Guidance in Support of the Operationalization of the Evaluation Policy

Baseline Data Report

Technical Evaluation Reference Group
ADAPTATION FUND

This guidance note is part of a series of technical guidance from the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) supporting reliable, useful, and ethical evaluations aligned with the Adaptation Fund's Evaluation Policy. This guidance note has been developed by the AF-TERG with inputs from the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat (AFB Secretariat). Special thanks to Sithabiso Gandure, Aneesh Kotru, Vladislav Arnaoudov, as well as all the members of the AF-TERG and the AFB Secretariat who provided support in the delivery and finalization of this guidance note.

AF-TERG guidance documents are intended to be succinct, but with sufficient information to practically guide users, pointing to additional resources when appropriate. Additional AF-TERG evaluation resources on various topics can be accessed at the online AF-TERG Evaluation Resource Webpage. Feedback is welcome and can be sent to AF-TERG-SEC@adaptation-fund.org.

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

The Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) is an independent evaluation advisory group accountable to the Fund Board. It was established in 2018 to ensure the independent implementation of the Fund's evaluation framework, which was succeeded by the new evaluation policy from October 2023 onwards. The AF-TERG, which is headed by a chair, provides an evaluative advisory role through performing evaluative, advisory and oversight functions. The group is comprised of independent experts in evaluation, called the AF-TERG members. A full-time secretariat provides support for the implementation of evaluative and advisory activities as part of the work programme. While independent of the operations of the Adaptation Fund, the aim of the AF-TERG is to add value to the Fund's work through independent monitoring, evaluation, and learning, www.adaptation-fund.org/about/evaluation/

Table of Contents

Acronyms

AF	Adaptation Fund
AF-TERG	Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund
BDR	Baseline Data Report
EP	Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund
ESP	Adaptation Fund Environmental and Social Policy
GP	Adaptation Fund Gender Policy
IE	Implementing Entity
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PPR	Project Performance Report
RBM	Results-Based Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-based
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
ToC	Theory of Change

Glossary

Adaptation Fund (AF):
A multilateral climate fund established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process that finances concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

Baseline Data Report (BDR):
A stand alone report prepared by an Implementing Entity to document baseline values, methods, and data sources for all indicators in the approved project/programme results framework, when complete baseline data are not submitted through the funding proposal.

Evaluation Policy (EP):
The Adaptation Fund's policy that sets out principles, standards, and requirements for evaluation across the Fund's activities, including expectations for baselines and results measurement.

Implementing Entity (IE):
A national, regional, or multilateral organization accredited by the Adaptation Fund to design and implement projects and programmes, and to report on their results, including baseline data.

Locally Led Adaptation (LLA):
Approaches and activities that place local actors, institutions, and communities at the center of decision making, design, implementation, and monitoring of adaptation actions. LLA components may require phased or flexible approaches to baseline data collection.

Project Performance Report (PPR):
The annual report submitted by Implementing Entities to the Adaptation Fund Secretariat, providing information on implementation progress, including, inter alia, results, risks, and lessons learned.

Strategic Results Framework (SRF):
The Adaptation Fund's overarching fund level results based management framework that defines goals, impacts, outcomes, outputs, and indicators to guide, measure, and aggregate adaptation results across all projects and programme.

Unidentified Sub Projects (USPs):
Project/programme activities that have not been formulated, at the time of submission of a funding request, to the extent that their environmental and social risks can be identified in line with the ESP are called Unidentified Sub-Projects (USPs). USPs may require a phased approach to baseline data collection and reporting.

1. What is this guidance note?

1.1 Mandate and purpose

This guidance note responds to the mandate given by the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB) at its forty-fifth meeting through Decision B.45/52, where the Board decided 'to request the AF-TERG, in consultation with the secretariat, to develop an evaluation policy guidance document for Baseline Data Reports (BDR).' This guidance note also responds to the Board's mandate to strengthen project level baselines and results frameworks under the Fund's Evaluation Policy (2022).

The Evaluation Policy (EP) of the Adaptation Fund (AF) in paragraph 23(a)(i) requires Implementing Entities (IE) to prepare and submit BDRs in line with the Fund's "Results Framework and baseline guidance" (which is now replaced by the Strategic Results Framework Guidance Document) and no later than the submission of the first Project Performance Report (PPR).

The purpose of this document is to guide Adaptation Fund (AF) Implementing Entities (IEs) on how to plan, collect, and report baseline data for projects and programmes. It provides practical instructions on establishing the "starting point" for measuring results, ensuring that projects can effectively track progress toward their objectives.

Crucially, this guidance aims to provide clarity on timeline implications and offer flexible options tailored to different project types (such as locally led adaptation (LLA), innovation grants, or any other projects with Unidentified Sub-Projects (USP)), ensuring compliance without imposing undue prescriptive burdens on the IEs.

1.2 Scope and application

This guidance applies to all Adaptation Fund projects and programmes funded through National Implementing Entities (NIEs), Regional Implementing Entities (RIEs), and Multilateral Implementing Entities (MIEs). In line with the Evaluation Policy, the requirement to provide baseline information applies to all project types, though the format and timing may vary depending on the type of funding window, and the design and implementation modalities.

In this context, the guidance takes a 'policy equivalence' approach, implying that the requirement of baseline data report can be met through a standalone baseline data report, or other means such as baseline data provision in funding proposals or PPRs (See Box 1). The core requirement addressed in the Guidance Note is that actionable baseline data must be made available, either through the proposal or during the first year of implementation, to enable meaningful tracking of the results and success of the interventions.

> **BOX 1: Policy Equivalency Scenarios**
>
> 1. Baseline data submitted at the project proposal stage using the AF proposal template.
>
> 2. Baseline data submitted with the first Project Performance Report (PPR), using the AF PPR template.

1.3 Intended audience

This guidance is targeted at:

- Project proponents/design teams: Who develop results frameworks, indicators and baseline planning during the funding proposal design stage.
- Implementing Entities (NIEs, RIEs, MIEs): Who are responsible for monitoring, reporting, and complying with AF policies.
- Executing Entities: Who collect baseline data and ongoing data management during implementation.
- Independent Evaluators of AF funded projects.
- AF staff/technical teams that review funding proposal and PPRs.

1.4 What are the benefits of baseline data reporting?

Establishing robust baseline data is the foundation of Results-Based Management (RBM). Baseline data are used to characterize the prevailing conditions that inform an intervention, describe average conditions and their variability, identify ongoing trends or cycles, and create a reference for comparing future changes. The key benefits include:

- Accountability: It specifies the reference situation against which changes over time are compared, allowing the Fund to verify whether intended results have been achieved.

- Learning and adaptive management: It helps project managers understand the initial conditions (e.g., vulnerability, climate risk) allowing project teams to adjust interventions as contexts and assumptions change.
- Impact measurement: It enables the calculation of the project's true contribution to adaptation resilience by providing the "before" snapshot for the "before-and-after" comparison.
- Evaluation: It enables the credible assessment of project performance by providing an accurate starting point needed to assess change, track results, and understand reasons for lack of change. Evaluators are able to better assess change and draw lessons about what worked, for whom, and why.

2. What is baseline data reporting?

2.1 Definition

Baseline data reporting is the submission of analysis, metrics and baseline values that describe the situation prior to AF-funded intervention. It specifies the reference condition for project indicators against which progress can be assessed over time.

2.2 What baseline data should be reported?

Baseline data reporting should document the pre-intervention situation as defined in the approved Project/Programme Results Framework. IEs are required to provide baseline data for the following:

- Project indicators: Specific indicators defined in the project proposal (e.g., "percentage of households with improved water access").
- Core indicators: Standardized AF indicators that are explicitly required for aggregation and reporting (e.g., "Number of beneficiaries," "Physical assets improved or constructed to withstand climate variability and change").
- Relevant contextual data: Information on climate risks and vulnerability trends that justify the intervention.

2.3 Types of baseline data reporting

Depending on the project modality, baseline reporting generally falls into two main categories:

- Standard baseline reporting: For projects or programmes where interventions are fully defined at design stage, the project/ programme results framework should include clearly specified indicators, baseline values, and targets from the outset. Baseline data are expected to cover all relevant outcomes and outputs and are to be reported based on the existing proposal and through the PPR templates.
- Phased baseline reporting: For projects with Unidentified Sub-Projects (USPs), Locally Led Adaptation (LLA), or innovation grants, a full set of baseline values may not be available at the design stage. In such cases, a more general results framework is submitted at approval, with specific

baseline data reported later through PPRs, once those sub-projects have been identified.

2.4 When should baseline data reporting take place?

The timing of baseline reporting is informed by policy requirements and availability of reliable data:

- At design stage (where feasible): Baseline data should be included in the fully developed project proposal to ensure expectations and targets are realistic from the start.
- By the first PPR (Mandatory): In line with the EP, all baseline data must be submitted no later than the first PPR.
- For phased modalities (e.g. USPs/LLA): For sub-projects identified after the first year (after approval), baseline data should be established and reported in the earliest possible PPR following the identification of those sub-projects.

3. How to plan for baseline data reporting?

3.1 During project proposal preparation

Planning for baseline data is recommended to begin at the design stage. Project proponents need to take the following steps.

- Define indicators: Define a clear set of project indicators, following the Adaptation Fund's existing guidance on project-level results frameworks and core indicators. Select indicators that are relevant to the project's logical framework (logframe). The above guidance remains the primary reference for selecting outcome and output level indicators, aligning them with the updated Strategic Results Framework, and requires choosing at least one relevant core indicator per project and other core indicators as relevant. This guidance note does not replace or revise the indicator selection guidance; rather, it cross-references and builds upon it by explaining when and how to generate and report baseline data for the selected indicators.
- Assess data availability: Conduct a rapid assessment of existing data sources (e.g., national statistics, prior studies, etc.) to see what data already exists and where primary data collection will be required.
- Budget for baseline data collection: Allocate adequate resources for baseline data collection (surveys, expert assessments) in the project formulation grant or the M&E budget of the project.
- Address sensitivities: Identify potential barriers to data collection, such as societal sensitivities (e.g., household income in certain regions) or physical access issues, and plan for backup indicators, if necessary.

Further practical guidance on how to complete the proposal template, including the results framework, indicators and M&E sections, is provided in the SRF Guidance Document and the Evaluation Policy Guidance Note on Evaluation in Project Design. Implementing Entities are encouraged to use these guidance documents in parallel when preparing project and programme proposals.

3.2 After project inception

For projects where provision of complete baseline data set is not feasible at the design stage (e.g., USPs, LLA, or innovation grants), the inception phase becomes a critical window for completing baseline reporting. Project proponents are encouraged to take the following steps:

- Conduct a baseline gap analysis: Systematically identify which indicators lack baseline data and prioritize them for immediate data generation.
- Validate indicators and baseline approach: Use the inception workshop to validate indicators with stakeholders, agree on baseline methodologies, and clarify institutional responsibilities for data collection.
- Undertake data collection: Conduct field surveys or assessments to fill gaps before major interventions begin.
- Update the results framework: Formally update the project results framework with the newly collected baseline data and submit this in the first Project Performance Report (PPR) (or the most immediate one for LLA, Innovation, and any other project with USPs), or earlier if practically possible or preferred.

In cases where a concise standalone baseline data report is submitted by an IE, existing guidance/ sample baseline reports can serve as references in terms of formatting and content.

3.3 Stand-alone baseline data reports

Implementing Entities can still opt to provide a stand-alone baseline data report after project approval and prior to the first PPR. In that case, the guidance in Annex 1 can be used to prepare the baseline data report (use the accompanying MS Excel template to fill in the baseline data).

3.4 Key planning considerations

Key planning considerations help IEs comply with reporting requirements as per the Evaluation Policy and integrate baseline data smoothly into the project design and implementation without creating unnecessary burden. This section highlights practical choices that should be made early on - including those related to methods, timing, resources, and responsibilities - so that baseline data are feasible to collect, aligned with AF indicator and SRF requirements, and sufficient to support credible monitoring, evaluation and learning over the life of the project. This section should be read in conjunction with the Evaluation Policy Guidance Notes on Project Design and on Budgeting for Evaluation.

Key planning considerations for BDR compliance are:

- **What must be reported:** Identify which outcomes and indicators require baseline values and ensure each has all relevant fields populated, as per the reporting template in Annex 1.
- **How to document:** Decide whether the reporting protocols will be fulfilled through baseline information in the approved project document and/or first PPR, or whether a standalone BDR is needed. Choose methods that balance cost, speed, and accuracy. (e.g., Is a full household survey needed, or will focus group discussions suffice?).
- **When data will be collected:** Plan baseline data collection and validation so required values are available by the first PPR. Additionally, balance robust data needs with start-up timelines: use "good enough" data to begin urgent interventions and refine later where possible.
- **Phased modalities:** For projects/programmes with sub projects identified after approval (e.g. project with USPs, LLA, and Innovation projects), submit a general results framework at design and report full baseline data for each sub project in the earliest possible PPR (preferably the first) after they are identified.
- **Who is responsible:** Assign clear responsibilities for compiling, checking and submitting baseline data and coordinate this with preparation of the first PPR."

4. How to report baseline data?

4.1 Baseline data reporting structure

The Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund requires a standalone "Baseline Data Report" document as one of the three mandatory evaluations in the Adaptation Fund, the other two being the mid-term evaluation and the final evaluation. However, in practical terms, baseline data are often included in the project proposal or the first PPR. Therefore, this guidance note takes the policy equivalence approach where the stand-alone document is prepared only if baseline data is not provided through other equivalent documents. In terms of current practice, complete baseline data are primarily reported through the PPR template. IEs may provide baseline data through other project documents (e.g., proposal, first PPR) or, if they prefer, submit a stand alone baseline report using the structure in Annex 1.

The remaining part of this section provides insight into the structure of the stand-alone baseline data report to be developed and submitted by the IEs.

The required structure of the stand-along report template (Annex 1) includes:

- Project indicators table: A results matrix listing all project indicators, including core indicators, their unit of measurement, the baseline value, the target value, the data source, data collection method and the responsible entity.
- Methodology Note: A brief narrative explaining how the values were derived (e.g., "Baseline estimate based on a stratified random sample of 200 households in District X and District Y, using a national household survey questionnaire as the core data source; data collected between January 1st and March 31st, 2024").

Note: The structure and content of the PPR may be updated periodically. IEs should always refer to the most recent PPR template and guidance available in the dedicated online PPR module, which reflects the latest approved sections and requirements.

4.2 Key reporting considerations

It is important to highlight that the requirement to provide baseline information applies across all Adaptation Fund projects and programmes.

When describing the baseline, for example in the narrative sections of the first PPR or project proposal, IEs should:

- Contextualize the data: Refrain from just listing a number in isolation (e.g., "30% vulnerability"). Instead, briefly explain why it is that way (e.g., "High vulnerability due to recent drought and lack of irrigation").
- Disaggregate data: Wherever possible, break down baseline data by gender, age, and vulnerable groups (e.g., indigenous peoples) to allow for equity focused monitoring and learning.
- Link to climate context: Briefly mention the climate context (e.g., "Baseline reflects current conditions under increasing rainfall variability") to justify the adaptation rationale and interpretability of results over time.

As mentioned previously, an IE may also choose to prepare and submit a standalone Baseline Data Report before the first PPR. However, the same baseline information should still be reflected in the AF project proposal or submitted PPRs.

BOX 2: Note on collecting and reporting baseline data

This guidance document is a supplement to the AF Strategic Results Framework guidance document. For detailed definitions of indicators, methodologies for data collection, and examples of how to establish and report baselines for specific AF indicators, Implementing Entities should refer to AFs Strategic Results Framework and its guidance document.

4.3 Reporting formats and dissemination

- Primary format: The stand-alone baseline data shall be reported in the format as described in Annex 1, which aligns with the data reporting format within the PPR.
- Timing of submission: The stand-alone baseline data can be formally submitted any time after the project proposal approval and prior to the first PPR submission.
- Dissemination: While the primary audience is the AF Board (for accountability), IEs are encouraged to share baseline findings with national

stakeholders (e.g., government partners, communities) to validate findings and build ownership.

4.4 Quality Assurance for Baseline Reporting

Before submission, the IE should check the baseline data against the following quality criteria and questions:

- Validity: Does the data actually measure what it claims to measure?
- Reliability: Is the source credible? If the same method is repeated in three years, will it be comparable?
- Completeness: Is there baseline data for every indicator in the framework? (If not, is there a clear plan to get it?).
- Alignment: Do the baseline units match the target units? (e.g., don't have a baseline in "% of households" and a target in "number of people").

ANNEX 1. Baseline Data Reporting Template and Checklist

(Source: Table 3. Project-specific results framework template, Page 25 of [SRF Guidance Document]())

Project Results	Indicator	Disaggregation Categories	Baseline	Target		Means of Verification			Risks, Assumptions, Notes
				Mid-term	Final	Methods and Sources	Responsible Party	Frequency	
Impact									
Impact 1									
Impact 2									
Outcomes and outputs									
Outcome 1	*Project-specific indicators*	*Disaggregation categories relevant for indicator*	*The starting value of the indicator before project implementation* *Include baselines for disaggregation categories*	*The estimated value of the indicator at the mid-point of implementation* *Include targets for disaggregation categories*	*The estimate value of the indicator at the end of implementation* *Include targets for disaggregation categories*	*Sources of information and methods used to measure and report progress against targets*	*Project team responsibilities for measuring and reporting progress against targets*	*Frequency of data collection / reporting*	*If needed, factors that may affect feasibility of monitoring and reporting*
Output 1.1									
Output 1.2									
Outcome 2									
Output 2.1									
Output 2.2									
Outcome 3									
Output 3.1									
Output 3.2									

ANNEX 2. Additional BDR Guidance Background and Resources

Mandate and purpose

This guidance note responds to the original mandate by the Board to strengthen project-level baselines and results frameworks as part of the Fund's results-based management and evaluation system, as set out in the Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund approved in 2022.

This guidance note is also aligned with the Adaptation Fund Board's decision B.42/46, which approved the AF-TERG multi-year work programme and tasked the AF-TERG with developing policy guidance on baseline data to support the operationalization of the Evaluation Policy.

Relationship to Other Policies and Guidance

This guidance supports the operationalization of AF's Evaluation Policy and is aligned with the updated Adaptation Fund Strategic Results Framework (SRF) guidance document, as approved by the AFB under Decision B.45/3 (AFB/B.45/8).

- The Evaluation Policy (EP): The Evaluation Policy requires the preparation and submission of baseline data within the reporting cycle, no later than the first Project Performance Report (PPR), to strengthen results-based management, evaluability, and performance assessment while minimizing duplication of reporting efforts.
- Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and Guidance Document: Baseline data are essential for aligning project indicators with Fund-level outcomes and for tracking results consistently. This guidance note should therefore be read alongside the updated SRF guidance document.
- Guidance Note on Evaluation Policy considerations in project design: This baseline data guidance builds on the AF-TERG Guidance Note on Evaluation in Project Design, which provides guidance on how projects should articulate a theory of change, define outcomes, and select indicators and data sources at design stage, by explaining how to plan and implement baseline data collection for those indicators, so that the evidence needed for future evaluations is available and of sufficient quality.