Technical Evaluation Reference Group
ADAPTATION FUND

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Evaluation of the Processes and Systems supporting Governance for enhanced performance of the Adaptation Fund (G/PS Evaluation)

Led and coordinated by the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund

Inception Report

Agulhas Applied Knowledge

3rd October 2025

Index

Abbreviations

AF	Adaptation Fund
AFB	Adaptation Fund Board
AFB.44	The 44th Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (April 2025)
AF-TERG	Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund
AF-CSO	Adaptation Fund – Civil Society Organization
AP	Accreditation Panel
CE	Comprehensive Evaluation
CIF	Climate Investment Funds
CMA	Conference of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
CMP	Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Procol
COI	Conflict of Interest
EAG	Evaluation Advisory Group
EDA	Enhanced Direct Access
EFC	Ethics and Finance Committee
ESP	Environmental and Social Policy
ET	Evaluation Team
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GGA	Global Goal on Adaptation
G/PS	Governance Processes and Systems
IE	Implementing Entity
KII	Key Informant Interview
LLA	Locally Led Adaptation
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MIE	Multilateral Implementing Entity
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
NCQG	New Collective Quantified Goal
NIE	National Implementing Entity

OCA	Organizational Capability Assessment
OE	Overall Evaluation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
PPRC	Project and Programme Review Committee
ToR	Terms of Reference
QA	Quality Assurance
RBM	Results-Based Management
RM	Resource Mobilization
SNIE	Smaller National Implementing Entity
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Glossary

Governance systems	The formal and informal structures through which authority, accountability, decision making and oversight are organized. In short, who holds authority and how is it structured?
Governance processes	The mechanisms, activities and practices through which governance systems function. In short, how are decisions made, implemented and monitored?
Governance resources	The inputs and assets needed to design, operate and sustain governance systems and processes. In short, what capacities, assets and enablers make governance possible?

1. Introduction

The Governance, Processes, and Systems (G/PS) evaluation is being launched at a critical juncture for the Adaptation Fund (AF), as the Fund adapts to both internal strategy shifts and the rapidly changing global climate finance context. Established under the Kyoto Protocol and now operating in alignment with the Paris Agreement, the AF is mandated to finance adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts, with a distinct emphasis on locally led adaptation and direct access modalities. As the Fund faces increasing demand and greater operational complexity in the climate finance landscape, it remains committed to meeting the adaptation needs of the most vulnerable, while continually aligning with evolving governance standards and stakeholder expectations.

In recognition of the vital role that institutional architecture plays in the effectiveness of climate finance delivery, the AF Board has commissioned an evaluation focusing on the Fund's governance structures (G/PS), decision-making processes, and operational systems as a strategic input for forward planning (Decision B.40/72, March 2023). Overseen and managed by the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG), this evaluation will critically assess how the Fund's formal and informal governance, risk management, oversight mechanisms, resource allocation systems, and policy adaptation processes enable or constrain its mandate delivery. The G/PS evaluation is designed to provide actionable insights into the alignment, effectiveness, and efficiency of these systems across macro (governance and oversight), meso (institutional and operational performance), and micro (project cycle) levels, with particular attention to lessons learned since the last comprehensive evaluation and during the implementation of Fund's Second Medium-Term Strategy (MTS2).

This evaluation is a key component of the Fund's broader learning and accountability agenda, complementing the ongoing Comprehensive Evaluation (CE) and the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of MTS2. Close coordination with these parallel processes will ensure methodological coherence, maximize resource efficiencies, and reduce stakeholder engagement fatigue. Methodologically, the G/PS evaluation will employ a blend of documentary analysis and stakeholder consultation, drawing on the Fund's 2023 Evaluation Policy, which prioritizes credibility, impartiality, equity, and transparency in all evaluative processes.

2. Background

To provide context and set the scene for this evaluation, it is important that this inception report begins by outlining the Fund's mandate and formal governance arrangements. It then highlights how the Fund responds to an evolving context through its readiness programme, Medium-Term Strategies, streamlined accreditation process, and country caps. Finally, it briefly revisits key findings from previous evaluations.

Please note upfront that this evaluation will not consider the AF Board structure, AF Board Secretariat structure and business model, and AF-TERG role and effectiveness. These are being covered by other evaluations or processes and are out of scope for this evaluation.

2.1 The Adaptation Fund mandate

The role and mandate of the Adaptation Fund is more relevant and important than ever. While the AF´s mandate is "to assist developing country Parties to the Kyoto Protocol that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change in meeting the costs of adaptation, by financing concrete adaptation projects and programmes that are country driven and based on the needs, views and priorities of eligible Parties", since 2019, the Fund has been formally designated to serve the Paris Agreement, providing adaptation finance and technical assistance to developing countries. With an approved portfolio exceeding USD 1 billion, the Fund continues to play a central role in addressing urgent adaptation needs while strengthening country ownership and institutional capacity. COP29 reinforced the Fund's importance by establishing a high-level adaptation dialogue and committing to a tripling of climate finance by 2035. However, developing countries have emphasized the need for more robust governance, transparency, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that adaptation commitments translate into tangible results on the ground.[1]

The MTS2 (2023-2027)[2] "builds on the Fund's achievements and experience with implementing the first MTS[3] with the aim to further consolidate the Fund's comparative advantage and optimize its impact. It does so by continuing the strategic focus on financing adaptation action, innovation and learning and sharing, while increasing the ambition under each of these strategic pillars, strengthening the linkage and synergies between them, and further introducing a crosscutting strategic emphasis on promoting locally based and locally led adaptation as well as on scaling up funded activities and results".[4]

Reviewing the processes and systems that underpin the governance of the AF is critical for improving the Fund's effectiveness and efficiency in a rapidly evolving climate finance landscape. At COP29 (Baku, 2024), parties reached a milestone agreement on a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance, setting a target of at least $1.3 trillion annually by 2035, with $300 billion specifically allocated for developing countries. The Baku Adaptation Roadmap and a high-level dialogue on adaptation were also launched to sustain political momentum and operationalize the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) framework agreed at COP28, which sets clear thematic focus areas and targets for all countries. However, concerns remain over the sufficiency and accessibility of financial commitments, particularly for the most vulnerable countries.[5] The recent SB62 sessions in Bonn have focused on operationalizing commitments, with discussions centred on improving the governance, transparency, and effectiveness of adaptation finance flows.

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[1] UNFCCC (2025) 62nd Sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB 62), link.

[2] Medium-Term Strategy 2023-2027, The Adaptation Fund, 2022, link.

[3] Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2022, The Adaptation Fund, 2018, link.

[4] Medium-Term Strategy 2023-2027, The Adaptation Fund, 2022, link.

[5] Adaptation Outcomes at COP29: Key Agreements and Progress on Climate Resilience, 2024, link; Summary report, 11–22 November 2024, UN Climate Change Conference Baku - November 2024; IISD, link.

Governance

The Fund is supervised and managed by the AF Board (the Board), which is accountable to the Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Procol (CMP) and since 2019, the Conference of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA). The Board is responsible for strategic oversight of projects and programmes, in accordance with its overarching Strategic Results Framework for the Adaptation Fund and the Adaptation Fund Level Effectiveness and Efficiency Results Framework, to support the Strategic Priorities, Policies, and Guidelines of the Adaptation Fund. The Board has two committees: the Ethics and Finance Committee (EFC), and the Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC).

In 2015, the Board revised its Terms of Reference, assigning the PPRC responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the progress of projects and programmes in addition to reviewing proposals, while the EFC retained responsibility for fund-level oversight.[6] In 2018, the EFC's mandate was expanded to include oversight of the newly established AF-TERG, making it responsible for advising the Board on conflict of interest, ethics, finance, fund and portfolio monitoring, and audit.[7]

The PPRC's workload has grown overtime, driven by a rising number of proposals for review and the introduction of policies and operational guidance for new funding windows under the 2018–2022 MTS. This workload was further amplified by the introduction of rolling submissions, first piloted for selected funding windows in 2022 (Decision B.39/53) and later extended to all windows in 2023 (Decision B.40/59). Recognizing that the substantially expanded agendas of PPRC meetings, accompanied by an increase in the volume of supporting documents, often led to the postponement of agenda items, the Board has continued to consider ways to adapt organizational processes to better support the PPRC's work.[8] Most recently, in 2024, policies on post-approval changes were revised to delegate routine requests (such as small budget reallocations or no-cost extensions) to the Secretariat.[9]

Accreditation of Implementing Entities (national, regional, multilateral) is managed by an Accreditation Panel (AP) that assesses fiduciary, environmental, and social standards. The AP provides recommendations to the Board regarding the accreditation of new Implementing Entities (IEs) and the suspension, cancellation, or re-accreditation of IEs already accredited. The Panel has also proposed recommendations to the Board regarding systems and processes for accreditation, for example, proposed revisions to the application form to include upfront questions about entity size (e.g., number of staff, portfolio size) to streamline identification of the appropriate accreditation modality.[10]

The Board is supported by a dedicated Secretariat – the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat (AFB Secretariat) – hosted administratively by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and housed within the

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[6] Adaptation Fund (2015) Project and Programme Review Committee Terms of Reference, link.
[7] Adaptation Fund (2018) Ethics and Finance Committee Terms of Reference, link
[8] Adaptation Fund (April 2022) Options for further supporting the work of the project and programme review committee, link; Adaptation Fund (October 2022) Options for further supporting the work of the project and programme committee, link; Adaptation Fund (March 2023) Options for further supporting the work of the project and programme review committee: Lessons from the pilot rolling basis submission processes and recommendations.
[9] Adaptation Fund (2025) OPG Annex 7: Policy on Project Post-Approval Requests for Changes in Projects/Programmes
[10] Adaptation Fund (2022) Lessons learned: Adaptation Fund's streamlined accreditation process, link.

World Bank Group as a dedicated and functionally independent unit. The Secretariat provides day-to-day support to the Board, its committees, and panels, including initial screening and technical review of project and programme proposals, policy development, and operational guidance. The Secretariat has also been central in piloting and institutionalizing changes to operational processes and systems. For example, it has developed guidance documents for new funding windows under the MTS (2018–2022), operationalized the shift to rolling submissions (2020–2023), and introduced updated templates for project and programme proposals to align with revised environmental and social safeguards and gender policies.

The AF-TERG, established in 2018, is an independent evaluation advisory group accountable to the Board. The day-to-day operations of the AF-TERG are supported by the AF-TERG Secretariat. AF-TERG regularly produces syntheses of project final evaluations, drawing out performance trends, lessons, and recommendations across the portfolio. At the thematic level, the AF-TERG has carried out studies on cross-cutting issues, including evaluations on readiness and capacity-building programmes (2022), innovation (2023), and scaling-up grants (2023). Findings from these thematic evaluations have been provided to the Board and integrated into discussions on Fund policies and programming. AF-TERG also conducts ex-post evaluations to support learning and accountability, and to understand projects' impact over time, for example in the context of Ecuador (2022) and Argentina (2023).

The World Bank serves as the Trustee of the AF, administering contributions, and making transfers to accredited IEs at the instruction of the Board. The Trustee provides financial reporting on the status of the Trust Fund, including regular updates to the Board on contributions, investment income, and disbursements. The Trustee has also been involved in process and system improvements that strengthen Fund operations.[11]

2.2 Responding to evolving context

The Fund's policy and strategy-making processes and operational systems have evolved to support effective delivery of the Fund's mandate in response to rising adaptation needs and a shifting climate finance landscape. Direct Access remains a cornerstone of the Fund's approach. The AF's Readiness Programme was formally launched in May 2014 in response to recognized gaps in countries' ability to access adaptation finance under the Fund, especially via the Direct Access modality. The programme's initial objectives were: (i) increasing the preparedness of National Implementing Entities (NIEs) seeking accreditation; and (ii) increasing the number of high-quality proposals submitted to the Board once entities are accredited. At its twenty-seventh meeting the Board decided to institutionalize the Readiness Programme and make it a more permanent feature of the Fund through Decision B.27/38. Over time, the programme's framework, objectives, and processes have been refined through a series of decision-making points. At its twenty-ninth meeting, the Board approved the framework for the Readiness

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[11] TANGO International in association with the Overseas Development Institute. 2015. First Phase Independent Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Programme and requested the Secretariat to take further steps to integrate the Readiness Programme into the AF work plan and budget.

By raising country caps while capping multilateral implementing entity access at 50% of resources, the Fund has strengthened incentives for countries to pursue direct access accreditation and funding through the locally led adaptation window. In 2021, the Board doubled the funding cap per country from US$10 million to US$20 million, allowing countries to access more funding through a second NIE. Building on its Direct Access model, the Fund also expanded its Enhanced Direct Access (EDA) window into a Single-Country LLA modality at AFB-42 in April 2024. In 2025, the country resource cap was further increased to US$40 million and the maximum project size for single-country projects was increased from US$10 million to US$25 million. These decisions aim to support the Fund's goal of tripling annual outflows by 2030, as outlined in the NCQG decision.

The AF has also instilled a process for increasing access for smaller National Implementing Entities (SNIEs) with limited capacity. First approved at the twenty-third Board meeting in 2014, the Streamlined Accreditation Process includes mitigating measures and practices suited to SNIE's size, without exposing the Fund to additional risk. The streamlined approach has enabled SNIEs to directly access climate finance, strengthened their institutional capacities in areas such as audits, project management, safeguards, gender, and anti-money laundering, and positioned them to access other funding sources, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Additionally, entities already accredited by the GCF within the last four years can benefit from a fast-track option, reducing duplication of effort.[12]

To extend access further beyond accredited entities, the Fund has developed a range of funding windows and supporting policies and processes for locally led adaptation. The MTS2 introduces locally based and locally led adaptation (LLA) as a new crosscutting theme across the Fund's pillars, based on its experience with the direct access and enhanced direct access modalities. In 2024 the Fund launched a Global LLA Aggregator Programme, where accredited Implementing Entities act as intermediaries to channel funds to non-accredited local actors. At AFB.44 in April 2025, the Board approved a new Regional LLA funding window, enabling regional Implementing Entities to manage decisions on regional, multisector adaptation priorities. This window further decentralizes financial authority, enabling sub-national and cross-border institutions to tailor adaptation initiatives to regional realities and development contexts.

The Adaptation Fund has progressively mainstreamed gender considerations into its governance, review and monitoring processes. In 2016, the Fund adopted a Gender Policy and Action Plan, which provides a framework for integrating gender throughout its projects and programs. The policy requires accredited implementing entities to assess gender-related risks and opportunities, conduct gender analyses, and apply gender-responsive indicators in project design and implementation. When the updated Gender Policy and Action Plan were presented to the Board (B.35–36), the package explicitly

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[12] Adaptation Fund (2022) Lessons Learned: Adaptation Fund's streamlined accreditation process.

called for revisions to operational policies, templates, and guidance so that IEs would "systematically report on gender from the project outset."[13] This requirement was embedded in tools such as the revised Request for Funding template, review criteria, and Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) guidance. The Secretariat incorporated these updates into reporting practices, and the 2022 Gender Guidance highlights that the Project Performance Report (PPR) template, revised in 2019, now includes a dedicated section for Gender Policy compliance and results tracking.[14]

The Fund also provides capacity building, guidance, and knowledge-sharing on gender-responsive approaches to strengthen NIE capacities and ensure compliance with AF policies. For example, the Readiness Programme includes Technical Assistance (TA) Grants for ESP and Gender Policy to help NIEs build their capacity to address and manage environmental and social as well as gender associated risks within their projects/programmes in accordance with the Fund's ESP and Gender Policy. The secretariat has also explored intersectional approaches to gender mainstreaming in adaptation through pilots and knowledge sharing.

2.3 Previous evaluation findings

Several evaluations have collectively shaped the understanding of the Fund's operational processes and governance systems. The first overall evaluation (OE), completed over two phases, assessed the Fund's performance from its inception through to March 2017. The first phase involved a **process evaluation** focused on the Fund's resource mobilization and allocation, decision-making, the project/programme cycle, and knowledge management.

The first OE recognised the Fund's pioneering direct access modality, which empowered national institutions in developing countries to access adaptation finance directly, thereby enhancing country ownership and capacity-building. The Fund's approach to accreditation and project approval was seen as innovative, contributing to the broader climate finance landscape. However, the evaluation also identified notable challenges, particularly regarding the efficiency and timeliness of decision-making. Project approval and disbursement processes were often delayed due to complex review procedures and limited Secretariat resources. Furthermore, the Fund's reliance on a relatively narrow pool of implementing entities, especially NIEs, constrained its ability to scale and diversify its portfolio, with MIEs receiving a larger share of funding.[15]

The first OE also found the AF had made several substantial changes to its main processes, including the adoption of social and environmental standards, and improvements in communicating the accreditation process. The evaluation found that these changes were not only appropriate and supporting effectiveness but also demonstrated **the Fund's ability to recognize shortcomings and identify solutions to enhance**

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[13] Adaptation Fund (2021) Proposal for the Updated Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan of the Adaptation Fund, link.
[14] Adaptation Fund (2022) Updated Gender Guidance Document for Implementing Entities on Compliance with the Adaptation Fund Gender Policy, link.
[15] Adaptation Fund (2018) First Overall Evaluation of the Fund, link.

organizational processes. The evaluation noted that AF decision-making has been aided by the Secretariat and the committees, though a lack of institutional memory due to term limits on committees and on the Board was cited as a source of inefficiency. The evaluation found the EFC effectively facilitated Board decision-making on complex issues and was crucial in developing the AF's ESP.

The first OE found the procedures and protocols guiding Board decision-making have been steadily elaborated over time, improving clarity and effectiveness of decision-making processes. The evaluation highlighted that protocols for inter-sessional working groups and decisions allowed the Board sufficient flexibility to address urgent issues between meetings, noting further revisions to protocols 'will certainly be made in response to changing circumstances, lessons learnt, or evolving standards/best practices.'[16] The current Rules and Procedures of the Board dictate that intersessional decisions may occur on an extraordinary basis on the judgement of the Chair and Vice Chair. A review of recent intersessional decisions finds that the volume of decisions fluctuates. On average 20 intersessional decisions were taken between the last four Board meetings.[17] While the most common by far is the approval of no-cost extensions, other decisions vary, ranging from approving fast-tracked accreditation applications, changes to project pilot sites, revising project results frameworks, changes in Executing Entity, and extending grace periods for re-accreditation.

The OE found that both formal opportunities for civil society to speak at Board meetings and informal opportunities to contribute to debate and influence decisions help strengthen transparency and accountability. The evaluation also found several pathways for civil society to inform and participate in Board decision-making, with 74% of surveyed evaluation respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that civil society actors engage in and meaningfully influence the AF's main processes. Civil society input was found to be particularly valuable for processes related to resource mobilization and knowledge management.

Governance-related challenges were highlighted in the rapid evaluation conducted in 2023. Developed as the first phase of the ongoing Comprehensive Evaluation of the Fund, the rapid evaluation aimed to both synthesize findings from existing evidence and map evaluative knowledge gaps. The Board's inclusive structure, while ensuring broad representation, sometimes results in cumbersome decision-making and slower responses to emerging needs. The need for improved systematization of readiness work and capacity-building was also noted, as locally led adaptation approaches can be hampered by weak local capacities and insufficient support structures.[18] Opportunities for improvement, as identified in evaluations and other documents such as the MTS2 proposal and Implementation Reports, include simplifying project review cycles, strengthening Secretariat support, and investing in knowledge management systems. External reviews and the UNFCCC's fourth review of the Fund have commended

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[16] TANGO International in association with the Overseas Development Institute. 2015. First Phase Independent Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
[17] Adaptation Fund (2025) Intersessional Decisions, link
[18] Adaptation Fund (2023) Rapid evaluation of the Adaptation Fund, link.

its transparency and stakeholder engagement but echoed concerns about operational bottlenecks and the need for greater strategic focus.[19]

The rapid evaluation and other planning documents have also noted the evolution of governance systems following the decision to transition the Fund to exclusively serve the Paris Agreement. In this context, the Board has requested the Secretariat and independent experts to consider what governance features and functions would best enable it to serve the Paris Agreement, and to prepare draft amendments to key documents, including the Memorandum of Understanding on Secretariat services, the Rules of Procedure, the Operational Policies and Guidelines for Parties to Access Resources from the Adaptation Fund, and the Strategic Priorities, Policies and Guidelines.[20]

There remain important gaps in the level of evidence around how the Fund's governance systems and processes support its mandate. Previous evaluations, such as the MTR of MTS1, reviewed the Fund's operational policies and guidelines and assessed the MTR's suitability for guiding governance, but have not provided a comprehensive review of processes, systems and decision-making mechanisms underpinning the Fund's core functions. The rapid evaluation highlighted clear evidence gaps around how governance systems support agility and adoptability, how Board decisions and feedback loops operate across governance levels, and the timeliness and efficiency of decision-making. The approach paper for the G/PS evaluation, shared at AFB.44 in April 2025, similarly notes that many of the Fund's governance systems and processes have not been systematically evaluated to date. While clarity around resource allocation criteria has improved over time, resource mobilization has remained a consistent gap. The Rapid Evaluation found that while there is a relatively well-developed framework of core indicators and strategic results, gaps and inconsistencies remain in how data is collected, verified, and used across the portfolio.

3. Purpose and scope of the G/PS Evaluation

3.1 Purpose and objectives

The overarching purpose of this G/PS Evaluation is to determine the strengths and areas for improvement in the Fund's governance-related processes and systems. This evaluation is designed to support learning and enhancement of the Fund's performance, focusing on what works well, what needs improvement, and providing lessons and recommendations for future enhancements. Importantly, the G/PS evaluation is not intended as an accountability tool, but rather to inform and improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of governance processes within the Fund.

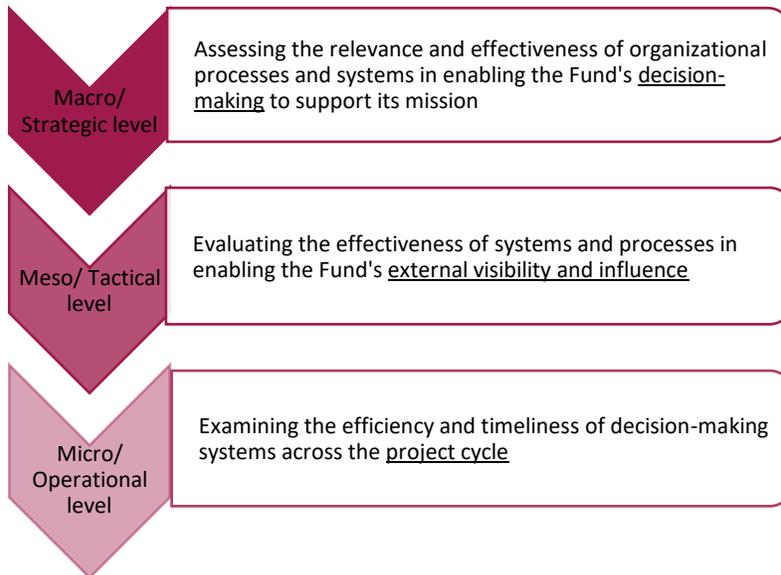The G/PS Evaluation will also serve as a building block for the independent Comprehensive Evaluation (CE) of the Fund, expected to be completed by October 2026. It therefore serves three distinct objectives

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[19] UNFCCC (2022) Fourth review of the Adaptation Fund, link
[20] Adaptation Fund (2025) Arrangements for the Transition of the Adaptation Fund to Exclusively Serve the Paris Agreement link,

aligned with the three levels of the ongoing CE. The evaluation dimensions, questions and their respective sub-questions are grouped into the three analytical levels.

Figure 1: Evaluation Objectives at Macro, Meso and Micro Levels

Macro/ Strategic level — Assessing the relevance and effectiveness of organizational processes and systems in enabling the Fund's decision-making to support its mission

Meso/ Tactical level — Evaluating the effectiveness of systems and processes in enabling the Fund's external visibility and influence

Micro/ Operational level — Examining the efficiency and timeliness of decision-making systems across the project cycle

Findings from the G/PS evaluation will inform the CE, providing foundational evidence and analysis on how governance processes and systems contribute to the Fund's overall performance and fulfilment of its mission. The evaluation will also support strategic decision-making, with recommendations and lessons informing the Board and its committees as they consider the Fund's future strategic direction and operational improvements, including development of the Fund's next medium-term strategy (MTS3).

3.2 Scope

The evaluation will cover the period from April 2017 to December 2025, building on the first overall evaluation of the AF that concluded in March 2017. This timeframe allows for consideration of the Fund's evolution in the context of the Paris Agreement transition and the evolving climate adaptation finance landscape.

The evaluation will focus on:

● **Governance systems** - the formal and informal structures through which authority, accountability, decision making and oversight are organized. In short, who holds authority and how is it structured?[21]

● **Governance processes** - the mechanisms, activities and practices through which governance systems function. In short, how are decisions made, implemented and monitored?

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[21] The evaluation will not consider structures or decision-making within the mandate of the CMP/CMA.

- **Governance resources** - the inputs and assets needed to design, operate and sustain governance systems and processes. In short, what is required to make governance possible?

Importantly, this evaluation will not consider the AF Board structure, AF Board Secretariat structure and business model, and AF-TERG role and effectiveness. This means that the ET will not do a deep dive into the capacity or structure of any one of the main governance bodies of the AF including AF-TERG. However, the ET can and will consider how the functional units/governance structures come together to support the effectiveness of the Fund's governance. These are being covered elsewhere and are out of scope for this evaluation.

The evaluation will be guided by the three objectives set out above at the macro, meso and micro levels, supported by a series of targeted questions and sub-questions (see our Evaluation Matrix on p17). The evaluation questions and sub-questions have been developed in collaboration with AF-TERG

To ensure there is clarity about what is in scope for the three focus areas (systems, processes and resources), the Evaluation Team (ET) developed an approved subset of evaluation components (the components of the systems, processes and resources) and working questions to guide the inquiry process for each component. These have been incorporated/referenced in the current evaluation matrix under in-scope prompt questions. Please see Annex 2 for a full current breakdown. [22]

Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) will be systematically integrated into the evaluation, recognizing their critical role in ensuring that the Fund's governance arrangements are inclusive, accessible, and equitable for all stakeholders, including women, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized groups. The assessment will examine the extent to which GESI considerations are embedded across policies, practices, participation mechanisms, and decision-making processes, analyzing not only formal requirements but also the practical effectiveness of these measures in promoting representation and influence in governance.

3.3   Changes to the Terms of Reference

While no fundamental changes have been made to the original Terms of Reference (ToR) that would alter the scope or objectives of the G/PS Evaluation, several refinements and operational decisions have been agreed with the AF-TERG relating to scope, optimizing the timeline and prioritization.

- **Prioritization:** The ToR included a list of potential evaluation questions to be reviewed and prioritized during inception. We have used this as the basis for the evaluation matrix (see p.21), and following feedback from AF-TERG reconciled the matrix against the Board approach paper. The matrix clearly aligns with the three evaluation dimensions: macro, meso and micro, as set out in the ToR and also links directly to the in-scope process and systems in Annex 2.

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[22] The ET will continue to coordinate with the CE to minimize duplication and maximize synergies. The ET have also lightly integrated a relational focus into the prompt questions to ensure it can capture these dimensions if relevant.

- **Overlap with out-of-scope areas:** The ToR explicitly excluded assessment of the Board structure, the AFB Secretariat structure and business model, and the AF-TERG role and effectiveness. During the inception phase, the team began to clarify[23] with the AF-TERG and Evaluation Advisory Group (EAG) how dependencies or overlaps will be managed if they emerge during the evaluation. The ET anticipates it will note any relevant data that emerges on the role and effectiveness of AF-TERG (e.g., from key informant interviews and sense making workshops) and share this with the team or individual conducting the forthcoming peer review of the AF-TERG, in line with the ToR's guidance to avoid duplication and maintain focus on the agreed scope.
- **Optimizing the timeline:** The ToR allocated relatively limited time for implementing the evaluation, especially given the complexity of stakeholder engagement and the need to coordinate with other ongoing evaluations (e.g. the CE and MTR of MTS2). Data collection occurs over a period which includes a Board meeting and COP. The report drafting then also falls over the holiday period, which limits availability for both the client and evaluation teams. During inception the team revisited the timeline with AF-TERG and developed a critical path analysis (Annex 3). The adjusted timeline includes space to reflect on progress, actively manage risks (see table 7) and deliver an early draft report to the Board in March.

3.4   Audience and stakeholders for the G/PS Evaluation

The main audiences for the G/PS evaluation are the AF Board, the Board Secretariat, and AF-TERG. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of the G/PS evaluation will be formally presented to the Board and will inform policy decisions, strategic adjustments, and future directions for the Fund's governance and operations. The Board Secretariat, which supports the Board's work and implements Board decisions, will be a direct user of the evaluation. The AF-TERG, which commissioned and will oversee the evaluation, will support the interpretation of findings to support broader evaluative work, notably the CE, and will help to ensure the integration of findings and recommendations into future Fund activities. The stakeholder analysis and breakdown of priority for the G/PS can be found in Annex 1.

The evaluation will also be made available to broader stakeholders, including donors, Implementing and Executing Entities, recipient governments, civil society groups, and other climate funds. These groups may use the report to inform their interactions with the Fund and to integrate lessons learned into their own adaptation financing or implementation work. The broader adaptation finance community, including multilaterals and partners, may also benefit from shared insights on efficient governance systems and processes, driving cross institutional learning.

3.5   Linkages with other evaluations

Throughout the evaluation, our team will work closely with the AF-TERG to ensure the G/PS evaluation dovetails with and complements the wider CE taking place in 2025/26, recognizing that the **G/PS will serve as a key building block for the CE** (please see Figure 2 below). The team will also work with the AF-

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[23] In inaugural meeting with EAG on Monday 22nd September 2025.

TERG to a) coordinate with other evaluative efforts and analytical work feeding into the CE, including the MTR of MTS2, and b) draw on other evaluative work conducted by the AF-TERG, including:

- The rapid evaluation of the Adaptation Fund (2023) link.
- Thematic evaluations on innovation (2023) link, scalability, and accreditation (forthcoming)
- Rapid evaluation of the readiness programme (forthcoming)

Our approach will emphasize **methodological compatibility** and, where possible, **process synergy** between the G/PS, the CE and MTR of MTS2, ensuring data collection is complementary across the suite of evaluations. This will enable the team to provide critical insights for the CE and identify areas for deeper exploration. By coordinating timelines, this approach will integrate available evidence—including emerging findings and data from AF-TERG's evaluative work—into the G/PS, allowing it to deliver summative insights that can serve as preparatory inputs for the CE.

Regular coordination meetings and sharing of emerging findings with the CE and MTR teams will be established throughout the evaluation process, enabling methodological alignment, evidence triangulation, and mutual reinforcement of conclusions and recommendations. This approach ensures that the G/PS evaluation does not duplicate efforts but rather complements and enhances the robustness of the overall strategic review of the Fund. The workplan on p.30 shares the reflection points and as discussed in more detail in that section, the team will engage in a sensemaking process in early 2026 with the other two evaluation teams.

Figure 2: Situating the G/PS evaluation with MTS and CE[24]
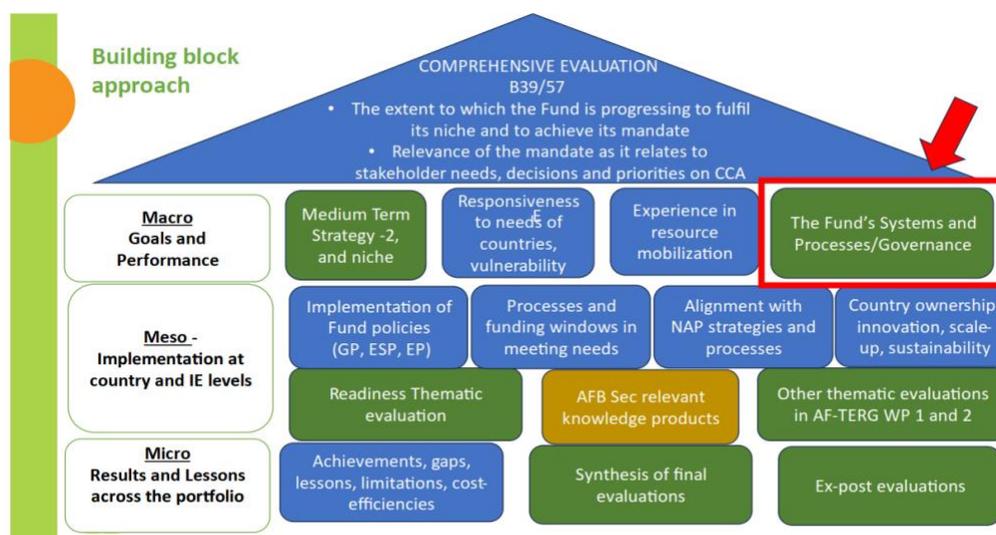
Note: Green boxes above refer to evaluations that are contracted separately; blue boxes include issues within the contract for the Comprehensive Evaluation; brown box refers to other relevant studies from the Adaptation Fund.

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[24] Source: AF-TERG (2025), "Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of the Processes and Systems supporting Governance for enhanced performance of the Adaptation Fund (G/PS Evaluation)", p. 5.

4. Evaluation Methodology

4.1 Overarching approach

Our approach to the G/PS Evaluation is guided by the seven **Adaptation Fund Evaluation Policy principles**, which came into effect in October 2023. The approach is designed to be comprehensive, systematic, and inclusive, ensuring that the evaluation captures the full range of perspectives, evidence, and lessons relevant to the Fund's governance processes and systems.

The methodology will be **participatory and tailored to the Fund's unique governance context and objectives**, ensuring that the evaluation is not only rigorous but useful to the Adaptation Fund and its stakeholders during an intense period of decision-making and evidence-gathering around the Fund's performance and outcomes. To ensure alignment with the evaluation principles of the Adaptation Fund Evaluation Policy, the methodological approach will include the following elements:

- **Rooted in the Adaptation Fund's Evaluation Policy:** Our evaluation will closely follow the seven principles that guide evaluation at the Adaptation Fund. Specifically, our approach will be (i) relevant and responsive to the interests of all potential users; (ii) credible and robust; (iii) transparent; (iv) impartial and objective; (v) equitable and gender-sensitive; (vi) complementary to other evaluation processes; and (vii) sensitive to the complex and dynamic context in which the fund operates and adaptive to changes and challenges along the way. Our team will refer to the guidance notes for operationalizing the AF's Evaluation Policy, which we note includes guidance on evaluation principles and criteria as well as on evaluation inception reports, evaluation reporting and mid-term reviews (mainly for project-level but still relevant for reference). Our team will also be sensitive to the evaluation roles and responsibilities of different units across the Adaptation Fund. Further, the team will review Governance Processes and Systems related to GESI. Please see Table 1 and the specific Evaluation Question related to GESI - How are GESI embedded in the Fund's systems and processes?

- **Triangulated:** We recognize the significant limitations and challenges to data and information sources expected to be accessed, not only for the G/PS, but also for the CE and the MTR of MTS2. We will therefore ensure robust triangulation of data sources, including through multiple data collection methods and sources to cross-verify findings and combining quantitative (where possible) and qualitative data and insights. Throughout the evaluation process, we will also be open to meeting and sharing information (according to ethical considerations) with teams involved in other evaluative products for the Fund. This will also help close knowledge and data gaps in our respective evaluations.

- **Participatory and inclusive:** We will adopt a participatory approach, emphasizing collaboration and active involvement from AF staff, its partners, and stakeholders. This includes consultation during design, data collection, validation of findings and development of
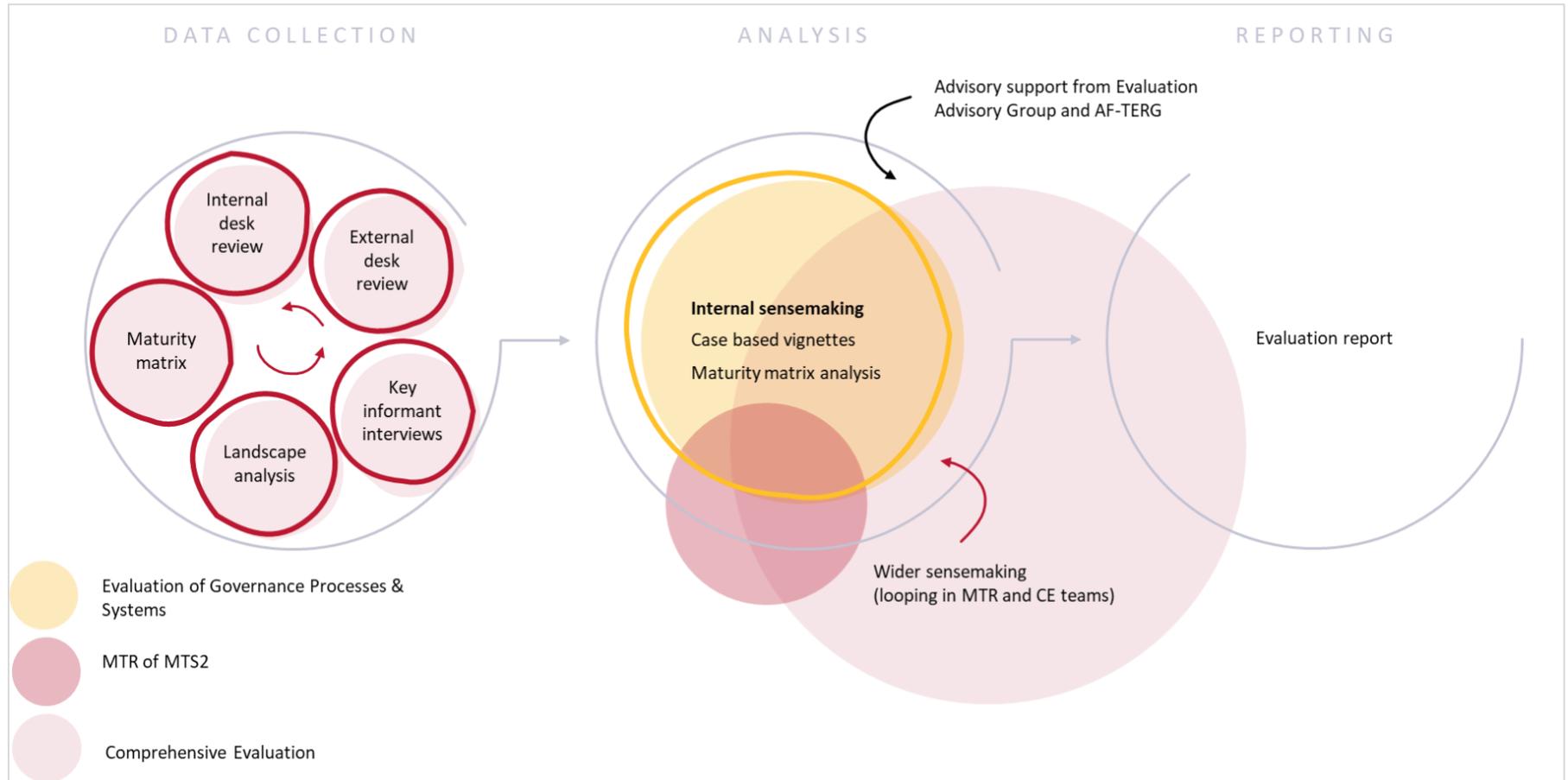
recommendations. Our participatory approach to data collection and analysis is designed to provide a more accurate representation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the processes and systems supporting governance at the Fund, by ensuring that the knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of those closest to the Fund's governance are integrated into the assessment. This participatory approach will be closely coordinated with consultations conducted by the CE and the MTR of MTS2.

● **User-focused:** Our approach is fundamentally user-oriented, aligning with the specific needs and priorities of the AF and its stakeholders as outlined in the ToRs, including the Board, Board Secretariat, AF-TERG and IEs. During the inception phase, we will engage with the main internal stakeholders and a selection of external stakeholders (e.g., funders, implementers) to understand their needs and priorities for the G/PS, and to improve our understanding of the strategy development and management decision-points that the evaluation will inform. We will ensure that the evaluation processes and outputs respond to their learning and management needs. Our user-focused approach, including regular touchpoints with the AF-TERG, will ensure that the evaluation delivers practical insights that can directly inform the CE, as well as relevant decision-making and adaptive management within the Fund.

● **Adaptive:** Our team will remain flexible to evolving contexts and emerging evidence, allowing for iterative refinements of methods and focus, working closely with the AF-TERG to identify and agree any changes to our approach.

4.2 Utility Pathway

The G/PS Evaluation is grounded in a user-focused approach. The remainder of this chapter takes the reader through how the ET will answer the EQs, our data collection methods, data analysis and sensemaking. Prior to presenting this detail, Figure 3 on the next page demonstrates the flow from data collection through to actionable recommendations in the final evaluation report that could strengthen the Fund's mission. It also shows the overlap with the MTR of MTS2 and the CE.

Figure 3: G/PS Methodology Diagram

DATA COLLECTION

Internal desk review
External desk review
Maturity matrix
Landscape analysis
Key informant interviews

ANALYSIS

Advisory support from Evaluation Advisory Group and AF-TERG

Internal sensemaking
Case based vignettes
Maturity matrix analysis

Wider sensemaking
(looping in MTR and CE teams)

REPORTING

Evaluation report

Evaluation of Governance Processes & Systems

MTR of MTS2

Comprehensive Evaluation

4.3 Evaluation questions and sub-questions

The G/PS Evaluation will answer five overarching questions and twelve sub questions, as outlined in the evaluation matrix (see Table 1, below). These questions are based on the draft evaluation questions provided in the ToR and have been further refined and finalized in consultation with AF-TERG during the inception phase.

Recognizing the broad scope of the G/PS evaluation, the ET undertook a rationalization exercise to prioritize which governance processes and systems would be evaluated. This was a collaboration process with inputs from the CE and MTR teams and from AF-TERG. Each component was assessed against three criteria: (i) its relevance to and contribution towards the Comprehensive Evaluation, (ii) potential overlap with the Comprehensive Evaluation and the MTR of MTS2, and (iii) feasibility within the time and resource constraints of the G/PS evaluation. Based on this review, components were categorized for either 'light touch' or 'in-depth' analysis, as presented in the table below.

Please see Figure 4 below and then the subsequent Figure 5 which demonstrates which (according to shading – darker is in-depth and lighter is light touch) components are in the subset. Please see Annex 2 for an approved subset of components with descriptions which have been co-created with the CE and MTR teams.

As per the glossary, the G/PS Evaluation has defined its scope in terms of:

1. Governance Systems: The formal and informal structures through which authority, accountability, decision making and oversight are organized. In short, who holds authority and how is it structured?
2. Governance Processes: The mechanisms, activities and practices through which governance systems function. In short, how are decisions made, implemented and monitored?
3. Governance Resources: The inputs and assets needed to design, operate and sustain governance systems and processes. In short, what capacities, assets and enablers make governance possible?

These are now broken down into their constituent components.

Figure 4: Subset of G/PS in scope for evaluation
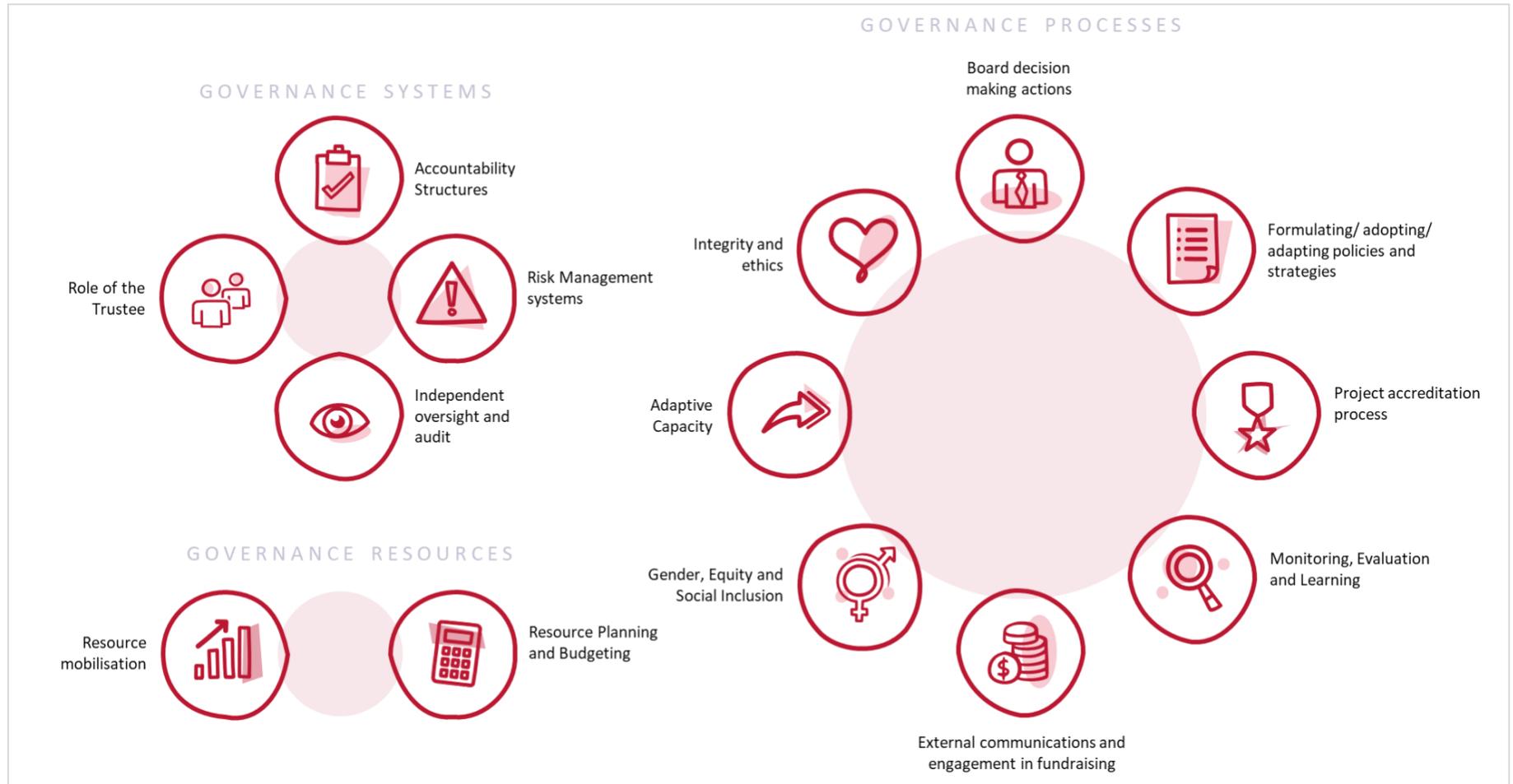
Figure 5: Distinction between light touch and in-depth
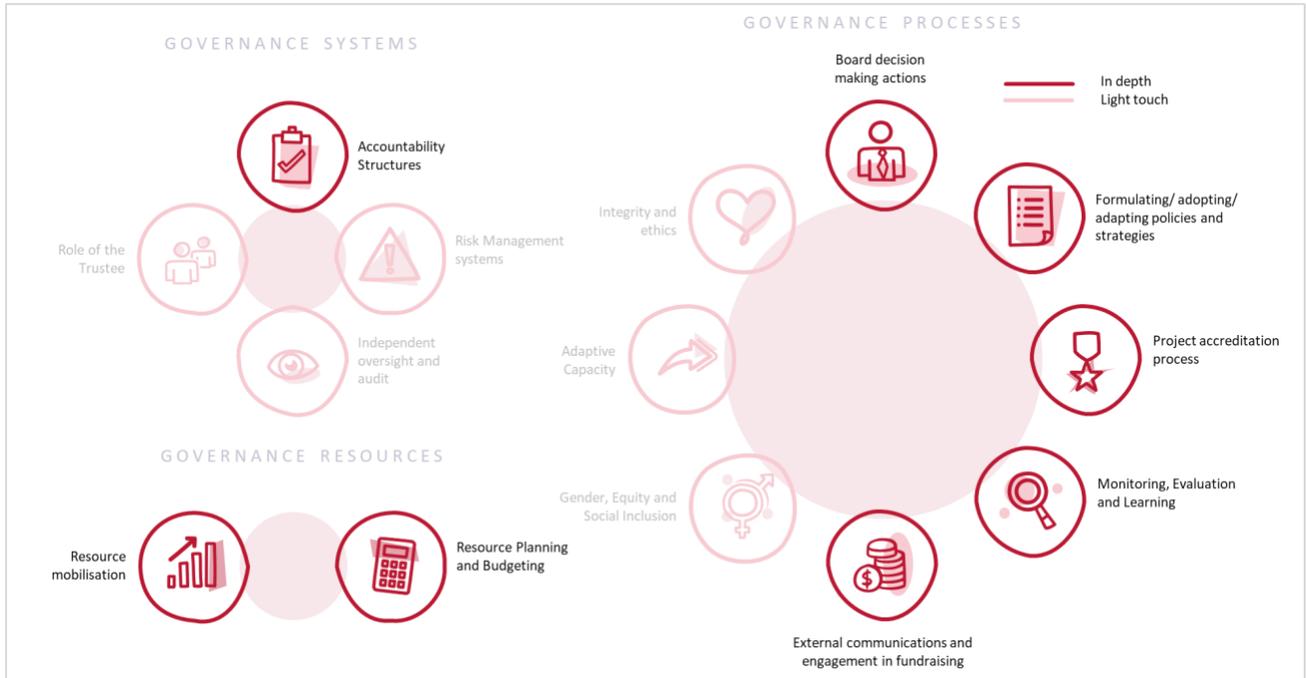
The matrix aligns each evaluation question with its respective indicators, data sources and methodological approach. In addition, the ET have included a specific mapping to the questions included in the Approach Paper[25] (AP) shared with the AF Board. Further, this iteration of the matrix includes those elements of the G/PS that are in scope for this evaluation, providing clarity to the CE and the MTR.

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[25] To note: the Qs in the AP and the ToR are the same except for the addition of 3 Qs on risks under the relevance dimension of the ToR. Nothing is therefore missing from the AP. The AP therefore has 22 sub-Qs while the ToR has 25 sub-Qs.

Table 1: G/PS Evaluation Matrix

No	Question, Board Approach Paper Q ref, evaluation criteria[26] and level of analysis				Judgement indicators	Data sources	G/PS in scope	Methodological element
1	*How, and in what ways, are the Fund's current governance processes and systems appropriate and adequate to enable effective decision making that supports the Fund's mission?*							
1a	How well do the current governance processes and systems i) reflect and support the Fund's mission, ii) reflect global best practices in climate and development finance?	Relevance

Alignment with mission and objectives | Obj 1/R | Macro | Evidence that governance systems and processes (i.e. those detailed in the list of governance processes, systems and resources[27]) align with strategic priorities of AF as outlined in MTS2. | AF Board decision papers documenting current Board decision making mechanisms (between and across category A and B stakeholders), evidence submitted, or advice given in support of decision making, (by AF Board, AF Board Secretariat, Ethics and Finance Committee, PPRC and Accreditation Panel)

Interviews with relevant staff members in relation to specific elements of in-scope governance processes, systems and resources. | Governance Systems: in-depth: accountability structures; Light-touch risk management; independent oversight and audit, role of trustee.

Governance Processes: In-depth: Board decision making processes, formulating/ adopting/adapting policies; Project approval, accreditation, reaccreditation and fund disbursement; MEL.; and external comms and engagement for fundraising.

Light-touch: GESI; adaptive capacity; and integrity and ethics.

Governance Resources: In depth - Resource planning and budgeting; and resource mobilisation. | Document review, KIIs, landscape analysis.

Use of maturity model for analysis. |
| 1b | Which governance processes and systems are most relevant to the Fund's mission and valued by decision makers? | | Obj 1/R | Macro | Evidence that governance systems and processes i.e. those detailed in the list of governance processes, systems and resources are relevant and valued by decision makers. | | | Document review, KIIs.

Use of maturity model for analysis. |
| 1c | To what extent have the Fund's governance processes and systems adapted since 2017 to: i) the evolving climate finance and negotiations space; ii) the evolving needs of Fund stakeholders? | Agility and Adaptability | Obj 1/R | Macro | Evidence of governance system and process adjustments to respond to evolving needs and requirements for international climate finance, specifically adaptation finance.

Evidence that adjustments have responded to previous evaluation recommendations.

Evidence of feedback loops for learning/ adaptive management. | | | Document review, KIIs, external desk review and landscape analysis.

Use of maturity model for analysis. |

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[26] The evaluation focus was assessed against the nine criteria in the EP. It will not evaluate for scalability or sustainability, as those are criteria intended for the evaluation of interventions. The evaluation of coherence is implicit in the discussion of relevance throughout the Evaluation matrix. The ET will also look at how the processes, systems and resources of governance cohere to deliver the Fund's mission.

No	Question, Board Approach Paper Q ref, evaluation criteria and level of analysis				Judgement indicators	Data Sources	G/PS in scope	Methodological element
2	***To what extent are the governance processes and systems effective in enabling decision making that advances the Fund's mission?***							
2a	To what extent do governance processes and systems support timely, coherent, and evidence-based decision-making?	Effectiveness	Obj 1/E	Macro	Evidence that governance processes and systems enable timely and effective decision-making. Stakeholder satisfaction with governance systems and process support for project execution.	Interviews with relevant staff members in relation to specific elements of in-scope governance processes, systems and resources.	Governance Systems: in-depth: accountability structures; Light-touch risk management; independent oversight and audit, role of trustee.	Document review, KIIs, landscape analysis. Use of maturity model for analysis.
2b	What key challenges and enablers affect how these governance processes and systems function, with particular reference to risk management and what good practices can be highlighted?	Timeliness and quality of decisions Support for evidence-based decisions	Obj 1/E	Macro	Degree to which challenges (including risks) and/or enablers are identified, documented, and managed, and how these have impacted delivery, and extent to which adaptive management has been used to address challenges and risks.	Operational-level evaluations, project proposals and results reporting, Second synthesis of Adaptation Fund final evaluations AF Board decision papers, evidence submitted in support of decision making, Results reporting, milestone achievements and timelines, management reports synthesizing progress against indicators	Governance Processes: In-depth: Board decision making processes, formulating/ adopting/adapting policies; Project approval, accreditation, reaccreditation and fund disbursement; MEL.; and external comms and engagement for fundraising. Light-touch: GESI; adaptive capacity; and integrity and ethics. Governance Resources: Resource planning and budgeting; resource mobilisation; country cap.	Document review, KIIs, external desk review, landscape analysis. Use of maturity model for analysis.

3	How effective are the processes and systems in enabling the Fund's external visibility and influence?							
3a	What internal and external factors enable or hinder the effectiveness of the Fund's governance processes and systems in supporting communication, outreach, and external visibility?	Relevance and effectiveness Visibility Resources	Obj 2/E	Meso	Degree to which governance processes and systems are enabling/ hindering the Fund's external visibility.	Interviews with relevant staff members in relation to specific elements of in-scope governance processes, systems and resources and external stakeholders, AF Strategic documents (internal and external), commissioned research, knowledge products, communication strategy	Governance Systems: In-depth: Accountability structures. Governance Processes: In-depth: Formulating/ adopting/adapting policies; and external comms and engagement for fundraising. Light-touch: GESI; adaptive capacity; and integrity and ethics.	Internal document review, KIIs, external desk review, and landscape analysis. Use of maturity model for analysis.
3b	How well do the Fund's governance processes and systems support its ability to influence key stakeholders or policy discussions at global and regional levels?	Influence	Obj 2/E	Meso	Evidence of governance processes/ systems influencing external stakeholders.		As row above plus, Governance Processes In-depth: MEL.	Internal document review, KIIs, external desk review and landscape analysis. Use of maturity model for analysis.
3c	In what ways have governance processes and systems specifically driven the Fund's communication strategies to enhance its reputation and drive resource mobilization?	Resource mobilisation	Obj 2/E	Meso	Evidence that governance processes and systems are driving external visibility, articulating the Fund's strategic niche and supporting RM.		As row above plus, Governance Resources: In-depth: Resource planning and budgeting; and resource mobilisation.	Internal document review, KIIs, external desk review and landscape analysis. Use of maturity model for analysis.

4	How efficient and timely are decision-making processes and systems across the project cycle (operations)?							
4a	To what extent do governance processes and systems support efficiency across: i) pipeline development; ii) approvals; and iii) devolved decision making as part of the project cycle?	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Obj 3/E	Micro	Evidence that funding window design, funding application approval guidance, scoring criteria, board decisions on funding, AF-TERG evaluations, knowledge products, stakeholder feedback are efficient and timely. Second synthesis of Adaptation Fund final evaluations.	Interviews with relevant staff members in relation to specific elements of in-scope governance processes, systems and resources, focus group discussions with PPCR and staff, lessons learned documents, post-closure reports, stakeholder engagement, board decisions, management response reports, results reporting, Second synthesis of Adaptation Fund final evaluations	Governance Systems: In-depth: Accountability structures. Governance Processes In-depth: Project approval, accreditation, reaccreditation and fund disbursement	Internal document review, KIIs. Use of maturity matrix for analysis.
4b	To what extent is the Fund positioned as a learning organisation, to ensure results and lessons are captured and informing future programming decisions at the level of: the AF Board; and ii) the AF Secretariat?	Design and approvals Implementation and monitoring Closure and learning	Obj 3/E	Micro	Frequency and nature of bottlenecks encountered across project cycle, and degree to which these are documented.		As row above plus, Governance Processes In-depth: Board decision making processes, formulating/ adopting/adapting policies; and MEL. Light-touch: Adaptive capacity and management	Internal document review, KIIs. Use of maturity model for analysis.
4c	Which interventions or changes to processes and systems have improved i) pipeline development; ii) approvals; and iii) devolved decision making as part of the project cycle since 2017?		Obj 3/E	Micro	Evidence of measures taken to address bottlenecks and how these inform subsequent funding cycle improvements.		As above	Internal document review, KIIs. Use of maturity model for analysis.

5	How are equity, gender and social inclusion (GESI) embedded in the Fund's systems and processes?							
5a	How have GESI requirements been designed and implemented into governance processes and systems?	NEW GESI	Obj 1/E	Macro/ Meso	Evidence of GESI considerations in minutes, guidelines, summaries. Examples of GESI-influenced funding allocations.	Lessons learned documents, post-closure reports, stakeholder engagement, board decisions, management response reports, results reporting, Second synthesis of Adaptation Fund final evaluations	Governance Processes: Light-touch: GESI	Internal document review, KIIs, external desk and landscape analysis. Use of maturity model for analysis.

**Summary review matrix key**

Levels of analysis:

Macro	
Meso	
Micro	

Evaluation criteria:

Relevance	Obj 1/R
Effectiveness	Obj 1/E
Effectiveness	Obj 2/E
Efficiency	Obj 3

4.4 Data collection methods

During the delivery stage, data collection will occur in sequence (see Figure 6 below) and will feed into the maturity model. Please see section 4.5.2 for more detail of this model and how we will be using it. Regular team meetings to share and discuss emerging insights will ensure that findings or insights derived from one methodological element can inform other approaches, allowing an iterative and adaptive approach to data collection with triangulation at its core.

Figure 6: Summary of methods and data triangulation approach
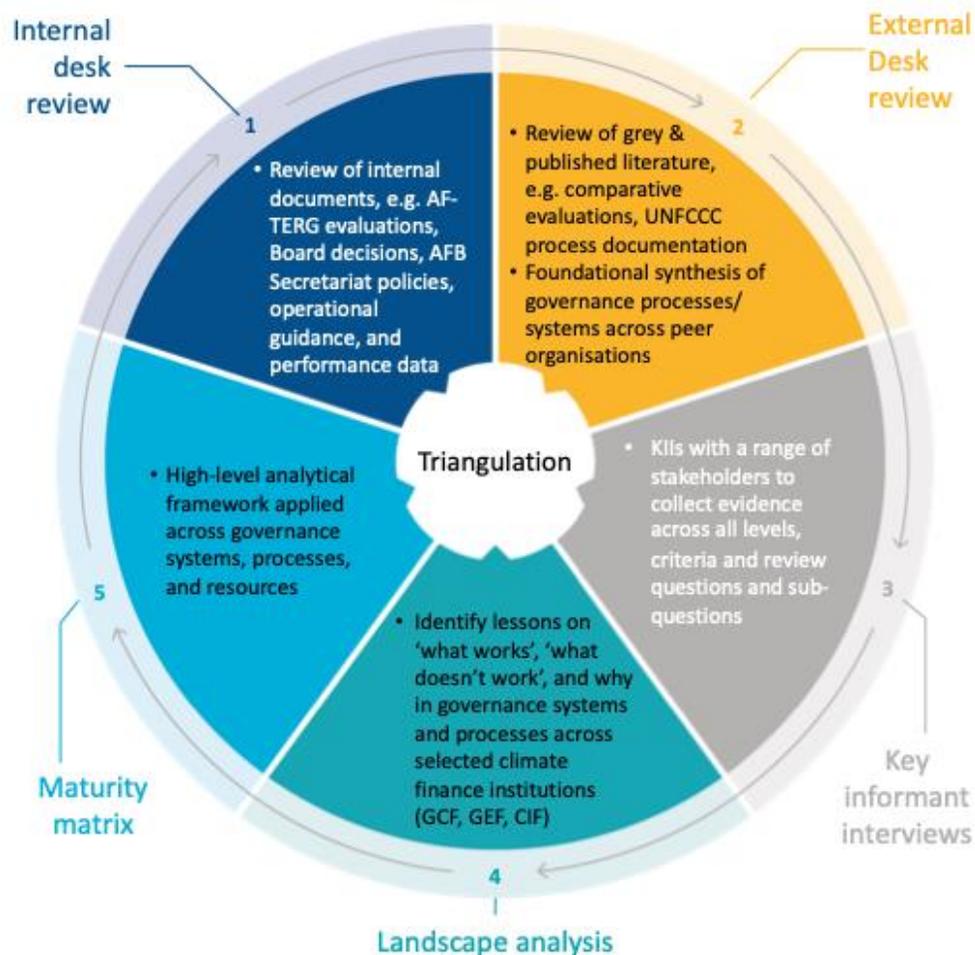
4.4.1. Desk-based document review (internal)

The team will review and extract relevant data and evidence from key Fund documents, including i) AF-TERG completed evaluations, the Fund's Evaluation Policy and Guidance Notes, and the first CE of the Fund (completed in March 2017), ii) AF-TERG planned and ongoing evaluations, including the second CE and the MTR of MTS2, iii) Board committee documents and Board decisions spanning the evaluation

period, and iv) Board Secretariat knowledge products and data such as approved funding decisions, annual performance reports and monitoring data, policies, operational guidelines, and previous evaluations. The evaluation team will work closely with the AF-TERG to identify and collect relevant documentation throughout inception and implementation. A structured evidence framework, aligned with the evaluation matrix, has been established in MAXQDA to extract and analyze relevant data.

4.4.2. Desk-based document review (external)

The team will review and extract relevant data and evidence from external sources, including grey and published literature on climate finance architecture, comparative evaluations from other climate funds with a focus on governance processes and systems, and UNFCCC process documentation relevant to the Fund's governance and Paris Agreement transition. The external desk review will serve as a foundational, broad-scope synthesis of existing governance documentation and evaluations across peer institutions, providing contextual and baseline insights that will inform the more targeted landscape analysis focused on learning and best-practice (see below). As for the internal desk review, a structured evidence framework, aligned with the evaluation matrix, has been established in MAXQDA to extract and analyze relevant data.

4.4.3. Key informant interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be held with key stakeholders across stakeholder categories A, B and C as set out in the ToR:

- **Category A stakeholders** include AF Board members and their alternates, including members of the Board's two standing committees: the EFC and the PPRC. These stakeholders are responsible for setting the Fund's strategic direction and making high-level decisions.
- **Category B stakeholders** include the AFB Secretariat, Accreditation Panel, AF-TERG and the Fund Trustee. These are the operational enablers and facilitators who implement Board decisions, manage day-to-day operations, oversee accreditation, and provide technical and fiduciary oversight.
- **Category C stakeholders** include key partners such as government representatives from recipient countries, Implementing Entities (National, Regional, and Multilateral), and Civil Society Organizations. These stakeholders are users and informants of the Fund's governance processes and systems and will contribute insights on how these systems support delivery and impact.

A purposive and snowball sampling approach will be applied to ensure representation and to capture diverse perspectives, building on an initial stakeholder mapping undertaken with AF-TERG during the inception phase. An initial list of stakeholder group priorities for interviewing is set out in Annex 1. Stakeholders who have multiple roles (e.g., those who sit in committees) will only be listed once. We will coordinate with the AF-TERG and CE/MTR teams to reduce duplication of effort and the burden of interviewees as a significant number of the people who will be listed have been/will be interviewed by them as well.

Interview protocols have been developed and tailored to the different stakeholder categories, covering the range of evaluation questions and three evaluation levels as appropriate. The protocols are designed to ensure coverage across the agreed subset of governance processes and systems in scope for the evaluation (Annex 2), prioritizing areas where qualitative insights will form a critical component of the evidence base. Interviews will be conducted remotely.

The KIIs will also complement the landscape analysis (below) by providing in-depth, context-specific insights and nuanced perspectives from stakeholders directly involved in or knowledgeable about climate finance governance systems, which will enrich and validate the findings derived from the landscape analysis's structured review of institutional practices and external positioning.

4.5   Data analysis and synthesis

Our data analysis approach will be comprehensive, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a nuanced and robust understanding.

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be triangulated and synthesized to generate insights and findings at the macro, meso and micro levels. This synthesis will provide a holistic view of how the Fund's decision-making processes and systems support the Fund's mission and performance (macro level), enabling external visibility and influence in relationship to the implementation of the Fund's strategies, policies, and processes (meso level), and supporting programming decisions across the project cycle to maximize impact (micro level). It will highlight areas of strength at all three levels, as well as areas of the Fund's processes and systems that may require further attention or adjustment. It will also draw lessons, highlight good practices and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the Fund's systems and processes within the broader climate finance landscape.

MaxQDA will be used to support systematic data coding and analysis, focused on identifying key themes, patterns, and insights relevant to the G/PS evaluation. Coding frameworks have been developed to align with the evaluation questions and sub-questions to ensure consistency in categorizing and interpreting data – from inception through to delivery and reporting.

4.5.1. Landscape analysis

The landscape analysis will identify lessons from peer organizations in both the climate finance and wider climate field. It will map and review the governance arrangements, processes and systems of these organizations that are within scope for the evaluation and agreed with AF-TERG. This will help contextualize distinctive strengths and gaps of the Fund, and act as a learning product. The intent of the landscape analysis is not to benchmark performance of the AF with other peer organizations, recognizing the unique context and mandate that each organization has, but instead to situate the AF in the wider climate-finance (and climate action) landscape. It will also dovetail with the landscape analyses being conducted by the MTR of MTS2 and the CE, ensuring complementarity across the set (see Table 2, below).

Table 2: Landscape analyses framing

Evaluation	Framing	Selected peer organizations	Scope	Approach
Comprehensive Evaluation	AF niche and comparative advantage	GEF, GCF	• Current niche and comparative advantages of the Fund. • Complementarities with other climate funds' work and donors. • Whether knowledge generated by the Fund contributes to the global discussion on climate change adaptation. • How the Fund's processes and funding modalities position it within the wider climate finance landscape. • How the Fund engages with different stakeholders to promote innovation, scale-up and sustainability.	Case study on the Fund's niche and comparative advantage in the climate finance landscape, including desk review, portfolio analysis, country and other thematic case studies and KIIs.
Mid-Term Review of MTS2	AF position in an evolving climate finance landscape (Jan 2023 to Jun 2025)	GCF, CIF, GEF	• How the Fund's niche is supported through MTS2. • Mandate and role. • Relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. • Agility and nimbleness. • Recognition (how comparative advantages are perceived). • Responsiveness.	Focused landscape scan, drawing on secondary data and selected KIIs, and explicitly avoiding benchmarking.
G/PS Evaluation	AF decision-making processes and external influence and visibility	GCF, CIF, GEF	• Formal mechanisms by which Boards and governance bodies make, communicate, and implement decisions. • Practices that enhance accountability, timeliness, and responsiveness of decision-making. • Processes and practices for building external visibility, influence, and reputation with external stakeholders, especially linked to RM.	Internal and external desk reviews, supported by KIIs, explicitly avoiding benchmarking.

The landscape analysis will serve as a learning exercise to identify 'what works', what doesn't work', and why in governance systems and processes across climate finance institutions. It will focus on identifying and describing good practice or standard-setting approaches, highlighting where the AF may draw lessons from others or is itself demonstrating innovation and good practice.

The peer organizations to be included in the landscape analysis (alongside the AF) are the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), and the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) all of which operate under the Paris Agreement. The landscape analysis will systematically map, describe and review governance processes and systems. It will pay particular attention to (i) decision-making processes; and (ii) external positioning and visibility mechanisms, generating insights into institutional arrangements, lines of accountability, and oversight mechanisms that can strengthen reflection on potential approaches. Areas of focus are set out in more detail in the table below.

Table 3: Areas covered by the landscape analysis

Dimension	Areas of focus and LA process
Decision-making processes (macro level)	The team will: ● Identify and analyze the formal mechanisms by which Boards and governance bodies (specifically Board Committees and fund Secretariats) make, communicate, and implement decisions, with a strong focus on clarity, transparency, inclusiveness and speed. ● Identify practices that enhance accountability, timeliness, and responsiveness of decision-making, including the role of standing and ad hoc committees.[28] ● Analyse how timely and effective decision making is in response to learning/changes in context. ● Analyze enabling factors, including delegation of authority, RBM, performance monitoring systems, and the incorporation of feedback for adaptive management.
External positioning and visibility (meso level)	The team will: ● Identify and analyze processes and practices used by other organizations to build their external visibility, influence, and reputation with external stakeholders, especially for resource mobilization. ● Identify practices through which other organizations communicate achievements, learning, and innovations, and whether this is embedded in governance systems. ● Examine how stakeholder relationships, networks, and external partnerships are cultivated for strategic positioning.

Three evidence streams will inform the landscape analysis. First, an **internal desk review** of AF decisions, policies, operational guidance, project documentation, AF-TERG products, and Board materials will ground the analysis. Second, an **external desk review** of governance frameworks, evaluations, and policy documents from peer organizations will establish the broader landscape. Finally, **targeted key informant**

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[28] Standing committees refer to permanent bodies constituted to oversee ongoing governance, technical, fiduciary, or operational aspects of the organizations included in the landscape analysis, while ad hoc committees include temporary groups established for specific, time-bound tasks or issues that require targeted attention.

interviews (KIIs) with key stakeholders, primarily governance and evaluation leads from selected peer organizations, will help to validate findings and add context not available in written documentation.

Findings will be mapped at the macro and meso level, but not at the micro level, which focuses on project documentation and similarly detailed processes, which might require access to these organizations which the ET does not have. A descriptive summary brief will be developed to highlight and describe good or innovative practices identified for effective decision-making and external positioning, grounded in evidence from peer organizations. Findings from this summary brief will be aggregated and synthesized as part of the evaluation synthesis.

4.5.2. Maturity Model

A Maturity Model provides a high-level analytical framework to assess whether each component is emerging, formalized, harmonized or strategic (please see Table 4 below for descriptions). To ensure the maturity matrix is applied consistently across governance systems, processes and resources, clear and standardized definitions have been developed for each of the four levels. In addition, the ET will demonstrate, where relevant, the trajectory of a component. A component may currently be characterized under the definition of formalized however, the Evaluation of G/PS could find evidence which suggests that its trajectory is moving towards harmonized. This will be the case especially when new policies or strategies have recently been put in place but there is currently (due to limited time for implementation) no evidence of the difference these have made. Trajectory will be displayed with an arrow. The detailed analysis will feed directly into answering the five key evaluation questions (please see the evaluation matrix).

Table 4: Maturity Definitions

Emerging	Governance **structures, processes and resources** exist in a **basic or ad hoc** form, often informal and inconsistently applied. Roles, responsibilities, and decision-making pathways are **unclear or underdeveloped**. Activities are primarily reactive, with limited evidence of alignment to the Fund's mission, inclusion, or value for money.
Formalized	Governance structures, processes, and resources are **documented, approved, and implemented** with defined roles and procedures. Components enable **regular decision-making and compliance**, but linkages across functions remain **fragmented** and focus more on **operational or tactical needs** than on strategic alignment or adaptability.
Harmonized	Governance structures, processes and resources are **integrated and coherent across all functions**. Decision-making is **aligned with strategic objectives**, with clear accountability, transparent flows of information, and mechanisms for **mutual decision-making and learning**. Systems and processes support **proactive risk management**, cross-functional collaboration, and greater inclusiveness.
Strategic	Governance structures, processes and resources are **fully embedded, adaptive, and a strategic enabler** of the Fund's mission. Systems and processes are **flexible and responsive** to changing political, environmental, or financial contexts. Decision-making is **evidence-based, inclusive, and anticipatory**,

ensuring continuous improvement, innovation, and high value for money. Resources are mobilized and deployed in a way that is **sustainable, diversified, and forward-looking**.

The benefits of this level of analysis are that it allows us to assess the AF's governance as a whole and identify where the AF is at in terms of its processes, systems and resources. This method will allow for an assessment of how a multilateral trust fund like the AF has evolved over time. This is appropriate for the evaluation of the AF which is looking at the last seven years since its inception. It will allow the ET to take a view of the maturity of each component under the three dimensions of governance.

The ET will incorporate synthesized learning from the landscape analysis into the maturity model analytical process. These findings will then be discussed at the sensemaking workshop.

Further, we will include a focus on evidence confidence when the collected data is used to answer the evaluation questions and sub-questions. Insights gathered across each sub-question will be triangulated and assessed for strength of evidence (see Table 5, below), enabling the team to build a set of concrete, evidence-based and triangulated findings.

Table 5: Evidence Confidence

Rating	Statement	Definition
Strong confidence	There is clear and corroborative evidence to model maturity	Evidence can be corroborated amongst maturity model components, AF documents, learning from the landscape analysis and primary data to model maturity
Medium confidence	There is some evidence available to model maturity	Some evidence amongst maturity model, AF documents, learning from the landscape analysis and primary data supports modelling maturity
Limited confidence	Insufficient evidence to model maturity	Evidence is singular and while it may suggest a level of maturity, is insufficient to model maturity

4.5.3. Sense-making workshop

A collaborative sense-making workshop will be held towards the end of the evaluation, enabling representatives from Category B stakeholders including the EAG to apply their own experience and insights to the emerging evidence. This approach is based on the understanding that genuine stakeholders, rather than external evaluators, are best placed to identify and define course corrections and adaptations.

The team will look for opportunities to align this workshop with ongoing evaluative efforts of the MTR of MTS2 and the CE. This could include designing a larger workshop that allows the different teams to

present and cross-check emerging findings with key stakeholders, or it could involve other team members participating as observers to enable timely information sharing and collaboration across teams.

5. G/PS management and delivery

5.1 Deliverables

The evaluation is divided into three key phases: 1) inception, 2) implementation, and 3) reporting and dissemination. The evaluation will span from August 2025 to April 2026, beginning with a virtual kick off meeting between the evaluation team, AF-TERG members and the AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator, and culminating in delivery of the final report and PowerPoint presentation and Evaluation Brief on key findings and recommendations. The ET will deliver 5 formal outputs as shown in **bold** below in Table 6. Our workplan is also presented below in Figure 7.

Table 6: Overview of outputs

Phase	Output	Date
Phase 1: Evaluation inception	**Inception Report,** including the finalized methodology, evaluation matrix, data collection tools, and workplan and budget.	First week of October 2025
Phase 2: Evaluation implementation	Sensemaking workshop with CE and MTR of MTS 2 to discuss/triangulate findings and co-create recommendations.	January 2026
	Draft findings, to be discussed and agreed with AF-TERG before sharing for validation and feedback from the Evaluation Advisory Group and AFB Secretariat.	Early February 2026
Phase 3: Drafting the G/PS evaluation report, and validation	An **advanced draft report** prepared for discussion and agreement with AF-TERG, including presentation of draft findings to AF-TERG and AFB Secretariat.	20th February 2026
	Final report, incorporating and responding to comments from AF-TERG and AFB Secretariat.	Early April 2026
	Draft **PowerPoint presentation** for the AF-TERG to use to present key findings and recommendations to the EFC March 2026 meeting as the basis for communicating findings to key AF-stakeholders. **Three-page Evaluation Brief.**	End of April 2026

Delivery of formal outputs according to the outlined timeline requires the ET and AF-TERG to adhere to a mutually agreed workplan, aiming to produce a first draft report within 16 weeks of the kick-off call (noting that the December holiday period may limit progress). Certain activities, notably the completion

of KIIs and timely provision of documentation from the AF, are not flexible and will receive particular attention. Should there be challenges in accessing these inputs, the ET may need to qualify its findings, including where conclusions are provisional and subject to the availability of further evidence, which could influence the overall quality and completeness of the report.

Provided the evidence collection proceeds as expected, the ET will advance through the analytical and drafting phase as efficiently as possible. The timetable for submission to the Board also depends on receiving timely feedback from the Advisory Group on the initial draft, enabling the ET to finalize revisions ahead of the March 2026 Board session.

In light of these dependencies, the ET and AF-TERG have agreed to build formal pause and reflect moments into the workplan to allow for joint review of progress at key stages (see Figure 7, below) and have discussed the tight turnaround of deliverables for the Board.

5.1.1. Commenting process

To ensure that the ET can progress smoothly into the implementation phase of their work and meet the deadline for a draft to the AF Board, they kindly request the AF-TERG to,

- supply one set of consolidated comments to the ET within one week of receiving the inception report and Draft 1

We trust that by planning in advance, this is achievable.

5.2 Workplan

The following workplan, including the above-mentioned pause and reflect moments, has been agreed with AF-TERG to ensure timely delivery of a first draft report to the Board session in March 2026.

Figure 7: G/PS Workplan

No	Phase	* Critical path with Reflection Points Item
1	Inception	Kick-off meeting with AF-TERG
2		Refining review questions
3		Light desk review
4		Inception interviews
5		Evaluation matrix
6		Evaluation toolkit development
7		Draft inception report + QA
8		AF-TERG comment on inception report
9		Reflection Point 1
10		Final inception report
11		Sign off of inception phase
11	Review & Preliminary Analysis (Implementation)	*Desk review (internal)
12		Desk review (external)
13		*Key informant interviews (KIIs) (note CoP and Board meeting)
14		*Landscape analysis
15		Reflection Point 2
16		Preliminary analysis of evidence
17		Sign off of Evaluation Implementation phase
18	Full analysis and reporting phase	Analysis and triangulation
19		Reflection Point 3
20		Drafting workshop/ Sensemaking workshop (as per proposal)
21		Draft 1 (inc. maturity matrix analysis)
22		Draft 1 QA
23		Draft 1 to AF-TERG
24		AF-TERG comment on draft report
25		Full first draft to Board
26		Draft 2
27		Draft 2 QA
28		Draft 2 to AF-TERG
29		AF-TERG comment on draft 2 report
30		Finalisation of report
31		Sign off Report drafting phase
32	Final communication and dissemination	Meeting with AF stakeholders to discuss outreach
33		Draft powerpoint presentation for the EFC and Evaluation Brief
34		QA of draft presentation and Evaluation Brief
35		Draft presentation and Evaluation Brief to AF-TERG
36		Feedback from AF TERG on draft presentation and Evaluation Brief
37		Final presentation and Evaluation Brief delivered
38		Sign off Dissemination phase

Timeline columns: August (1–4), Sep (1–4), Oct (1–4), Nov (1–4), Dec (1–4), Jan (1–4), Feb (1–4), March (1–4), April (1–4). Notes on row 13: "Board" (Oct) and "COP 30" (Nov).

5.3 AF-TERG team roles and responsibilities

The Evaluation of G/PS will be managed by Debbie Menezes (AF-TERG Chair and focal point for this evaluation), who will oversee the strategic and technical aspects of the evaluation process. She will serve as the primary interlocutor between the ET and AF stakeholders, ensuring that technical guidance is provided on key content areas. Debbie will also review interim products and deliverables to assure their quality, drawing on the support of relevant AF-TERG stakeholders and working in close collaboration with the EAG.

Vladislav Arnaoudov, as the AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator and Task Team Leader, is responsible for overall process facilitation, ensuring effective coordination between the ET, EAG, and broader AF-TERG structures. Vlad will support the timely flow of information, manage strategic communications, and play a key role in organizing Reflection Points and managing risk throughout the evaluation cycle (see the above workplan).

Debbie is supported by Mariana Vidal Merino from the AF-TERG Secretariat who will assist in the identification and collection of relevant literature and data, the organization of interviews, and the administration and day-to-day management of the G/PS evaluation. Mariana will also act as the EAG Coordinator, providing data management, coordination, and other logistical support to the group.

The EAG for the G/PS evaluation is comprised of four selected members. Two selected from AF-TERG and two from AF Board Secretariat who have expertise in governance, evaluation, and Fund operations. The EAG will serve in an advisory capacity to the AF-TERG focal point, providing relevant information, technical guidance, and overall oversight at key stages throughout the evaluation. Specifically, the EAG will:

- Ensure alignment of the evaluation with the strategic objectives and directions set by the EFC/Board.
- Provide expert advice and guidance to the evaluation team at key stages of the evaluation.
- Review and sense check evaluation deliverables (as outlined in the implementation section below) including the evaluation matrix, inception report, interim findings, and final report.
- Identify and provide access to relevant data, stakeholders, and contextual knowledge as appropriate.
- Ensure the evaluation process maintains relevance, transparency, rigor, and credibility.
- Offer advice to enhance the utility and use of evaluation findings.

The EAG will be expected to **review** the key milestones and deliverables associated with the five outputs shared above in Table 6.

- The evaluation matrix and data collection approaches.
- Inception report
- Draft findings
- Short brief with these emerging findings for submission to the EFC
- G/PS evaluation report

EAG members will be expected to review documents and provide written or verbal feedback within agreed timeframes.

5.4 ET roles and responsibilities

The ET will be relatively self-sufficient in terms of managing the evaluation process, drawing on AF-TERG assistance primarily for access to key stakeholders and supporting documentation. There may be cases where AF-TERG facilitation is required, for example formal introductions as part of protocols for meeting with stakeholders but otherwise the ET will manage most communication and interviews with stakeholders.

The team's makeup reflects a robust blend of technical, analytical, facilitation, and climate governance expertise, specifically matched to deliver each component of the G/PS evaluation as set out in the agreed work plan and initial proposal. Roles within the team are clearly delineated to ensure efficient delivery of all tasks across data collection, analysis, synthesis, and reporting stages. The team configuration is illustrated in Fig 7 below.

Figure 7: The Evaluation Team
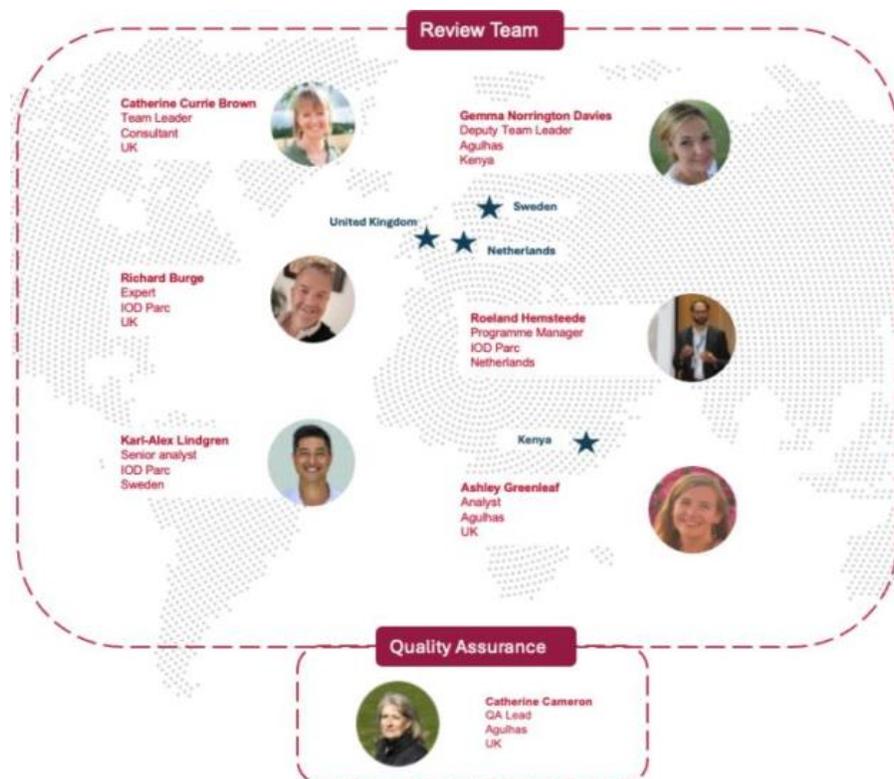
A breakdown of responsibilities is shown in the table below.

Table 7: Evaluation Team Responsibilities

Name	Role
Catherine	Leading overall delivery of the G/PS evaluation, including robust evaluation design, managing the overarching client relationship, oversight and management of all evidence gathering and analysis, leading high-quality drafting and ensuring timely delivery of all technical deliverables.
Gemma	Assisting the Team Leader with delivery of the G/PS evaluation, including evaluation design, evidence gathering and drafting and delivery of all outputs. Gemma will oversee the programme management of the evaluation, working closely with Roeland Hemsteede to manage the workplan, deliverables and oversee work of the analyst team. She will lead the landscape analysis and contribute to report drafting. She will be the main point of contact with AF-TERG. She is also the focal person in communication with the CE and MTR of MTS2 teams.
Richard	Richard will contribute to the evaluation as a senior organizational effectiveness expert, working on the development of the methodology, providing technical inputs during the implementation phase and assisting with aspects of report drafting. Richard will lead selected KIIs and support delivery of the landscape analysis. He will lead the synthesis of evidence against the maturity model.
Roeland	Roeland will provide senior analytical and programme management support to the team throughout delivery of the evaluation. Roeland will lead day-to-day client coordination through Mariana. He will support Richard in the synthesis of evidence against the maturity model and report drafting.
Karl-Axel	Karl-Axel will provide analyst support, including support for qualitative and quantitative evidence gathering across all stages of the evaluation. He will focus on the external review and landscape analysis, including external KIIs and drafting of the relevant sections.
Ashley	Ashley will provide analyst support, including support for qualitative and quantitative evidence gathering and analysis across all stages of the evaluation. She will focus on the internal desk review and supporting KIIs.

5.5 Coordination with the Comprehensive Evaluation (CE) and Mid-Term Review (MTR) of MTS2

The G/PS evaluation, alongside the MTR of MTS2 evaluation, is designed as a building block of the CE. Therefore, to ensure methodological complementarity, avoid duplication, and to minimize the burden on stakeholders, close alignment with the respective teams and coordination across parallel stakeholder engagements is essential. A coordinated approach will help clearly define boundaries and allow for the G/PS evaluation to provide targeted insights on governance processes and systems specifically, to directly feed into and strengthen the CE, and provide cross-cutting learning that is complementary to the MTR.

The G/PS evaluation team has clear lines of communication. Catherine Currie and Gemma Norrington-Davies are responsible for programme-level coordination. Both Gemma and Catherine are to be included in all communications. Gemma is the focal person in communication with the CE and MTR of MTS2 teams. During the inception phase, conversations were convened with AF-TERG to identify areas of potential overlap and best ways of sharing interim findings and lessons. This will help to ensure mutual learning and consistency across the evaluations during data collection and analysis.

To reduce the risk of stakeholder fatigue, the evaluation team has committed to aligning interview schedules and sense-making workshops with those of the CE and MTR of MTS2 wherever possible, and to ensure that each evaluation engages with a different set of individuals within each stakeholder group.

Lastly, methodological choices, such as evaluation tools employed, including the evaluation matrix and interview protocols, were based on potential compatibility and synergy with the approaches taken by the CE and MTR of MTS2 evaluation teams.

5.6 Quality assurance

The G/PS Evaluation will apply the following QA approach:

Both Agulhas and IOD PARC have over 15 years of experience in evaluation, research and knowledge generation. They have both developed high standards of quality assurance (QA) techniques to ensure the highest levels of quality and accountability. The ET is also well-versed in World Bank approaches to evaluation quality assurance and understands the importance of meeting those specific standards. For this Evaluation we propose the following QA approach:

1. At specific stages of the Evaluation process, our QA lead, **Catherine Cameron**, will be brought in to provide key insights into the methodology; to provide advice on specific areas or issues that the team has encountered; and to undertake internal QA for this assignment. Catherine Cameron is a highly experienced evaluation expert with over 30 years' experience. An expert in the field of climate change and MEL, Catherine is well-placed to offer expert inputs into technical as well as thematic elements of the evaluation.

2. Before delivering outputs to the client, the QA lead will review the overall quality of report drafts, presentations and briefs, as well as verify the methodological rigor of data collection tools, evaluation

frameworks and sampling approaches, considering the evaluation methodology, specifically the evaluation matrix, and the Adaptation Fund evaluation policy.

3. Progress reviews will be held at key points with AF-TERG to confirm progress, decisions taken, and feedback throughout the evaluation. This responsibility is held by the Team Leader, **Catherine Currie**.

Our QA approach ensures that we meet required standards of methodological rigour, analytical depth and balance, the avoidance of factual errors, and the highest possible quality of drafting and presentation in line with globally accepted benchmarks and the Adaptation Fund evaluation policy. In the rare case that a product does not meet the standard required, our commitment to total quality dictates that the product must be improved until it meets the acceptable standard. In this rare case, we will deploy extra resources if necessary. Any additional resources will be at our own cost and will not affect the overall budget or timeline.

5.7 Risks and mitigations

A set of potential risk areas and proposed mitigation actions has been identified by the evaluation team. H= high, M=medium and L=low

Table 8: G/PS Evaluation risks and mitigation actions

Risk	Likeli hood	Impact	Mitigating Steps
Complexity and breadth of evaluation scope: The evaluation covers complex, multi-layered governance processes and systems, involving many stakeholders and potentially sensitive topics. This complexity increases the risk of missing important nuances or failing to capture the diversity of perspectives.	M	H	A comprehensive scope defining governance systems, processes and resources has been developed and agreed with AF-TERG. We have scheduled sufficient time for stakeholder consultations to ensure the team is able to access and interview a sufficient number and diversity of key informants.
Availability of key informants: Gaining access to key stakeholders across all governance areas, particularly in high-level government positions or in remote areas, may be challenging due to time constraints, political sensitivities, or logistical issues. This may also be exacerbated as the Fund has multiple reviews and	M	H	Key informants are critical to data collection, but also to ensure the learning from the evaluation will be taken up. Therefore, we will continue to reach out to key informants at an early stage and decide on KII and sense-making workshop dates in collaboration with the AF-TERG. As an extra measure, we will request AF-TERG to follow up on non-responses. We will integrate digital tools such as Calendly to ensure maximum flexibility for our key informants in scheduling meetings

evaluations underway at the same time.			while reducing the coordination load on them and the evaluation team. We will coordinate with the CE and MTR of MTS2 teams to reduce overlap as far as possible.
Timeline rigidity: The evaluation must be completed in time to feed into the comprehensive evaluation and meet Board deadlines, leaving no room for delays.	M	H	In collaboration and communication with AF-TERG during the inception period, a critical path analysis was conducted and can be found in Annex 3. This then informed an iteration of the workplan. This will allow us to act iteratively, flexibly and quickly to take corrective actions during data collection without jeopardizing delivery. Discussions with AF-TERG also raised the possibility that timeline deliverables are given in early draft form to inform the Board, and shape the final draft based on the inputs received from the Board.
Data availability and quality: limited existing data and relatively short implementation period for data gathering mean the team do not have sufficient information with which to conduct the evaluation.	H	M	Working closely with AF-TERG to conduct a thorough assessment of available data during the inception phase, supplementing gaps with primary data collection where necessary. In cases where data quality is a concern, we will apply data triangulation to validate findings from multiple sources. We will include an assessment of evidence confidence against the sub-EQs.
Knowledge continuity: Remote working, dispersed staff, and turnover may mean institutional memory is fragmented particularly as the period being evaluated is from 2017.	M	M	We will identify long-tenure personnel (e.g., Secretariat leads, TERG members) for the inception interviews, supplementing with document review to reconstruct governance histories. We will also triangulate perspectives across different institutional layers.
Legal-institutional complexity: AF's unique structure, with the Secretariat housed in the World Bank under GEF, and with only the Board holding a legal personality, complicated accountability mapping and comparison with other climate funds.	M	L	An institutional mapping exercise as part of the landscape analysis will capture and clarify roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. Like-for-like comparisons will be avoided in the landscape analysis, instead it will highlight shared lessons and learning opportunities.
Coordination with concurrent evaluations and reviews: The evaluation must coordinate with other ongoing evaluations (e.g.,	L	M	We have established regular coordination and communication mechanisms with other evaluation teams, guided by the AF-TERG Secretariat. Where possible, we will align

Comprehensive Evaluation, MTR of MTS2) to avoid duplication, ensure complementarity, and manage demands on stakeholders' time. Poor coordination could result in inconsistent findings or stakeholder fatigue.			timelines and data collection efforts to minimize overlap and reduce burden on stakeholders. Interim findings and lessons will be shared to ensure consistency and mutual learning across different workstreams.
Bias in stakeholder feedback: Stakeholder interviews and surveys may be subject to bias, including positive bias due to relationships with the Adaptation Fund, or negative bias stemming from isolated negative experiences.	L	M	We will ensure anonymity in interviews to encourage honest feedback. Additionally, we will engage with a diverse range of stakeholders from different stakeholder categories and geographic regions to obtain a balanced view and cross-check information across different sources.
Use and uptake of findings: Despite the new evaluation policy, findings may still not be fully used if they are too abstract or politically sensitive.	L	M	Recommendations will be practical, actionable, and co-developed with AF-TERG. The inception period allowed for engagement with AF-TERG on pathways for recommendation uptake, to ensure findings are engaged with by the Board and Secretariat.

5.8 Ethical considerations

At both Agulhas and IOD PARC, our evaluations comply with the highest ethical standards. Agulhas' Ethical Research Standards and Guidelines focus on:

1. Gender equality and social inclusion
2. Ensuring voluntary and informed consent
3. Ensuring confidentiality of data
4. Special considerations for online engagement
5. Processes for ensuring ethical research

In delivering this evaluation, our ET commits to upholding the highest ethical standards throughout the assignment. We will ensure informed consent is given to all individuals participating in the evaluation. All feedback in the report will be anonymized, unless consent is obtained from an individual to use specific material.

Both Agulhas and IOD PARC are committed to providing high quality independent advice and evaluation and preventing actual or perceived conflicts of interest (COI). The Evaluation Team's approach to COI is

informed by the OECD Guidelines for Managing Conflict of Interest in the Public Service.[29] Throughout this assignment, we will work to ensure all content is created in the best interest of the AF and its stakeholders and without external influence. All team members will be responsible for providing full transparency of any potential or perceived conflict with related parties should these arise at any point during delivery of the assignment.

Table 9: Agulhas' commitments for ethical evaluation

Commitment	We will always keep in mind the goal of harnessing knowledge and learning for sustainable development.
Effectiveness	We will strive to deliver the highest quality work in the areas where we can use our skills to make the greatest impact. We will continually look for ways to do better: individually; together; and with clients, contractors, and communities.
Equity	We will be mindful of power imbalances in everything we do. Our approach will continuously evolve, recognizing our collective responsibility to unlearn biases and re-learn what it means to be equitable, inclusive, and just.
Integrity	We will conduct ourselves in a way in which we can be proud. We will be honest with each other, our clients and ourselves. We will provide challenge where it is needed and praise where it is due.
Openness	We will share ideas and good practice. We will raise concerns quickly and deal with them fairly.
Respect	We will treat each other and our clients, contractors, and communities with respect. We will take the time to listen to others, look for the best in people and strive to empower others to be their best.

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[29] Recommendation of the Council on OECD Guidelines for Managing Conflict of Interest in the Public Service, OECD Legal Instruments, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD/LEGAL/0316, 2024, link.

Annex 1: Stakeholder analysis - interviews

The ET could not undertake any interviews prior to the submission of the first draft of the Inception report. This was due to busy calendars and the need to formalise the system and process for requesting and securing interviews across all three concurrent evaluations. That system and process is now in place and means that there is complete clarity for all evaluations about who is being interviewed and for what. This will hopefully reduce the burden as far as possible across stakeholders.

The ET is currently using the stakeholder analysis conducted by the CE to finalise the number of interviews for the G/PS. Only the type of stakeholders relevant to the G/PS have been included. Purposeful sampling within each stakeholder group will be guided by i) the level of already available evidence in documentation for each qualitative question ii) the relevance of each stakeholder to addressing evidence gaps in both the evaluation criteria and list of governance processes and systems in scope for the evaluation (Annex 2) iii) degree of overlap with the CE and MTR, reducing the burden on stakeholders already consulted where possible. Please also note the level of priority for the G/PS (* main phase, ** main phase early engagement, *** inception).

Type of stakeholder	Relationship to AF	Type of organization	Stakeholder group	Level of engagement	Level of interest	Level of influence	Priority for G/PS
Governance and oversight bodies	Stakeholders directly responsible for the Fund's strategic direction, oversight, and accountability.	AF Board	A	macro	high	high	**
		AFB Committees - EFC	A	meso	high	high	***/**
		AFB Committees - PPRC	A	meso	high	high	**
		Accreditation Panel	B	meso, micro	high	high	**
		AF TERG	B	macro, meso	high	high	***/**
	Responsible for managing AF activities	AFB Secretariat	B	macro, meso, micro	high	high	***/**
	Interim Trustee	World Bank	B	meso	high	high	**
Implementing and Executing Entities	Entities responsible for project preparation,	NIEs	C	micro	high	medium	*

	implementation, and management.	RIEs	C	micro	high	medium	*
		MIEs	C	micro	high	medium	*
		Executing Entities	C	micro	high	medium	*
National-Level Stakeholders	Domestic actors involved in accessing and implementing funding.	National Designated Authorities (NDAs)	C	micro	high	high	*
Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations	Actors that influence fund activities through advocacy, implementation, and oversight.	National and international CSOs, incl. Adaptation Fund CSO Network	C	macro, meso, micro	high	medium	*
Technical and Knowledge Partners	Contributors to capacity-building, M&E, policy development, and knowledge sharing.	Think tanks and research centres (incl. IPCCI)	C	macro, meso	medium	medium	*
		Technical assistance providers	C	micro	medium	medium	*
Multilateral and Intergovernmental Partners	Entities supporting coordination with other climate finance mechanisms and policy alignment.	UNFCCC and COP	C	macro	high	high	**
		Green Climate Fund (GCF)	C	macro, meso	low	low	**
		Global Environment Facility (GEF)	C	macro, meso	low	low	**

Annex 2: Agreed subset of G/PS for evaluation

This Annex captures the agreed subset of governance processes and systems to be evaluated. A comprehensive breakdown of governance includes systems (who and what), processes (how) and resources (with what). Each evaluation component now includes a prompt that will interrogate what was previously categorized as culture and ethics. We agreed this approach was more appropriate than calling out this sensitive area as a component in and of itself.

Recognizing the broad scope of the G/PS evaluation, the ET undertook a rationalization exercise to prioritize which governance processes and systems would be evaluated. This was a collaboration process with inputs from the CE and MTR teams and from AF-TERG. Each component was assessed against three criteria: (i) its relevance to and contribution towards the Comprehensive Evaluation, (ii) potential overlap with the Comprehensive Evaluation and the MTR of MTS2, and (iii) feasibility within the time and resource constraints of the G/PS evaluation. Based on this review, components were categorized for either 'light touch' or 'in-depth' analysis, as presented in the table below.

Evaluation components	Level of analysis	Scope of MTR & CE	Working questions
Governance Systems – the formal and informal structures through which authority, accountability, decision making and oversight are organised. In short, who holds authority and how is it structured?			
• **Accountability structures:** the governance systems which exist and enable lines of authority and accountability for strategic and operational decision-making. This means systems which link the key actors and bodies within the Fund's governance framework, shaping how decisions are made,	Macro/ Meso *In-depth*	• G/PS will lead on Governance Systems.	• What are the formal mechanisms by which the Fund makes decisions? • What are the types of decisions (e.g., strategic, policies, routines, etc.)? What is the relative workload for Board and committees? What do they focus on? Include a strong focus on clarity, transparency, inclusiveness and speed.

implemented, and overseen to support effective delivery of the Fund's mission. *Structures (e.g., Board structure) out of scope*			• What is the division of roles and responsibilities between Board (and committees) and AFB Sec? Is this division balanced? Complementary? • What are the formal accountability mechanisms? Is there clarity in delegation of authority between different parts of the Fund (e.g. Sec, AP, AF-TERG etc)? How are these mechanisms applied? Do they cohere? • What structures are in place (e.g. task forces on innovation and resource mobilization) to develop and guide specific strategies? Explore the role of inter-sessional working groups and what structures exist to integrate their decisions. • What are the formal mechanisms to track the implementation of Board decisions by AFB Secretariat, the Accreditation Panel, Fund Trustee and the AF-TERG? • What mechanisms encourage or inhibit engagement of stakeholders in governance and formal decision-making structures? • What observations are there around inclusiveness and building trust in decision-making structures (e.g., gender, regional, and stakeholder input)

• **Risk management systems:** the frameworks, processes, tools and practices used to identify, assess, mitigate, and communicate risks that affect the Fund's decision-making, operational effectiveness and achievement of its mandate.	Macro *Light touch*	• See addition on innovation portfolio decisions.	• What risk management frameworks exist? How adequate are these and how do these align with decision making structures (i.e., how are these are managed in practice at all levels of the Fund)? And, in relation to decisions on the innovation portfolio? • Are roles and responsibilities related to risk management clear? • Is there adequate coverage and responsiveness to emerging risks (e.g., geopolitical, fiduciary, climate) ? • Is risk reporting transparent and timely? • What observations are there related to risk management culture?
• **Independent oversight and audit:** the mandates, scope and independence of audits, the AF -TERG, and grievance mechanisms, and how findings are addressed by the Fund's governance bodies.	Macro *Light touch*	• MTR: general overlap, more specific on uptake of recommendations. • Case study on learning from MTR of MTS1	• What structures exist to support independent oversight and audit? • How independent are these bodies to ensure integrity? • How are findings and recommendations communicated and addressed (in a timely manner)? • Are there any observations related to culture around oversight and audit formal structures?

• **Role of the Trustee:** fiduciary management of the Fund's resources, oversight of financial flows, and execution of Board-approved financial transactions.	Macro *Light touch*	• No overlap with CE – feed into CE. •	• What are the Trustee's processes for identifying, mitigating, and reporting financial risk and how these are integrated into the Fund's decision-making? • How are audit findings integrated into the Fund's operations? • How timely and efficient are financial transfers in support of the Fund's mission? • How accessible is financial information for evidence-based decision-making? • Are there any observations related to culture around the role of the trustee?
Governance Processes are the mechanisms, activities and practices through which governance systems function. In short, how are decisions made, implemented and monitored?			
• **Board decision-making actions**: the processes and flows through which the AF Board makes, communicates, and implements decisions, and how this supports delivery of the Fund's mission. *Board structure out of scope*	Macro/ Meso/ Micro *In-depth*	• CE – how well are Board decisions implemented? Do they make sense. • G/PS look at how the Board operates. • MTR - The extent to which the Board	• What processes and flows exist to support decision making (including the preparation and review of Board documents)? How clear, transparent and inclusive are they? • What resources are available to the Board (e.g. for travel of developing countries' members)? • What processes and flows exist to support delivery of the Fund's MTS-2 and other UNFCCC-linked priorities?

		and Secretariat use the MTS2 for decision-making.	• What committee operations and processes are used to feed recommendations to the Board?
		• MTR - Decision-making and division of labour in managing pipelines during the MTS2 period.	• Once taken, are decisions communicated widely and do stakeholders understand and use them? How are these tracked?
			• How transparent is decision-making to internal and external stakeholders?
• **Formulating/ adopting/ adapting policies and strategies:** processes for developing, consulting and approving and adapting organisational strategies, policies, and operational guidelines.	Macro/ Meso/ Micro *In-depth*	• MTR: Case study on funding windows as part of adaptive management review • CE – looking at implementation of Fund policies – social safeguards and ESP. Same as above. • G/PS look at how processes and systems around	• What are the current operational guidelines and policies relevant to the Fund's governance? How flexible and responsive are they? • What stakeholder participation, facilitation and consultation takes places to formulate, adopt and adapt OPGs? Explore collaboration within and between governance bodies including the role of civil society organization representatives and accredited observers. • How relevant and useful are the OPGs? Explore integration of the AF Readiness Programme into the AF workplan and budget.

		policies and strategies work.	
• **Accreditation, Project approval, , and fund disbursement, reaccreditation:** the systems and processes that underpin how projects move from proposal through approval to disbursement, with a focus on transparency, efficiency, accountability, and alignment with the Fund's mission.	Macro/ Meso/ Micro *In-depth*	• MTR: Assessing pipeline and portfolio under MT including blockages in delivery and how this impedes delivery of Fund's mandate. • G/PS to provide in depth on accreditation only to CE.	• What methods and criteria are used (including VfM) to review, recommend and approve project proposals, accreditation and reaccreditation processes? • Is there transparency in selection of programmes? Are the project review criteria definitions applied? • How efficient and timely are these processes?
• **Monitoring, evaluation and learning:** the formal mechanisms, procedures, and practices used to supply timely and actionable evidence (e.g. AF-TERG) into governance structures and processes to inform decision-making and continuous improvement in the Fund's governance.	Macro/ Meso/ Micro *In depth*	• G/PS team to analyse in depth and provide evidence to CE. • MTR - The degree to which MEL exists in MTS2 implementation	MEL • What monitoring systems exist for governance and policy implementation? • What monitoring systems exist for the Fund's MEL of projects and programmes? • What formal evaluation frameworks and practices exist which focus on the Fund's governance?

Includes data and knowledge management considerations		and informs Board decision-making.	• How do evaluation management response processes integrated with decision making structures and systems?
			• What lesson channels and feedback mechanisms exist to inform evidence-based decision-making ? How agile are these?
			• Are there any observations about informal MEL processes that are useful to the continuous improvement of the Fund's governance?
			Data management
			• What systems exist for data collection related to governance? Explore data coverage, management and storage, including roles and responsibilities for maintaining data sets.
			• What data sharing mechanisms/ processes exist to inform agile governance-related decision-making (internal)?
			• What systems exist to share data to support external accountability and visibility of the Fund? What information is accessible about portfolio/pipeline and strategy implementation? Are stakeholders/CSO able to participate in these?

			• Are there any observations about the culture associated with data systems? Knowledge Management • What organizational learning systems exist and what are the related knowledge management roles and responsibilities? Explore knowledge capture, management, and dissemination, including use of technology and data systems.
• **Gender, equity and social inclusion:** the processes and practices that ensure the Fund's governance systems and processes are inclusive, gender-responsive, and equitable.	Macro/ Meso/ Micro *Light touch*	• G/PS proposes to do a very light touch review or no review given focus of several CE EQs on addressing most vulnerable (A3, A4.1 and A6)	• How integrated is GESI in Fund-wide policies, strategies and operational guidelines ? o Do approaches/policies/processes promote gender equality and social inclusions? • How integrated is the social and environmental policy into projects/programmes? • Are processes and systems inclusive bringing diversity of voices and points of view (e.g., constituencies format, CSOs, IEs, NDAs).

• **Adaptive capacity and management:** feedback loops and processes to proactively identify, adjust to and learn from changes to strengthen the Fund's governance and performance.	Macro/ Meso/ Micro *Light touch*	• MTR : Case study on funding windows as part of adaptive management review and scope relating to how the MTS2 has followed an adaptive design informed by the previous MTR. • MTR - Broader adaptive capacity and management (i.e., learning from MTS1 to MTS2). • Overlap CE – processes and funding windows in meeting needs (relevance) • Also CE niche study may touch upon how AF's processes and modalities define	• What feedback loops/ systems exist to inform decision-making and course correction? Explore processes related to mechanisms and processes for updating and changing policies in response to feedback/ lessons learned?

		its niche + whether any changes have resulted from coordination efforts with other funds, but it would be very light touch. • MTR: Covering adaptive management review which overlaps with our questions.	
• **External communications and engagement for fundraising:** processes and practices used to enhance the Fund's visibility, influence and reputation amongst external stakeholders to support resource mobilization.	Meso *In-depth*	• G/PS to do in-depth and provide evidence to CE.	• What processes and tools are used to disseminate information about the Fund's mission, achievements, learning etc. to external audiences? Explore through engagement activities aimed at building relationships, collaboration, facilitation, trust and influence. • How visibly are these processes integrated to support resource mobilisation?
• **Integrity and ethics:** the principles and processes used to uphold the Fund's	Macro	• Consider transparency/	• What codes of conduct and ethics policies and procedures, Conflict of interest management, Anti-

culture of ethical conduct, transparency, fairness, and accountability.	*Light touch*	access to information for CE	corruption policies and Safeguards exist? Explore the Fund requirements as part of GEF Secretariat.
Governance Resources are the inputs and assets needed to design, operate and sustain governance systems and processes. In short, what is required to make governance possible?			
• **Resource planning and budgeting:** the core systems and processes for allocating and managing the Fund's financial, human, and technical resources as these support the Fund's mission and governance. **Includes Country cap:** systems and processes for ensuring equitable, balanced, and efficient distribution of resources among eligible developing countries. Includes administrative budgets.	Macro/ Meso/ Micro *In depth*	• G/PS does a deep dive and provide evidence to CE. • MTR - Consideration of LLA in funding decisions.	• What are the resource allocation systems across funding windows/ grant types/ eligible developing countries/replenishment policy, including systems for equitable and balanced distribution? Explore enhanced direct access window, global locally led adaptation aggregatory programme, regional LA funding window. • What processes exist for developing, approving, and monitoring annual and multi-year budgets? Consider role of accreditation unit which follows accreditation process and systems. • What are administrative budgets for Secretariat and Board operations? Explore administrative efficiency / overhead. • How do these integrate with financial planning and forecasting tools and then to governance processes? Explore links to Human resource strategy and planning processes, in particular, the systems in place to plan for and allocate staff resources and technical expertise needed to implement governance decisions.

			Country Cap related • What mechanisms exist for adjustment, including processes and review and decision-making processes? • How does the Fund ensure policies and systems are fair access and support across eligible countries?
• **Resource mobilization:** the systems and processes for attracting and securing financial resources to support delivery of the Fund's mission and operations.	Macro/ Meso/ Micro *In-depth*	• MTR: Case study on funding windows as part of adaptive management review • CE not covering resource mobilisation in niche study.	• What are the overarching strategies, policies, or frameworks for guiding resource mobilization (inc. introducing new funding windows/ grant types and the replenishment policy/role of the Board in resource mobilisation)? • Building on the previous discussion of decision-making mechanisms, how does these interact with setting resource mobilization priorities? • In more detail, what are the processes for identifying, targeting and maintaining donor/ funder relationships? How does these align with the external climate finance landscape? How do the Fund's mobilisation efforts align or compete with other climate funds?

Annex 3: Critical Path Analysis

The following table has been developed to highlight the time risks and dependencies involved in delivering a first full draft by 20th February 2025.

Key activity from workplan	Responsibility	Risk (without this, the following will be delayed)	Scheduled to start / be ready w/c	Latest to finish
Key Informant Interviews	Introductions AF-TERG Set-up & Conduct – ET	Coding of interviews for analysis (e.g. maturity matrix)	27th October	12th December
Provision of documentation <u>not</u> publicly available	AF-TERG	Desk review and landscape analysis	27th October	23rd January
Sensemaking workshop (set -up and delivery)	AF-TERG with support from ET	Draft 1	2nd February	6th February
ET writes up Draft 1	ET	Commenting by Advisory Group	9th February	13th February
Advisory Group Reviews Draft 1	AF-TERG	Full first draft ready for Board	16th February	20th February

Highlights

- <u>Duration of project:</u> Based on the critical path, if the current scheduled start dates for activities are followed, then the project will deliver Draft 1 within 16 weeks of inception (assuming limited work takes place during holiday period end December/early Jan 2025).
- <u>Activities with no flexibility which must be monitored closely</u> are the key informant interviews and the provision of documentation. Without these the ET will have to make plausible inferences (e.g. setting out that conclusions could change with new information and are highly sensitive to the evaluation's available knowledge base) and the quality of the final product will be affected.
- If data collection goes to plan, the ET will work through the analytical process as quickly as possible to deliver Draft 1. However, delivery to the Board is dependent on timely commenting on Draft 1 by the Advisory Group, so that the ET can turn it around ready for the Board.

Recommendation: Based on these critical dependencies, the ET will introduce formal reflection points into their workplan. At these points, we will review progress and quality of evidence against the timeline. We will actively manage the process and the output. Secondly, the inception report specifies the commenting process and the quality standards for Draft 1.

Annex 4 - References

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