Approach Paper: Guidelines for Climate Mitigation Evaluations

Climate-Eval community of practice
– Draft as of February 8, 2012[1]

I. Summary

This paper presents the approach for crafting guidelines for evaluating climate change mitigation measures. The preparation of the guidelines is the third Climate-Eval study, and will be conducted in the context of evaluating programs and projects which include the dual objectives of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and sustainable development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The study will build on the concepts and tools developed in the previous Climate-Eval study "*Meta-Evaluation of Mitigation Evaluations"* conducted by Dr. Christine Woerlen. In addition, the OECD DAC criteria will be further operationalized by posing assessment questions. Other suitable project and program criteria and indicators will be identified that are applicable to different types of climate mitigation interventions. These are necessary to reflect the extent to which climate mitigation goals, objectives and targets are being met by strategies, programs and projects. The guidelines are intended to:

a. outline and describe the steps in conducting climate mitigation evaluation;
b. operationalize the OECD DAC evaluation criteria and identify criteria in the context of and applicable to the evaluation of climate change mitigation interventions that will allow the comparability of such evaluations; and
c. create a toolbox containing tools, methodologies and approaches for verifying the reduction of GHG emissions, particularly in conducting ex-post evaluations

The Climate-Eval community of practice will be consulted during the key steps of the guidelines preparation. Furthermore, the draft guidelines will be presented to interested evaluation professionals via a Climate-Eval webinar. The interactions with the Climate-Eval community of practice aim to validate the guidelines' practical application.

II. Background

The establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change seeks to address the wide scientific consensus of anthropogenic climate change caused by the increasing GHG emission. Agreed upon during the 1992 Earth Summit, the Convention aims to stabilize GHG concentrations in the atmosphere, now commonly known as 'climate change mitigation'. The Convention indicated mitigation (and adaptation) to climate change as a strategy that signatory countries need to implement, and that the corresponding financing should be made available for developing countries ("Annex II" countries) to support such measures. Since then, the range of mitigation measures that have been proposed is staggering, yet the identification and evaluation of the most effective and cost-effective climate mitigation actions remain unclear.

The GEF EO recognized this issue, and in 2008, organized the Alexandria Conference which gathered participants to discuss the state-of-the-art of climate change and development evaluation. The conference participants called for the creation of a network of evaluators, now known as the Climate-Eval community of practice or "Climate-Eval", whose domain of work is to improve the evaluation of

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climate change and development action through knowledge sharing and capacity building. Members of Climate-Eval are composed of evaluation practitioners in the field of climate change from different institutions and countries all over the world, reaching at least 600 members to date. One of the goals of Climate-Eval is to initiate new developments on climate change evaluation standards and frameworks, and promote the initiative among interested individuals and organizations. It is initially supported by the Swedish International Development Agency, the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, and the GEF EO.

III. Rationale for the guidelines

Evaluation guidelines for climate mitigation promote accountability and improvement of projects and programs with the dual objectives of reducing GHG emissions and sustainable development. The application of evaluation guidelines and standards can harmonize evaluation approaches and increase comparability between findings, thus allowing for a higher value evaluations and evaluation findings that could be used for meta-evaluations.

Various agencies and professional associations publish evaluation guidelines as instructive reference for evaluation units and entities to follow to subsequently enhance the quality and utility of evaluations of program and projects. Information arising from these evaluations may be used for a) budget allocation decisions, b) funding decisions on proposed projects and programs with similar objectives, and perhaps most importantly c) informing and improving the design and implementation of programs and projects. When applied with diligence to different project and program evaluations, the approaches, methodologies and tools contained in evaluation guidelines could provide robust information on the performance of a project or program and valuable information on appropriate evaluation practices. Moreover, the comparison of the performance of a variety of interventions across different themes will be possible.

The proposed guidelines will be cognizant of existing evaluation guidelines, policies, and criteria issued by evaluation agencies. As such, it aims to complement them and substantiate other aspects of evaluation by establishing evidence of reduced GHG emissions as impacts and outcomes of a particular climate change intervention.

Perhaps the most widely-adopted principles for evaluating development projects were formulated by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Established to oversee the improvement of aid delivery or official development assistance, the DAC adopted the Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance which include a set of criteria for evaluating development cooperation programs and projects, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

While development aid and climate finance are similar in some respects, it should be recognized that there may be divergence particularly in terms of timeliness, appropriateness, complementarity, additionality, among other aspects. Furthermore, time lag inherent to climate mitigation interventions exists in observing and realizing the outcomes of these measures. This may create a bias against these interventions when subjected to the OECD DAC criteria or impact evaluation in general. The OECD DAC criteria which were developed to assess aid effectiveness may need to be further operationalized and/or other criteria need to be developed to measure and approximate the outcomes of climate mitigation projects.

The impacts of climate change as a development agenda, climate finance, and the implementation of corresponding measures have risen in the previous years. The evaluation of these measures calls for interpretation of existing criteria and subsequently the development of new indicators that capture the nuance of climate change mitigation measures. Methodologies, indicators for evaluation, and calculation tools for GHG reductions have been developed for this purpose, yet an overarching framework that could guide evaluators in assessing the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of interventions has yet to be crafted and agreed upon. This document proposes the development of evaluation guidelines that describes approaches and provides assessment tools for evaluating climate mitigation interventions.

The preparation of guidelines for mitigation evaluation will include developing evaluation tools, substantiating criteria and indicators in the context of climate change mitigation, and creating a complementary toolbox. This initiative can contribute to the enhancement of the quality of climate mitigation project and program evaluation, and effectively improve investments of development aid through accurate and timely reporting and strengthened accountability.

IV. Key Questions of the Study

Preparing the *Guidelines for Mitigation Evaluations* will involve systematically addressing key issues as identified in the literature and suggestions gathered from the Climate-Eval community of practice. The main objective is to come up with a standardized set of practical guidelines that will provide a series of steps in conducting evaluations, including approaches and tools which will enable the comparison of evaluation reports on climate change mitigation interventions. The guidelines will address the following issues:

a. What are the necessary steps when evaluating climate change mitigation interventions?
b. How can the OECD DAC criteria (i.e., effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, impact and sustainability) be applied to climate mitigation projects and be operationalized to determine the success of such measures in relation to reducing GHG emissions and sustainable development?
c. What other criteria are applicable to climate mitigation programs?
d. What evaluation principles and reporting requirements should evaluators consider when evaluating climate change mitigation interventions?
e. What evaluation approaches and tools can assist the ex-post measurement and calculation of GHG emission reduction?

V. Methodology

This approach paper will be sent or presented in an online meeting to Climate-Eval members and other interested stakeholders for their comments. The comments will be considered for integration in the approach paper as necessary. Thereafter, the terms of reference will be formulated in coordination with the senior consultant.

Literature review. A review of related literature will be conducted to establish the state-of-the-art of evaluation guidelines on development projects and programs, and evaluation guidelines designed particularly for climate change interventions. These evaluation guidelines may include those issued by multilateral and bilateral organizations and development cooperation agencies. In addition, climate change and development strategies and M&E policies of different organizations will be considered in the literature review. Evaluation reports of projects, programs and programs with the objective of reducing GHG emission will be considered for the preparation of the guidelines. The Climate-Eval electronic

library already contains a number of evaluation reports of GEF-funded and other projects and programs that could be considered for review.

Applying the barrier-strategy analysis for evaluation. Concepts from the previous Climate-Eval study "*Meta-Evaluation of Mitigation Evaluations"* conducted by Dr. Christine Woerlen will be central to the evaluation approach proposed in the guidelines[2]. While this study was developed particular to energy efficiency market transformation, the formulation of the evaluation guidelines can glean insights into its application to other climate mitigation strategies. In particular, the "The Theory of No Change" can assist in shaping an evaluation and provide an approach that compares the outcomes of an intervention (e.g., project, program, or policy) to barriers in market transformation. The study identified 17 barriers from which outcome indicators could be identified and integrated in the evaluation guideline. Furthermore, one of the recommendations in the study includes the development of outcome indicators as the next step in developing a general framework for climate change mitigation.

The market transformation tool, also developed in the meta-evaluation study, will be included as part of the climate mitigation evaluation toolbox. It is a visualization tool that can show the extent to which market transformation interventions for energy efficiency address barriers according to different stakeholders.

Development of an evaluation matrix. An evaluation matrix including instructions on its application will be developed. The matrix will include key questions, identification of targets and indicators, sources of data and means of verification.

Assessing outcomes and objectives using the OECD DAC criteria. As applicable, the OECD DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability should be elaborated and operationalized in the context of evaluating climate change projects and programs. The criteria could be further substantiated by formulating assessment questions, and describing the extent and limitations to which they could be applied on climate mitigation project and program evaluations.

Criteria for rating quality of final evaluation reports. Other criteria to assess the overall quality of the final evaluation reports will be identified. These criteria can facilitate the review of evaluation reports to assess the extent to which the following dimensions are considered in the reports.

Toolbox. A toolbox containing 'best practice' tools, methodologies and other resources for evaluating mitigation, including methods to calculate and measure GHG emissions will complement and accompany the evaluation guidelines. The tools and methodologies will include a description and instructions on how to use the tool. To the extent possible, they will be ranked according to their usefulness and based on their applicability for certain tasks and/or types of climate mitigation projects or programs. The tools can be gathered from organizations and agencies which already developed climate mitigation evaluation tools. When uploaded on the Climate-Eval website, they can also be organized into different categories to assist in finding the most relevant tool specific to the users' needs, such as according to geographic region, type of project or program, or other any user-friendly interface.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

A senior consultant will lead the preparation of the *Guidelines for Mitigation Study*, hired by the GEF Evaluation Office on behalf of the Climate-Eval community of practice. The Climate-Eval moderator,

[2] Visit http://climate-eval.org/node/28 for more information on the Meta-Evaluation of Mitigation Evaluations

Andrew Zubiri, will facilitate the communication and discussion between the consultant and the community members, via focus group discussions, postings on the Climate-Eval forum, and email. The community members will also be consulted during the key steps of the study, such as in the design of the approach paper, review of the methodology, identification of key documents and stakeholders, among others.

Self-selected members of the Climate-Eval community of practice and experts will be consulted in key steps of the guideline preparation, such as in the identification of scope, guidelines' target users, validation of results, and addressing the main issues that will be encountered in conducting the study, among others. The consultant will present the preliminary results of the guidelines and toolbox to the community of practice, and other forums to solicit additional comments.

VII. Schedule

The preparation of the guidelines will be conducted between March 2012 and May 2012. The consultant is required to propose a detailed schedule of activities outlining the key steps of the study.

VIII. Budget

Preparation of the budget for the guidelines preparation is underway. Other tasks required will be carried out by Climate-Eval moderation team, and will not have any additional budget implications.

IX. References

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