Again, good data management during implementation and good archiving at project completion will facilitate this process.

**4. Reporting.** This phase of the evaluation encompasses the drafting, review, and finalization of the ex post evaluation report, which includes the following:

1) An in-country de-briefing of preliminary findings with relevant stakeholders to validate accuracy and elicit any further reflections and opinion to inform the draft evaluation report.

2) The preparation of the draft evaluation report.

3) The circulation of the draft evaluation report for comments and feedback; one should not underestimate the time this can entail.

4) The finalization of the evaluation report based on comments and feedback.

5) The preparation of a summary of the evaluation report for the Board, implementing entities, and any other relevant stakeholders.

6) The preparation of a two-page summary of the evaluation's key findings, lessons and recommendations for participating communities.

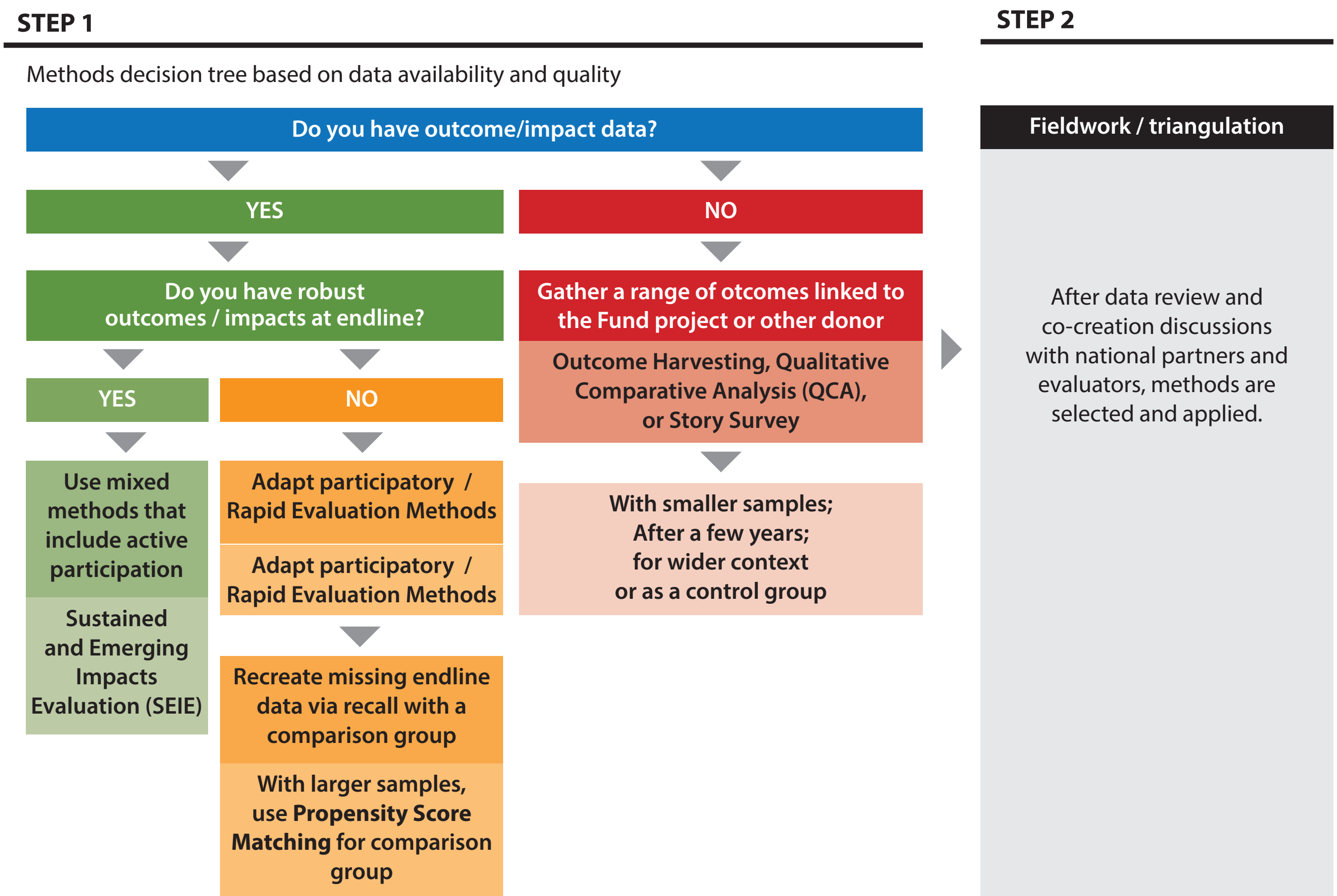
The Fund's Evaluation Reporting Guidance Note is a valuable resource for this step, providing further detail on the above points and more.

**5. Follow-up:** This step involves disseminating the findings of the evaluation more broadly, supporting any management response to and follow-up on the recommendations made by the evaluation team, and supporting broader learning in the climate change adaptation field from the evaluation. Learning includes integrating lessons about relevance regarding how to design, implement, monitor and evaluate for sustainability and resilience. The roles and responsibilities of actors for this step are provided in **Annex 1**, and further detail can also be found in the Fund's Commissioning and Managing an Evaluation Guidance Note.

# ANNEX 1. Roles and Responsibilities in a Fund Ex Post Evaluation

| Project Life Cycle / Evaluation Stage | Role of AF-TERG | Role of Implementing Entity |
|---|---|---|
| ***Preparation:*** Project closure | ✓ AF-TERG budgets beforehand for ex post evaluations | ✓ Submit terminal evaluation and project completion report to the Board Secretariat.<br>✓ Archive all project data and information for five years in an accessible, identifiable location at the Implementing Entities (see Box 1). |
| ***Preparation:*** Ex post project selection | ✓ Select projects for ex post evaluations and notify IEs | ✓ Acknowledge the notification and appoint a focal point for the exercise |
| ***Inception:*** Training, co-creation, and outcome selection | ✓ Hire evaluator(s)<br>✓ Provide trainer(s)<br>✓ Organize co-creation workshop | ✓ Identify key stakeholders for participation<br>✓ Nominate Implementing Entities participant(s) |
| ***Implementation:*** Data Collection and Analysis | ✓ Provide QA/QC support for the evaluation team | ✓ Provide project documentation to the evaluation team |
| ***Reporting:*** Presentation of Report | ✓ Present draft findings (in-country) to stakeholders<br>✓ Organize a de-briefing for the IE for the final report<br>✓ Develop an evaluation summary for the Board and a two-page summary to return to the country | ✓ Participate in presentation of draft findings<br>✓ Provide review comments on the draft report<br>✓ Participate in the de-briefing of the final report |
| ***Follow-Up:*** Follow-up Activities | ✓ Present the report recommendations in an information note or decision document to the Board.<br>✓ Incorporate learning into the ex post methodology and approach used by the Fund<br>✓ Disseminate learning from the ex post to the climate change adaptation and M&E communities<br>✓ Prepare and disseminate findings at the local level to participants in the evaluation and their communities. | ✓ Disseminate recommendations to relevant actors at the Implementing Entities (i.e. M&E managers, learning officers, program managers, and others)<br>✓ Support the AF-TERG in the dissemination of the results at the community level. |

# ANNEX 2. Decision Tree Based on Data Quality and Availability




Source: AF-TERG, Cekan and Spearman, 2020.

# ANNEX 3. Additional Resources

**The AF-TERG offers a variety of resources related to its ex post evaluations:**

- The AF-TERG's Ex Post Project Sustainability Evaluation Phase I Report (2021) provides general background on ex post evaluation in development projects and describes the development of the approach to evaluation Fund projects following their completion.
- AF-TERG's webpage dedicated to the Ex Post Evaluations includes summaries of its first two pilot evaluations.
- Training material for ex post pilots used for the training of evaluators and national partners before the field work includes sample materials used in the pilots and handouts on methods.
- The Adaptation Fund's Strategic Results Framework (Amended in March 2019), is a valuable reference for strategic outcomes and outcome indicators for the Adaptation Fund.

**External resources on ex post evaluation include the following:**

- The 2019 OECD DAC publication "Better Criteria for Better Evaluation" provides additional description of elements of sustainability. https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf
- The 2019 WHO manual "The project has ended but we can still learn from it." Is a good example of technical guidance from a funding agency on how to conduct post-project evaluations.
- The 2016 publication Sustained Emerging Impact Evaluation (SEIE) by Jindra Cekan et al provides a helpful overview of the ex post approach for both evaluators and those managing evaluations.
- The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has published Overview of the Ex-post Evaluation System, which is an extensive reference on ex post evaluation from a bilateral donor perspective.

**External resources on methods that can be used in ex post evaluations include the following:**

- Better Evaluation. Contribution Analysis.

- Mountain A., 2008. Participatory Impact Pathways Analysis. Better Evaluation
- OECD DAC. 2019. Better Criteria for Better Evaluation.
- Serrat O. 2009. Most Significant Change. Better Evaluation.
- Schoonmaker Freudeberger K. 1999. Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal. A manual for CRS field workers and partners. Catholic Relief Services, Maryland.
- Wilson-Grau, R. 2021. Outcome Harvesting. Better Evaluation
- World Bank. Propensity Score Matching.
- Zivets, L. and Cekan, J. Evaluability Checklists. Valuing Voices