



ADAPTATION FUND

Terms of Reference

Short-term consultancy (STC): Support for the internal self-assessment of the work of the AF-TERG

27 January 2026

1. Introduction

This Terms of Reference (TOR) is for a short-term consultant (STC) to support the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) in undertaking an **internal** self-assessment and reflection exercise of the work of the AF-TERG since its establishment in 2018. This internal exercise is expected to feed into the AF-TERG's own self-improvement and work planning processes in contributing to the Fund and feed into a separate independent review of the group to be conducted in 2026. The TOR sets out the background, scope of work, and requirements for the self-assessment exercise.

2. Background

The Adaptation Fund ('AF' or the 'Fund') was established through decisions by the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol to finance concrete adaptation projects and programs in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. At COP24 in 2018, the Parties to the Paris Agreement decided that the Adaptation Fund shall also serve the Paris Agreement. The Fund supports country-driven projects and programs, innovation and global learning for effective adaptation.¹ All of the Fund's activities are designed to build national and local adaptive capacities while reaching and engaging the most vulnerable groups, and to integrate gender consideration to provide equal opportunity to access and benefit from the Fund's resources. They are also aimed at enhancing synergies with other sources of climate finance, while creating models that can be replicated or scaled up.

The Fund is supervised and managed by the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB' or the 'Board'), which is accountable to CMP and CMA.² The majority of Board members are from developing countries. The Board has two committees, namely, the Ethics and Finance Committee (EFC), and the Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC). The EFC is responsible for advising the Board on issues of conflict of interest, ethics, finance, fund and portfolio monitoring, evaluation and audit.³ The PPRC is responsible for assisting the Board in assessing project and programme proposals submitted to the Board and in reviewing project and programme performance reports.⁴ An Accreditation Panel (AP) works to ensure that organizations receiving Fund money meet fiduciary standards. The AP provides recommendations to the Board regarding the accreditation of new implementation entities (IEs) and the suspension, cancellation or re-accreditation of implementing entities already accredited.⁵

The World Bank serves as an interim trustee of the Fund.⁶ An Adaptation Fund Board secretariat ('the AFB secretariat') provides support to the Board through a team of dedicated officials, who are part of, but remain operationally independent from the Global Environmental Facility Vice Presidency Unit (GEF VPU) of the World Bank. The AFB Secretariat manages the day-to-day operations of the Adaptation Fund such as research, advisory and administrative services.

¹ AF. 2022. Medium-Term Strategy 2023-2027. Available at <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Medium-Term-Strategy-2023-2027.pdf>

² CMP; Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. See: <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-serving-as-the-meeting-of-the-parties-to-the-kyoto-protocol-cmp>. CMA; Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement. See: <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-serving-as-the-meeting-of-the-parties-to-the-paris-agreement-cma>

³ AF. 2015. [Ethics and Finance Committee Terms of Reference](https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TOR-of-EFC-amended-in-Mar2018.pdf). Amended March 2018. Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TOR-of-EFC-amended-in-Mar2018.pdf>.

⁴ AF. 2015. [Project and Programme Review Committee Terms of Reference](https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TOR-of-PPRC-amended-in-Oct2015.pdf). Amended October 2015. Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TOR-of-PPRC-amended-in-Oct2015.pdf>

⁵ AF. 2012. [Terms of Reference for the Establishment of the Adaptation Fund Board Accreditation Panel](https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Accreditation-Panel-TORs_0.pdf). Available at: https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Accreditation-Panel-TORs_0.pdf

⁶ AF. 2019. Amended and restated terms and conditions of services to be provided by the International bank for reconstruction and development as trustee for the Adaptation Fund (2017-2020). Available at: https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AFB.B.33.b.Inf_2._Amended_and_Restated_Terms_and_Conditions.pdf

As of October 2025, the Fund has approved close to 200 projects with a total approved amount of USD 1.4 billion, with a further USD 1 billion in the pipeline. As of the same time, it has 37 National Implementing Entities (NIE), nine Regional Implementing Entities (RIE), and 15 Multilateral Implementing Entities (MIE).

The **AF-TERG** is an independent evaluation advisory group accountable to the Board, established in 2018 to ensure the independent implementation of the Fund's evaluation framework.⁷ The AF-TERG reports to the Ethics and Finance Committee of the Adaptation Fund Board and operates under the World Bank administrative rules and procedures.

The AF-TERG, which is headed by a Chair and comprises five technical expert members, provides an evaluative advisory role through performing evaluation generation, evaluation utilization and evaluation capacity building functions. The AF-TERG Chair and members work on a part-time basis, with focused in-person meetings held at least once a year. The AF-TERG is supported by a full-time AF-TERG secretariat led by a Secretariat Coordinator. The AF-TERG secretariat supports the day-to-day work of the AF-TERG, in particular with regard to the implementation of the evaluation work programme. The AF-TERG and its secretariat work closely with the AFB Secretariat with a view to ensure synergies and synchronize outreach to Fund's stakeholders.

The work of the AF-TERG is governed by its Revised Terms of Reference⁸, adopted at B.42. Since October 2023, the AF-TERG has been in charge of the independent implementation of the Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund,⁹ while adhering to the policy principle of a 'whole-Fund-policy' where different stakeholders have responsibilities in implementing the policy. The AF-TERG's second multi-year work programme (FY25 - FY27), approved at the 42nd meeting of the Board in April 2024, includes key Board-mandated evaluations that are expected to further inform discussions on the future direction of the Adaptation Fund, including the Comprehensive Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund and the Mid Term Review of the Fund's Medium-Term Strategy (MTR of MTS-2).¹⁰

In 2021, the AF-TERG embarked on an internal reflection exercise to identify areas for improvement regarding team performance and organizational development. A follow-up exercise in 2022 focused on continued team performance and organizational development coaching process. The findings of these previous exercises may be used as background information references in this assessment.

The evolving context

This self-reflection internal assessment should take into consideration the evolving external and internal contexts, particularly the climate finance landscape and how the AF-TERG's role can be most effective in delivering for the Fund through its work programme and operating modalities. Notably, the Adaptation Fund is in the process of transitioning to exclusively serve the Paris Agreement. Additionally, the Decision (1.CMA/6) of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), which establishes a new financial and operational levels of ambition for some multilateral climate funds under the UNFCCC, could also have implications for the future operations of the Fund. Consequently, the Fund's evaluation function could help to deepen understanding of what the Fund is achieving to strengthen its credibility, and to learn lessons to inform its future direction.

3. Framing the self-reflective internal assessment

Focus and scope

The focus of the internal assessment will be the AF-TERG (taken to include both its members and the secretariat) and how it performs its evaluation function in the context of the current and future strategic direction of the Adaptation Fund. It is expected that the assessment will cover the work of the AF-TERG from its inception in 2018 up to the present. Throughout this internal review, the consultant will reach out and consult with a selection of representatives from the AF-TERG (its Chair, members and secretariat), and the AFB Secretariat. Key documents to be consulted are listed in Annex 1 to this TOR.

Purpose and objectives of the internal assessment

The current multi-year work programme (FY2025-2027) of the AF-TERG, approved by the Board in 2024, envisaged a review of the AF-TERG as part of a wider on-going Comprehensive Evaluation (CE) of the Fund.

⁷ AF. 2018. Report of the thirty-first meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board. March 2018. AFB/B.31/8, Annex III, Terms of Reference of the Technical Evaluation Reference Group (TERG). Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/report-thirty-first-meeting-afb-20-23-march-2018/>

⁸ Decision B. 42/47, for the full text please see: https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/AF-TERG-revised-ToR_for-publication.pdf

⁹ AF-TERG.2022. Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund. Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/evaluation-policy-of-the-adaptation-fund-graphically-edited/>

¹⁰ Further information is available here: [Approach to the Design of the Terms of Reference for the Comprehensive Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund and the Mid Term Review of the Second Medium Term Strategy of the Adaptation Fund - Adaptation Fund \(adaptation-fund.org\).](https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/evaluation-policy-of-the-adaptation-fund-graphically-edited/)

The internal assessment is the initial, but separate phase of a bigger exercise of an independent review of the AF-TERG. This TOR are for this internal exercise – for which the intended audience is the AF-TERG and the AFB Secretariat only. The work will be used internally by the AF-TERG to help it reflect, learn, and improve; and to initiate early thinking on approaches for its next work programme (in 2027). The work will serve as an important background document for the AF-TERG in enabling it to contribute meaningfully to discussions in framing options for a future planned external peer review. Details of this external peer review are to be determined separately.

This self-reflective assessment, covering the period June 2019 - June 2025, will serve as an opportunity for internal learning, quality improvement, and strategic alignment after six years of the AF-TERG's establishment, particularly on the extent to which the AF-TERG fulfilling its mandate/TORs; and ultimately, to consider its contribution to the achievement of the Fund's goals and mandate. The exercise is intended to help the AF-TERG to critically examine its own trajectory, operational set up, practices, and systems to fulfil its mandate and organizational responsibilities within the Adaptation Fund. Given the transition of the Fund from supporting the Kyoto Protocol to exclusively supporting the Paris Agreement, the AF-TERG is keen to reflect on the implications, if any, that could arise from this transition both for the way in which the AF-TERG is structured and the way in which it delivers its evaluation function.

The objectives of Phase 1 of the assessment span three levels¹¹:

- (i) **Objective 1 (Macro/Strategic level):** Assess the relevance and effectiveness of the AF-TERG in supporting the Fund's mission, including how the evaluation function is responsive in supporting the evolving needs of the Fund.
- (ii) **Objective 2 (Meso/Tactical level):** Examine the coherence of AF-TERG with other key institutional functions of the Fund; and assess the extent to which the AF-TERG's independent function is effectively maintained. This also includes an exploration of how the AF-TERG contributes to the Fund's external visibility, credibility, and influence.
- (iii) **Objective 3 (Micro/Operational level):** Assess the efficiency, timeliness and utility of the AF-TERG's work program; including the relevance of its evaluation function and products at the project cycle level.

Key assessment questions

A preliminary list of assessment questions (AQs) developed by the AF-TERG is provided below. The final streamlined set of questions for the assessment will be agreed between the consultant and the AF-TERG during the inception phase:

AQ.1: To what extent does the AF-TERG consider itself fit-for-purpose to support the current and evolving mandate of the Adaptation Fund? [EP criteria: *Relevance, Effectiveness, Adaptive Management*]

- How relevant is the AF-TERG's mandate and work program to the Fund's strategic vision and evolving priorities?
- Is the level of effort pitched at the right level to serve the needs of AF stakeholders?
- Is the AF-TERG structure equipped to respond to evolving Fund needs (e.g., scale, complexity)?
- Are roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines clearly defined and appropriate (both within the AF-TERG and its secretariat, as well as in relation to other parts of the Adaptation Fund)?

AQ.2: To what extent does the AF-TERG consider that its role and positioning facilitate an independent evaluation function while supporting coordination and coherence with the Fund's strategic priorities and internal processes? [EP criteria: *Coherence, Effectiveness*]

- How effectively does the AF-TERG's institutional setup and mandate align with, and complement other core functions and mechanisms of the Adaptation Fund?
- How is the balance between the AF-TERG's independence and institutional coherence understood and managed in its operations and ways of working? What are the perceived benefits/limitations of the current model to the Fund?
- What are the institutional constraints and enablers¹² that impact the work of the AF-TERG? Are there sufficient measures / systems in place to facilitate the enablers and address any constraints? (also relevant to EQ 4).
- In what ways does the AF-TERG contribute to the Fund's visibility and credibility among external stakeholders (e.g., partners, climate finance institutions, COP processes)?

¹¹ These objectives are related to the on-going evaluation of the Fund's systems and processes supporting the governance of the Fund (G/PS).

¹² For example, enablers could include (but are not limited to) availability of quality monitoring data, co-development with the AFB Secretariat of a relevant evidence agenda, and uptake of evaluation recommendations).

AQ.3: To what extent is the AF-TERG contributing to strengthening the Adaptation Fund’s evaluation function and informing learning, decision-making, and supporting adaptive management within the Fund
[EP criteria: Efficiency]

- Is the AF-TERG’s delivery of its work program timely, targeted, and efficient? Are processes and systems adequate in supporting delivery?
- **Fund level:** How well do the AF-TERG’s products meet the operational needs of the Fund and its stakeholders? What mechanisms are in place to support the uptake of AF-TERG deliverables? How are AF-TERG recommendations informing Adaptation Fund strategies, policies, or Board decisions?
- **Project level:** How are the AF-TERG’s frameworks, methodologies, or tools being adopted in project or program evaluations? To what extent is this supporting project-and program-level learning, quality assurance, or adaptive management?
- Has the AF-TERG contributed to strengthening evaluation capacity among implementing entities? (e.g. through guidance, workshops)?

AQ.4: What are the opportunities to enhance the effectiveness, utility, and strategic contribution of the AF-TERG going forward? [EP criteria: Relevance, Sustainability, Impact]

- What is working well, what is working less well?
- Looking ahead, what might help to improve the AF-TERG’s structure, focus, or resourcing?
- How could the AF-TERG support better uptake of its work within the Fund, including in the use of its evaluation work to inform forward-looking insights?
- Are there underutilized functions or potential partnerships that could be explored?

4. Assessment Approach and Methods

The STC is expected to propose an approach and methods for the self-assessment exercise that demonstrate a clear understanding and a good grasp of the Adaptation Fund’s mandate and institutional arrangements. The assessment will adopt a utilization-focused and learning oriented approach and should be guided by the Adaptation Fund’s Evaluation Policy, the AF-TERG’s Terms of Reference, and its multi-year work programme.

The approach will be focused solely as an internal self-reflective internal assessment of the AF-TERG while identifying opportunities for its strategic and operational enhancement. The STC will offer impartial insights and advice to the AF-TERG, and to act as a sounding board to support self-reflection and learning. The AF-TERG will be an active participant in the design of the exercise, in the validation of the findings and recommendations, and in the finalization of the self-assessment report. The data collection, analysis, drafting and other associated activities will be undertaken by the STC.

The AF-TERG Chair will be the focal point for this assignment. The TTL for this work is the AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator. The primary (sole) audience of the self-assessment is the AF-TERG and the AFB Secretariat. The final report, its findings, conclusions and recommendations, are owned by the AF-TERG and will be treated as an internal AF-TERG document only.

Assessment Methodology

The assessment will be conducted in a participatory and consultative manner, that encourages a reflective learning process among stakeholders and that supports open dialogue and critical self-assessment to enhance learning and improvement. The methodology is expected to include collection and analysis of data, synthesizing, and triangulating evidence including methods that are quantitative and qualitative in nature. To ensure the credibility and robustness of the assessment, both primary and secondary data will be collected and used. The methods will remain flexible and adjust to evolving insights or constraints, and could include the following:

- (i) **A Desk-based document review** will enable the consultant to familiarize her/himself with the AF-TERG and the Adaptation Fund, the AF-TERG’s trajectory and performance, and with existing methods and tools to conduct self-assessments. Key documents are listed in Annex 1 to this TOR. The consultant will also review relevant EFC minutes, Board decisions, and operational guidance as well as self-assessment guidance and maturity matrix produced by UNEG¹³ and other relevant materials from the UNEG peer review working group. Where critical data gaps exist, the consultant could draw on specific information from outside the Fund, for example, to enable comparison with evaluation functions of a small set of other similar climate funds or multilateral institutions.
- (ii) **Semi-structured interviews** with all AF-TERG members, and AF-TERG secretariat. The consultant

¹³ https://unevaluation.org/unevaluation_publications/unevaluation-self-assessment-maturity-matrix-un-evaluation-functions

will also consult with the AFB Secretariat senior management team, particularly to gather views on their interaction with the AF-TERG and their assessment of the AF-TERG’s relevance and effectiveness, for example. The details will be agreed with the AF-TERG during the inception stage of this assignment.

- (iii) **Case studies:** Optional deep dives into specific examples of AF-TERG outputs or processes.
- (iv) **Occasional meetings (virtual), and a sense-making reflective workshop** (in-person or virtual -- to be determined) with the AF-TERG to review the findings.

Data management

A clear record (i.e., interview and discussion notes, spreadsheet for quantitative data, etc.) from the data collection activities must be stored, and where requested, anonymized summaries shall be furnished to the AF-TERG and AFB Secretariat. All data collected through this assignment will be the property of the World Bank and by extension, the Adaptation Fund.

5. Self-assessment phases and deliverables

The assignment is for a total of 20 expert days in the period January – March 2026. The assignment will be conducted in the following three stages:

Stage 1: Inception (4 days)

This phase will begin with a kick-off meeting between the consultant and the AF-TERG focal point and AF-TERG secretariat coordinator, followed by a meeting with the AF-TERG to discuss clarifications on the TOR, ways of working, and key delivery dates. Additional meetings may be scheduled to confirm the data collection plan and overall approach.

The three main deliverables include: (i) a brief review (up to 2 pages) of the relevance of the AF-TERG’s Theory of Change framework (which could also help to deepen understanding of the AF-TERG’s spheres of influence), and how this could be applied to assessment; (ii) a concise (up to 5-7 pages) inception report setting out the key questions, methods, and next steps; and (ii) a UNEG-style self-assessment maturity template, with key dimensions and maturity levels (adapted for the AF-TERG) as the basis for self-diagnosis.

Stage 2: Assessment implementation (9 days)

The implementation phase involves data collection and analysis, (including triangulation) building on work done during inception. The main deliverable is the draft findings report which will be discussed, validated, and agreed with AF- TERG (most likely in February 2026). There will also be a validation and feedback process on aspects of the report with the AFB Secretariat before the document is finalized.

Stage 3: Drafting, finalizing and agreeing the report (7 days)

The consultant will draft the report based on the findings and consultations from Stage 2 (above), based on an outline pre-agreed with the AF-TERG. An advanced summary of key findings and recommendations will be prepared for discussion and agreement with the AF-TERG and AFB Secretariat by mid-March 2026, followed by a presentation of the draft report to the AF-TERG and AFB Secretariat. The final report, including the self-assessment maturity matrix, will incorporate comments from the AF-TERG and be ready by end March 2026. Both deliverables will be validated and agreed by the AF-TERG and will be owned by the AF-TERG as an internal document.

Table 1: Milestone Deliverables and Timelines

Stage	Deliverable	No of working days	Timeline
Stage 1: Inception Phase	Kick-off meeting with AF-TERG (this may be in-person – to be confirmed) Quick review of the AF-TERG’s Theory of Change. Inception Report (10-15 pages) Template - self-assessment maturity matrix (adapted to the AF-TERG)	4 days	All activities to be completed within 10 days of the start of the contract. (expected completion date: by mid January 2026)
Stage 2: Assessment Implementation	Present emerging analysis and findings to AF-TERG Validation and feedback with AF-TERG	10 days	To be completed within 15 days of the AF-TERG agreement to the stage 1 report.

			(expected completion by mid February 2026)
Stage 3: Drafting and finalizing the report	<p>Presentation of final report to AF-TERG</p> <p>Submission of final Report with key findings and recommendations</p> <p>Completed self-assessment maturity matrix as agreed with the AF-TERG.</p>	7 days	<p>To be completed within 15 days of AF-TERG agreement to stage 2.</p> <p>(expected completion by end March 2026).</p>

6. Implementation arrangements

The AF-TERG owns the process and all outputs of the assignment – which will be treated as internal document. The AF-TERG will provide feedback, comments and final clearance for all deliverables. Payments will be made after internal clearances of the deliverables are received.

The AF-TERG Chair (as the focal point) will provide strategic guidance and technical steer and monitor the self-assessment during its design and execution. The consultant shall keep the AF-TERG focal point and the AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator abreast of how the assessment is progressing by having regular consultations - for instance, to discuss ongoing analysis, and emerging issues or challenges, before a deliverable is finalized. Ad-hoc meetings may be scheduled as needed.

7. Qualifications and experience

The consultant shall possess the following qualifications and experience:

- (a) At least a Master's degree in applied research, climate change, environmental sciences, or related fields.
- (b) Strong and proven academic background in applied research, climate change, or environmental sciences, with a minimum of a master's level degree or equivalent in a relevant field (climate change adaptation; international development; social sciences or related area). PhD will be a plus.
- (c) Minimum of 15+ years of experience in leading and implementing mixed method evaluations or institutional assessments, ideally at corporate level. Experience with climate change evaluations is a plus.
- (d) Experience with independent evaluation functions across diverse organizations, particularly in multilateral institutions such as the World Bank or climate funds is preferred.
- (e) Experience of working within evaluating units, or of undertaking institutional assessments of evaluation units is highly desirable.
- (f) Knowledge of World Bank administrative systems and operations would be an advantage.
- (g) Proven ability to effectively engage with senior interlocutors and diverse stakeholders.
- (h) Ability to communicate complex technical details with clarity, and ability to identify and focus on the key messages among competing detail.
- (i) Ability to communicate sensitively with diverse AF stakeholders across geographies, including on issues that might be perceived as locally sensitive.
- (j) Strong knowledge of the climate finance landscape and of UNFCCC processes is a plus.
- (k) Familiarity with UNEG and its peer review processes is an advantage.

8. Other Arrangements

Location

The work will be conducted remotely. The consultant is expected to work during EST time zone office hours as needed.

Travel

This assignment will be conducted remotely. There may be need for a face-to-face meeting between the consultant and the AF-TERG in January 2026. Any travel undertaken during this consultancy, if deemed necessary, will be arranged and covered separately.

Contracting Arrangements

The assignment will be undertaken by a short-term consultant (STC) hired through the World Bank. This ToR will be governed by the relevant Adaptation Fund Board decisions and World Bank administrative rules. In case of any contradictions, the World Bank administrative rules and the Adaptation Fund Board decisions will prevail. The TTL of for this work within the World Bank administrative system is the AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator.

9. Contact

Task Team Leader (TTL): Vladislav Arnaoudov, AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator & Senior Evaluation Officer

Please submit your CV by February 4, 2026 to varnaoudov@adaptation-fund.org

Annex 1:

The key documents that will be essential in the internal self-reflective assessment include the following:

- (i) The Fund's second medium term strategy (MTS2), and the Fund's Evaluation Policy guide the work of the AF-TERG and form the backdrop for how it interacts with other parts of the system.
- (ii) The AF-TERG's multi-year work program outlines its key priorities, deliverables, and resources
- (iii) Foundational documents include the AF-TERG's Theory of Change and its core principles.
- (iv) The AF-TERG's TOR outline its structure and mandate. TORs for the Chair, and the AF-TERG members, and of job descriptions of the AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator and AF-TERG Secretariat Staff further detail roles and responsibilities, and ways of working.
- (v) Additional background information on the ways of working can be found in the two organizational development review reports of the AF-TERG, completed in 2021 and 2022.
- (vi) Relevant World Bank rules and policy should also be referred to as they guide various aspects of the operations of the AF-TERG, which is administratively hosted by the World Bank.