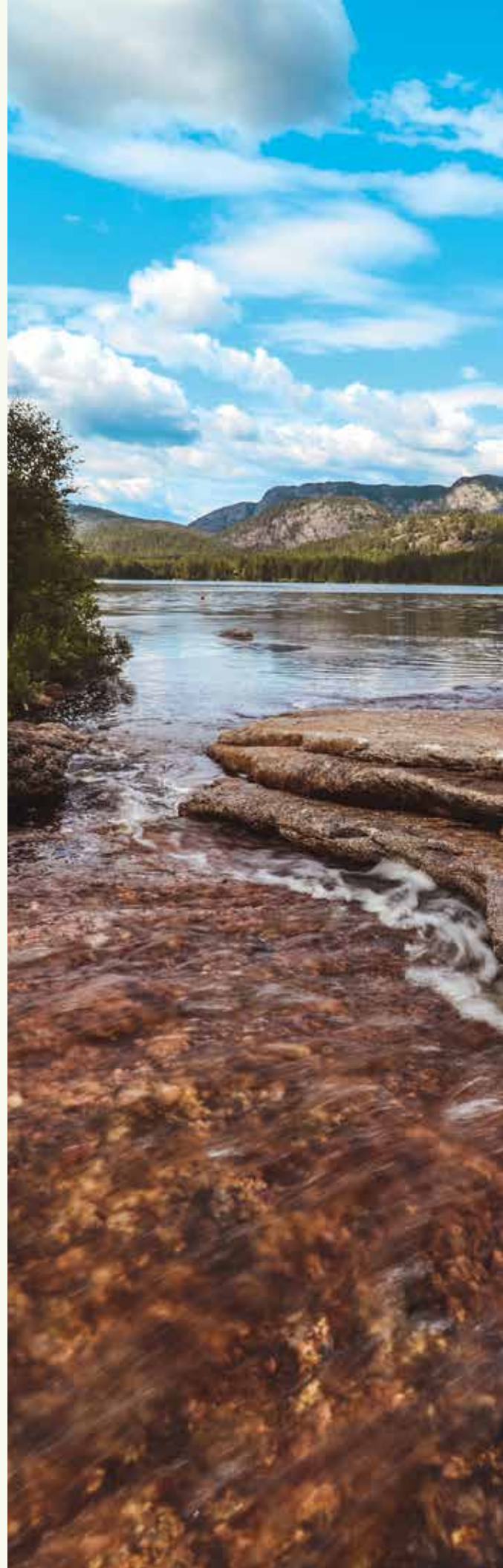# 4 Evaluation

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Table of Contents

Evaluation is the systematic assessment of an ongoing or completed intervention. It usually examines the intervention's design, implementation, and effects to determine its worth, quality, value, and importance. Evaluation helps to ensure accountability to the intervention's funders and other stakeholders as well as increase understanding of and learning from the intervention, its context, and its theories of change to improve future interventions. The process of performing an evaluation can be approached in many ways.

This chapter will help you:

- Understand how the intended uses and audience of your evaluation should guide its design and methodology.

- Become familiar with how to integrate conflict sensitivity into all stages of planning and conducting your evaluation.

- Consider ways to make your evaluation more inclusive and gender sensitive.

- Become familiar with multiple evaluation approaches that can be used in environmental peacebuilding interventions as well as their respective benefits and limitations.

4.1. Introduction

Evaluation is the systematic assessment of an ongoing or completed intervention's design, implementation, and effects to determine its worth, quality, value, and importance. Evaluations often utilize monitoring data in addition to collecting more in-depth information that examine the *how* and *why* of an intervention. These assessments can take place at various points during an intervention's implementation, from beginning to end and even some time after an intervention concludes. Decisions regarding when and how to evaluate should be driven by the objective of the evaluation itself, which in turn is linked to learning questions[1] and accountability needs.

INTERVENTION CYCLE

DESIGN
MONITORING
EVALUATION
IMPLEMENTATION
LEARNING
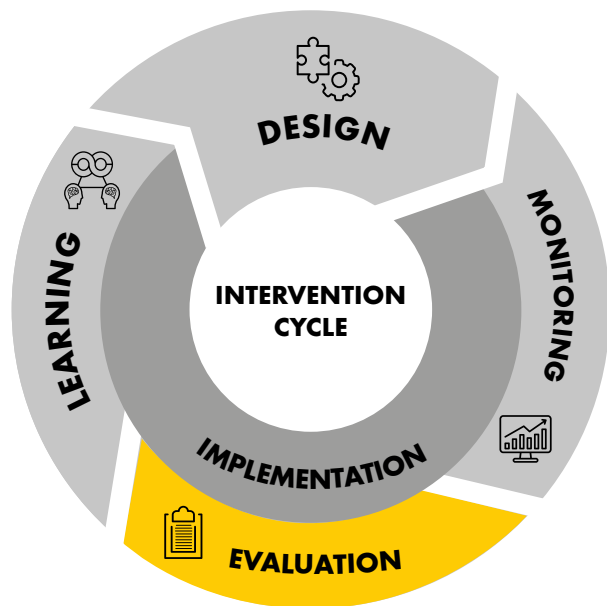
1. For more information on learning questions, see Chapter 2 (Design).

Evaluations are often undertaken for accountability purposes. **Accountability means being responsible for doing the work that you said you would do; conforming to certain standards, norms, or requirements in doing that work; and being transparent about the process, effects, and results of the work.** There are multiple kinds or directions of accountability: upward to funders, downward to beneficiaries or participants, horizontal to peer organizations, and inward accountability within an organization (Simister 2018) (see Figure 4.1). Upward accountability focuses on fulfilling specific commitments to take actions and achieve results, as well as accounting for how money and other resources were used. Downward accountability focuses on accountability to beneficiaries or other participants, particularly community members, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local administrators (rather than funders), considering who benefits how much and how, as well as opportunities for local people to participate in the initiative. Horizontal accountability focuses on sharing information with peer organizations, adhering to informal and formal agreements, and meeting shared standards. Finally, inward accountability focuses on adhering to the standards and procedures of the organization undertaking the intervention.

Although evaluations frequently focus on upward accountability as a condition of funding, other forms of accountability are also important in the context of environmental peacebuilding. Downward accountability is particularly important because it addresses participation and stakeholder engagement, which

can build local support for the intervention and substantially influence whether the benefits are sustained after the initiative ends.[2] Moreover, horizontal accountability and inward accountability are important in helping organizations, practitioners, and decisionmakers to learn what works under what circumstances and thereby improve environmental peacebuilding interventions.
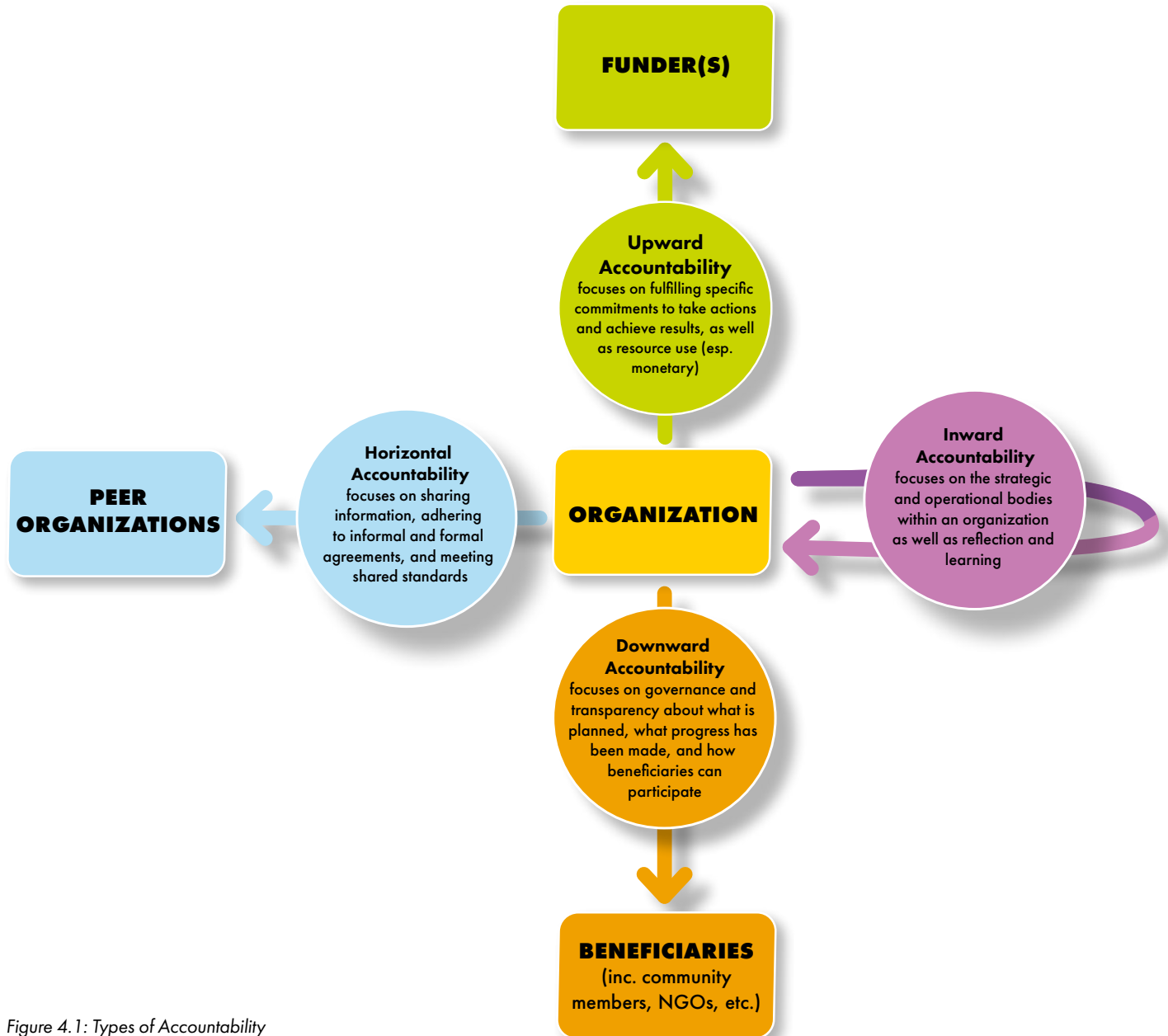
FUNDER(S)

Upward Accountability
focuses on fulfilling specific commitments to take actions and achieve results, as well as resource use (esp. monetary)

Horizontal Accountability
focuses on sharing information, adhering to informal and formal agreements, and meeting shared standards

PEER ORGANIZATIONS

ORGANIZATION

Inward Accountability
focuses on the strategic and operational bodies within an organization as well as reflection and learning

Downward Accountability
focuses on governance and transparency about what is planned, what progress has been made, and how beneficiaries can participate

BENEFICIARIES
(inc. community members, NGOs, etc.)

Figure 4.1: Types of Accountability
Source: ELI, drawing upon Simister 2018.

2. On the diverse stakeholders, see Box 4.1; on M&E as intervention, see Chapter 2 (Design).

Evaluations are also conducted for learning. This is especially the case for environmental peacebuilding, where theories of change are still evolving and evidence supporting them is often modest.

Box 4.1: Something to Consider—Different Stakeholders

Learning for and accountability to different kinds of stakeholders has important implications for how an evaluation is conducted. Consider:

o   What are these stakeholders interested in learning from an evaluation? What do they care about? What do they expect?

o   What will these stakeholders consider to be valid evidence? Equally as important, what kinds or sources of evidence might they question?

o   What standards, norms, or cultural considerations are relevant to the stakeholders? How will these affect how you conduct and share an evaluation?

When in doubt, refer back to the personas that you have developed during the design process (discussed in Chapter 2 (Design)).

LEARNING

Learning-oriented evaluations investigate why and how something happened, with the aim of increasing understanding and improving current and future interventions. Like accountability, learning can be for different audiences: for the intervention team, for the community or other stakeholders, for partners or the wider sector or field, for academia, and for funders. Like accountability, understanding who the learning is for and what they want to learn can help determine the focus of an evaluation. How learning is undertaken can likewise support the attainment of environmental peacebuilding objectives. The more participatory and frequent evaluation activities are, the more stakeholders will learn, and—generally speaking—the more effective the evaluations and interventions will be. Learning-oriented evaluations can also help build trust and support among stakeholders.

4.2. Challenges to Environmental Peacebuilding Evaluations

Before diving into how to conduct an evaluation of environmental peacebuilding work, it is important to note a few specific challenges. The first notable challenge to evaluating environmental peacebuilding interventions is **linking the environmental and peacebuilding dimensions.** As a practical matter, it is often relatively straightforward to monitor and evaluate changes in the environment and natural resources; similarly, there are established and tested techniques to monitor and evaluate efforts to resolve conflict and build peace. It can be challenging, though, to ascertain whether and how environmental changes may have contributed to changes in peace and security—or whether the changes in peace and security were due to other factors unrelated to environmental changes. This is made more complicated by cases in which outcomes related to conflict, peacebuilding, the environment, and other concepts related to an intervention's theory of change have not been well defined.

Options for an evaluation to link the environmental and peacebuilding dimensions include:

- Based on your theory/ies of change, start with the specific causal linkages that you anticipated.

- Use multiple methods and data sources collected over time (often through the process of monitoring) and as part of the evaluation process to build a picture of cause-and-effect relationships.

  - Survey and interview information can be complemented with satellite imagery to construct a picture of what happened, when, and to what effect.[3]

  - Diverse sources are useful for triangulation and understanding the different dimensions that are being evaluated, but they have their limitations in tying it all together.

- Ask stakeholders via interviews, focus groups, or surveys about their perceptions of the connections between the environment and conflict or peace situations.

  - For example, have improvements to the environment (documented through the various methods and data sources mentioned above) resulted from or contributed to increased trust? To peace?

  - Similarly, have changes to the conflict context resulted in any changes to the natural environment?

  - Did the conflict or fragile context affect the intervention in any way? Were these impacts anticipated?

- In retrospect, were there any other indicators that you wished you had tracked to be better able to evaluate the environment-conflict-peace linkages?

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3. See, for example, Emerson, Muhweezi, & Ayul 2017 (evaluating the Boma-Jonglei-Equatoria Landscape Program).

Another challenge to environmental peacebuilding evaluations is **understanding their long-term effects.** Changes to the environment as well as the conflict context often manifest over extended time-frames (Kupermintz & Salomon 2005; Swain 2016). As a practical matter, funding cycles often require long-term reforms or changes to be pursued through a series of shorter-term interventions, with each intervention lasting on the order of a year or a few years. As a result, transforming conflict—including through environmental pathways—requires multiple interventions, with evaluations often at the end of each intervention. In such situations, the evaluation of a single intervention, particularly those focusing on accountability, necessarily focuses on the time-frame covered by that intervention, providing earlier interventions as context and not yet knowing if the outcomes of the particular intervention will actually manifest or be sustained over the longer term.

To address these challenges, consider the following:

- Is it possible to allocate resources to assess long-term impacts?

    - For example, is it possible to set aside funding or budget for an evaluation 1-5 years after an intervention has ended?

    - Alternatively, consider the possibility of a programmatic evaluation (see Chapter 4.4).

- Contextualize the intervention and its evaluation within the broader suite of interventions and their evaluations in the same space. What long-term trends can you observe? Did this intervention build on other interventions (particularly ones that your organization undertook)? Or do they conflict and overlap? To what effect?

- Even if an evaluation of the long-term impacts is not possible, is it possible to assess leading indicators of success; what has happened so far that makes it likely to contribute to sustainable, positive change?

    - Make sure your evaluation includes an assessment of sustainability, potentially including sociopolitical, environmental, institutional, and financial sustainability (see Box 4.4).

Evaluations need to be gender-sensitive

GENDER

Women and girls as well as non-binary individuals have different roles, vulnerabilities, and opportunities than men in relation to both environmental management and to peace and conflict transformation. Accordingly, it is important to not assume that people of different genders were equally engaged, benefitted equally, or that the intervention was able to capitalize on the range of benefits that come from effective gender engagement and empowerment. Box 4.2 further explores consideration of gender in evaluations of interventions at the intersection of environment, conflict, and peace.

Evaluations should focus on contribution more so than attribution

Many funders want to know that their investments have achieved the desired objectives. This is core to evaluations that emphasize upward accountability. However, even when it is possible to identify changes (whether it is to the environment, to peace, or both), it can be difficult to attribute those changes to a particular intervention. Environmental peacebuilding interventions take place in complex contexts with diverse actors and interventions, a dynamic environment, and many intervening factors. Many factors influence conflicts and the environment, and control groups for counterfactuals may be impractical, ethically questionable, or outright dangerous (Goldwyn & Chigas 2013). There are often multiple, similar interventions happening at different scales and in different geographies, sometimes overlapping.

For example, if an intervention seeks to improve agricultural livelihoods in a post-conflict setting, there are often other simultaneous efforts to secure land tenure, improve land administration, build or restore irrigation systems, provide seed and other inputs, train farmers, train government administrators, resolve disputes over land and water rights, and so forth. If it is possible to track improvements in livelihoods, how can an evaluation of a particular intervention attribute those improvements to that intervention and not the other dozens of interventions related to agricultural livelihoods? And how can the evaluator ascertain whether that intervention and "its" livelihoods impact strengthened peace, whose improvements might be due (entirely, largely, or partially) to other peace-building efforts? The solution, in short, is to focus on the contribution of an intervention to the overall objective, rather than direct attribution.[4]

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4. This is discussed further in Chapter 4.3 (Step 2).

Box 4.2: Gender in Environmental Peacebuilding Evaluation

GENDER

Women often have gender-specific relationships with natural resources (UNEP et al. 2013). They may be the main users and managers of certain resources, be heavily dependent on resource availability for their livelihoods, or face challenges due to restricted resource rights. Additionally, women may be affected by conflict differently than men. In times of conflict, they may experience limited mobility, forced proximity to hazards, gender-based violence, or be forced to take on non-traditional economic or familial roles.

There is growing evidence that inclusion of women in both environmental and peacebuilding interventions improves their success and sustainability. Including women in local peace processes helps establish a more durable peace (Stone 2014; UNIFEM 2010). Additionally, UN peacekeeping operations are more effective in societies with greater female public participation and gender equality, which create opportunities for greater economic development (Gizelis, 2009). This makes women both important beneficiaries of and participants in environmental peacebuilding interventions.

Including and empowering women in environmental peacebuilding evaluations is essential because doing so (1) provides a more complete picture of the intervention and its effects on a greater range of people and (2) improves understanding of the roles of women and girls in achieving interventions' objectives, supporting the ongoing improvement of environmental peacebuilding. Gender inclusion means designing evaluations to assess gender considerations in an intervention's design, implementation, and effects; incorporating women's voices in the collection of evaluation information; and building a gender-balanced evaluation team.

Evaluation questions related to gender may include:

- Was the intervention's design gender-sensitive? How were women involved in the design of the intervention?

- Did the intervention's implementation create opportunities specifically for women and girls? What were these? Were they relevant and appropriate?

  - Regardless of the opportunities, were women and girls actually involved in the implementation of the intervention? How? How many females participated compared with how males many were involved in different aspects of the intervention's implementation?

  - What were the perceptions of different groups regarding gender inclusion at different stages?

- How were different genders affected differently by the intervention?

- How did the inclusion of different genders contribute to the achievement of intervention outcomes?

  - What were the effects of gender inclusion on intervention design? Implementation? Evaluation?

The collection of gender-disaggregated data is essential to understanding the gender dimensions of an intervention. When collecting gender-disaggregated information for an evaluation, consider:

- Should interviews or focus groups be separated by gender?

- Would women feel more comfortable talking to female evaluators?

- Is it possible to speak with both men and women in a culturally appropriate and respectful way while also ensuring people of all genders feel safe?

In building a gender-balanced evaluation team:

- Proactively hire women to lead or support evaluations. This may be challenging in areas where women are not traditionally formally employed or perceived as leaders.

- In the event that there are few women evaluators available, provide mentorship and capacity-building opportunities.

It is important to remember that being gender sensitive does not mean focusing exclusively on women. For example, it may also mean considering how young men are impacted by the conflict, the availability of natural resources, and the intervention. Young men are often forced into illicit occupations in times of conflict; they may also be compelled to participate in violence.
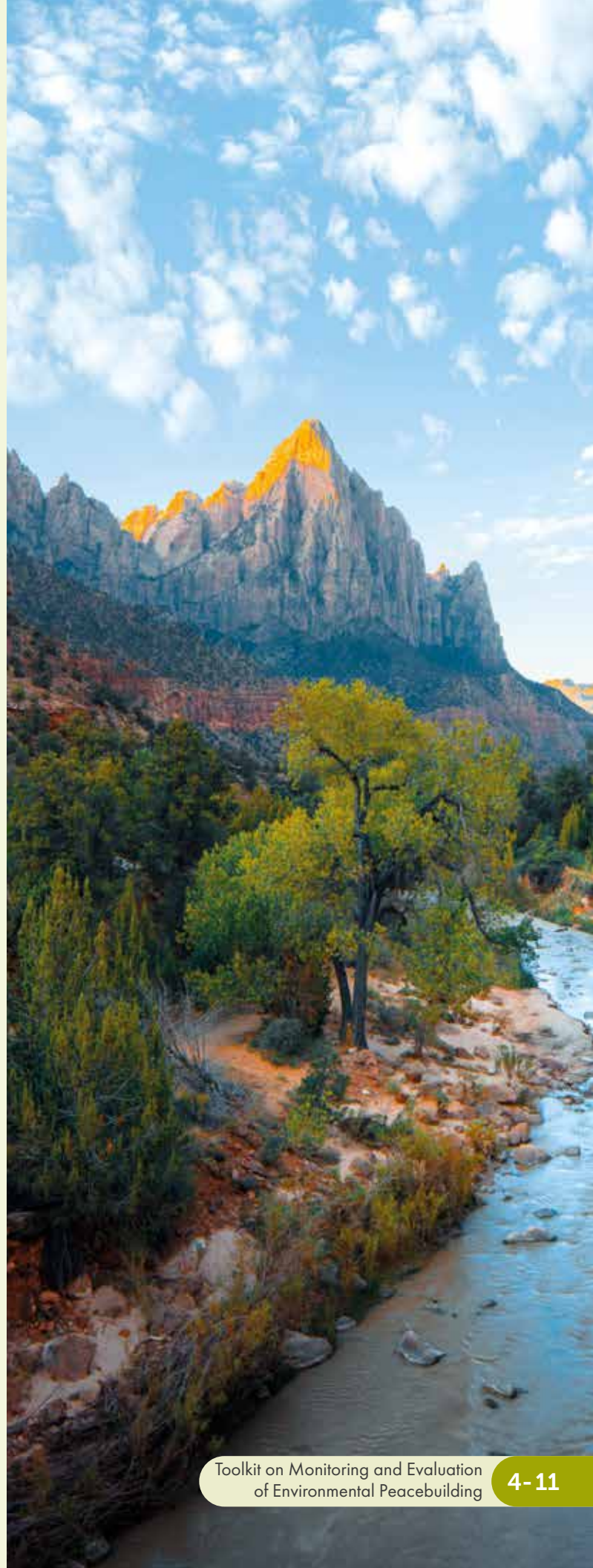
4.3. Step-by-Step Environmental Peacebuilding Evaluation

This section includes basic four-step guidance for planning and conducting an evaluation of an intervention at the intersection of environment, conflict, and peace. Throughout the design and implementation of an evaluation, there are a few key cross-cutting considerations, including how to conduct a gender-sensitive evaluation (Box 4.2), the extent to which stakeholders and other members of the public should be engaged (Box 4.3), and how to right-size the evaluation.

Box 4.3: Something to Consider—Participatory Evaluations

In each of the steps listed in this section, it is important to consider *who* is participating and *how*. Who is involved in deciding what to evaluate and how will affect the focus of your evaluation, what information is captured, the perceived legitimacy of your evaluation, and how it is used once completed. Participation and inclusion of various stakeholder groups often increases the evaluation's efficacy, legitimacy, and its eventual use. How stakeholders participate can also further or undermine your environmental peacebuilding objectives. Take the time to think through the various options so you can make appropriate and conflict sensitive choices.

Step 1: Decide for Whom, Why, and What You Will Evaluate

It is essential to define your scope before conducting an evaluation. This includes:

- **Establishing who the evaluation is for and why it is being undertaken.** Remember, different stakeholders will have different priorities when it comes to an evaluation (including different forms of accountability, learning, and adaptive management).[5] This is critical for environmental peacebuilding evaluations: who the evaluation is for, or who it is *perceived* to be for, could affect its legitimacy or even the conflict context. However, it is likely not possible to address every stakeholder group's priorities, so carefully consider your options and be selective.

- **Developing the evaluation questions.** Every evaluation or assessment should be guided by a few high-level questions. For environmental peacebuilding interventions, those questions will likely focus on what has happened to the environment and why, what has happened with conflict or peace and why, and what relationship the two have with each other. It is important to consider your theory/ies of change and focus on key "conversion points," or places where you have hypothesized a causal relationship and need evidence to validate it. You should also consider evaluating the degree to which the intervention was conflict-sensitive. Finally, remember to keep in mind scale and timing: on what level(s) will your evaluation focus, and are the questions relevant to the timeline? See Box 4.4 for more details.

- **Exploring whether it is possible to answer your desired evaluation questions.** Given the context, stage of the intervention, available data, etc. Environmental and socio-political changes can and often do happen along different timelines, so you need to ensure that it is feasible to answer all your questions now. Additionally, make sure you have the information and resources available to adequately answer your questions, or revise them accordingly.

- **Considering how to address the potential negative impacts of the evaluation.** Even if an evaluation is possible, undertaking it may cause harm or exacerbate tensions depending on the timing, content, and context of the evaluation. Consider how doing an evaluation could affect ongoing conflicts or tenuous relationships, either positively or negatively. How can you ensure that at the very least no harm is done, and at most, the evaluation helps achieve the environmental peacebuilding objectives? These considerations will be further explored as you design the evaluation.

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5. For further information on the different stakeholders, see discussion of personas in Chapter 2 (Design).

Box 4.4: Evaluation Criteria

Many evaluations utilize criteria developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD DAC) to frame evaluation questions. These criteria include relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and efficiency. Below are some evaluation questions related to each of these criteria:

- **Relevance**
  - Does the intervention address the key drivers of the conflict or of the environmental issue? Does it reflect the connections between environment and conflict factors?
  - Has the intervention adapted over time as the context has changed?
  - How is the intervention relevant to the needs of different stakeholder groups? How do these stakeholders perceive the relevance of the intervention?

- **Coherence**
  - How does the intervention fit within the broader context, particularly as it relates to other ongoing interventions?
  - How has the intervention coordinated with other stakeholders?
  - How is the intervention coherent with the actions of other stakeholders or changes to the relevant governments' policies?

- **Effectiveness**
  - How effective has the intervention been at meeting its environmental- and peacebuilding-related objectives? What challenges did it face in doing so?
  - Is the theory of change based on assumptions that are still valid?
  - How do the intervention's outcomes relate to broader trends or dynamics in the environmental and conflict contexts?

- **Impact**
  - What are the long-term or lasting effects of the intervention on the environmental and conflict contexts?
  - What are the most plausible explanations for those changes?

- **Sustainability**
  - Is it likely that new institutions, relationships, agreements, practices, etc. related to the intervention will last? Who will take ownership of them, and are there sufficient resources and political will to do so?
  - Has the intervention addressed the underlying causes or drivers of conflict and/or environmental degradation in a way that is sustainable?
  - Is there sufficient community resilience to deal with future shocks and stressors?

- **Efficiency**
  - Has the intervention delivered results in a cost-effective manner?
  - How well have resources been used, including environmental, human, cultural, and other kinds of resources?
  - In what ways did the intervention rely on or maximize local capacities?

Source: Adapted from OECD DAC 2012.

Step 2: Design Your Evaluation Methods and Approach

There are a wide range of types of evaluations and a multitude of ways to conduct an evaluation. No matter what approach and methods you choose, **the evaluation approach should match the questions and the context.** This means:
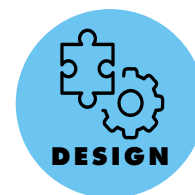
- Once you know who your evaluation is for and are clear on what questions the evaluation should answer, **determine a "good enough" way to get the information** using an approach and methods that are reasonable for answering those questions and for your stakeholders. Remember, you do not have to do the perfect evaluation; you just need to be transparent about what was done and why.

- You do not need experimental methods or an external consultant to do a good evaluation. While randomized control trials might have been the "gold standard" in the past, **it is important that you right-size your evaluation approach to your needs and available resources.** This may mean an internal evaluation, a rapid evaluation, or even an informal after-action review. Select an evaluation approach that is fit for the purpose and congruent with the available resources, and be transparent about that choice.

- **Aim for contribution, not attribution.** As noted above, environmental peacebuilding interventions take place in complex contexts with diverse actors and interventions, a dynamic environment, and many intervening factors. Additionally, changes in environment and peace happen at different scales and along different timelines. Instead of trying to determine what changes can be specifically attributed to your intervention, look at the ways in which your intervention *contributed* to the observed changes, as well as how your intervention *interacted* (positively or negatively) with other related interventions.

- **Consider methods that can account for complexity and interdisciplinarity.** First and foremost, this requires adopting a systems approach. It also means incorporating multiple methods and stakeholders with different areas of expertise into your evaluation, investigating multiple components of the intervention, and identifying emergent outcomes. Incorporating diverse stakeholders'

perceptions in the data collection also helps to capture more dimensions of the intervention in the evaluation. Complex systems such as those common to environmental peacebuilding work also require an evaluation of both the intervention process and the outcome. This is because a successful process does not necessarily result in the desired outcome, which can be affected by many other parts of the system. It is therefore important to understand if your process was building toward your objectives, even if the outcomes were not achieved for other reasons.

- Ensure that you **revisit or conduct a conflict analysis.** As a first step of any environmental peacebuilding evaluation, conflict analysis is essential both for assessing how an intervention responded or adapted to the conflict and for ensuring the evaluation itself is conflict-sensitive (Jean, Nelson, & Ris 2019) (see below). Evaluations should investigate whether an intervention has developed and revisited a conflict analysis as part of its implementation as well as to what degree the intervention was responsive to changes in the conflict context.[6] If a conflict analysis or assessment was completed during the design phase, this can serve as a baseline for an updated conflict analysis included as part of the evaluation (Goldwyn & Chigas 2013). Conflict analysis can also serve as a key input for assessing an intervention's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and impact (OECD 2012).

6. A timeline tool, as described by Goldwy & Chigas (2013), can be useful for assessing an intervention's responsiveness to changes in the conflict context. Practitioners can use the timeline tool to outline changes in the conflict context, corresponding changes to the intervention, if any, and how the intervention has remained relevant, or not, as a result. The same tool can be applied in environmental peacebuilding to track changes in the environmental context as well.

- An evaluation is also a good opportunity to **revisit your theory or theories of change.** This includes checking the assumptions explicitly or implicitly included in the theory of change, as the broader context in which an intervention is taking place has likely changed over time. See Table 4.1 for information on theory-based evaluations.

- Regardless of the approach you use, **ensure that your evaluation incorporates methods that explore unintended consequences.** The complexity of environmental peacebuilding as well as the limited availability of evidence for what works makes it important that you look for and identify any unintended consequences, both positive and negative. You can do this by asking open-ended questions in your interviews or surveys or intentionally seeking information on changes or effects outside of your theory of change. This includes speaking with non-targeted groups, or those who are outside of the intended beneficiaries or participants of your intervention (Goldwyn & Chigas 2013).

- Since environmental peacebuilding work is intrinsically connected with the broader context in which it takes place, make sure **to evaluate your intervention considering the larger context in which it takes place.**[7] The success of environmental peacebuilding work is often linked (directly or indirectly) to other, simultaneous interventions as well as broader changes in the physical environment, the political or policy space, migration, etc. (OECD 2012). You should make sure to take these changes—and what they mean for your intervention—are taken into account.

- When thinking through your approach, **consider if your evaluation methods are appropriate for and conflict-sensitive to the context.** Be mindful of who the evaluation is for and your intervention's stakeholders. Will the approach you choose be valid to and accepted by them? How will the methods employed in the evaluation affect those stakeholders and the context? Are any data or conclusions sensitive? Is there any way that the source of a sensitive statement could be identified putting the person who made it at risk? How can you avoid exposing participants in the intervention and evaluation to risk?[8] These are all essential questions to consider prior to conducting an evaluation.

- Relatedly, e**valuations should be as participatory as possible without exacerbating tensions.** Multiple perspectives should be considered and consulted. At the same time, transparency, participation, and inclusion must be balanced against the potential to do harm. See Box 4.6.

- Remember that **evaluation can be an integral part of the intervention.** What questions you ask and how you conduct an evaluation can intentionally or unintentionally affect the success and sustainability of your intervention. Consider this when choosing your approach and methodology. For example, a participatory, inclusive evaluation design that takes longer and is perhaps less objective or rigorous may be better suited to achieving objectives such as developing trust between stakeholder groups.

- **Consider the timing of your evaluation.** While evaluations traditionally happen at the beginning (formative), middle (mid-term), or end (summative, final) of an intervention, it is particularly important in environmental peacebuilding to consider the timing of the evaluation. That is because environmental peacebuilding interventions take place in complex and dynamic contexts that may be dangerous. Additionally, achieving environmental peacebuilding objectives often requires multiple interventions at different scales and operating on different timelines. And finally, environmental peacebuilding work may benefit from real-time evaluation or ongoing evaluations that can produce timely and actionable findings for immediate use. Consider the following:[9]

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7. See, for example, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/ PBAAC691.pdf .

8. See Jean, Nelson, & Ris 2019 for more guidance on vulnerable and at-risk groups in evaluation.

9. See OECD 2012 for a more in-depth consideration of issues of timing for peacebuilding evaluations.

○ Has there been sufficient time for the outcomes you want to evaluate to occur? Environmental and peace processes can take a long time, and they often happen along different timelines. If your evaluation focuses on outcomes, **consider whether it has been long enough for those outcomes to manifest.**

○ Given the current context, *will conducting an evaluation now potentially harm your intervention or make the conflict worse?* Consider if the evaluation would affect your intervention directly or spark a community or political reaction that could be detrimental to the intervention, the conflict, or the environment.

○ **Is it safe to conduct an evaluation now?** What is happening within the conflict context? Would the evaluation put the evaluators or other stakeholders at risk?

Box 4.5: Something to Consider—First-, Second-, and Third-Order Effects

In complex, adaptive, and systems change-focused work that characterizes many environmental peacebuilding interventions, it can help to explore first-, second-, and third-order outcomes. First-order effects are the immediate results. Second-order effects are the longer-term effects. And third-order effects are the most significant effects of the intervention. For example:

First-Order Effects	Second-Order Effects	Third-Order Effects
Trust, relationships	New partnerships	New collaborations
Mutual understanding	Coordination	On-the-ground results
High quality agreements	Changes in perceptions	New institutions
	Changes in behavior	New norms

Consider the timing of your evaluation and if you might be looking for first-, second-, and third-order effects.

Source: Adapted from Innes & Booher 1999.

After considering the points above, it is time to select one evaluation approach or a mix of approaches. Table 4.1 provides a list of potential approaches that may be appropriate and effective for your environmental peacebuilding evaluation. Remember: your choice of evaluation approach should always be based on the evaluation objectives, questions, and context.

Approach	Description	Pros & Cons
After Action Review	An informal approach to assess an intervention that can be implemented after individual activities or at various times during the intervention cycle.	**Pros:** It requires minimal resources or expertise. Can be very fast. Provides timely feedback. **Cons:** More subjective with limited perspectives of those who can participate in the review. Less comprehensive and systematic than other approaches.
Causal Link Monitoring[10]	Centers on a cycle of design, monitor/evaluate, and redesign throughout the intervention cycle to support adaptive management.	**Pros:** Supports adaptive management. **Cons:** Requires a commitment of time and resources to regular monitoring and check-in points.
Contribution Analysis[11]	Explores the extent to which the observed results stem from an intervention's activities rather than other factors. Useful for cases in which experimental or quasi-experimental designs are not feasible.	**Pros:** Can be done at different levels depending on the level of influence. **Cons:** More subjective than some other approaches.

10. Britt 2021.
11. Mayne. 2008.

Approach	Description	Pros & Cons
Developmental Evaluation[12]	Good for social change interventions in uncertain or complex contexts. Facilitates real-time feedback for decision making in evolving and innovative interventions. Utilization-focused. Positioned as an internal process to an intervention team.	**Pros:** Provides real-time feedback that is important for environmental peacebuilding work. Focused on the needs of the intervention team and can support team capacity development. Supports adaptive management. **Cons:** Can lack structure. Requires a qualified evaluator to facilitate, which can be costly.
Empowerment Evaluation[13]	An approach to evaluation that is inclusive of stakeholders so that they can monitor and evaluate their own progress and outcomes.	**Pros:** Fosters sustainability. If used appropriately, can increase evaluation's use as intervention, develop the capacities of participants, and improve inclusion. **Cons:** Requires high-level facilitator skills. Can take longer than other evaluation approaches. Can be more complicated than other evaluation approaches.
Formative Evaluation	Early-stage evaluation of an intervention's development to identify improvements for design and implementation. These evaluations are likely to be internal and less formal.	**Pros:** Can provide early feedback that is important for avoiding harm or exacerbating conflict. **Cons:** Often relies heavily on internal capacity. Can slow down implementation.
Most Significant Change[14]	An approach that generates accounts of change and seeks to understand what change is most significant and how it occurred.	**Pros:** Can provide evidence on unintended outcomes. Gives a strong voice to stakeholders. **Cons:** Requires a good facilitator to review and identify changes.

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12. Quinn Patton 2010; Global Evaluation Initiative, 2021.
13. Fetterman 2021.
14. Dart & Davies 2016; Davies, 1996.

Approach	Description	Pros & Cons
Outcome Harvesting[15]	An assessment that begins with documenting outcomes and then works to understand how an intervention contributed to those outcomes as part of an iterative process of identifying and validating outcomes.	**Pros:** Great for identifying unintended consequences or for situations in which the intervention does not have a comprehensive theory of change. Prioritizes the voices of stakeholders. **Cons:** Requires a high level of expertise and familiarity with the outcome harvesting approach. Can be subjective.
Process Tracing[16]	A case-based approach to evaluating causal relationships to examine possible explanations. Involves various types of causal tests.	**Pros:** Good for looking at a variety of causal relationships that might be possible in complex contexts. Can answer questions of attribution. **Cons:** Can be complicated to undertake.
Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP)[17]	An approach to impact evaluation that draws on contribution analysis (see above). QuIP provides a "reality check" of pre-determined theories of change through narrative causal statements.	**Pros:** Like other methods listed here, it does not require experimental or quasi-experimental conditions (such as a control group). Gives a strong voice to selected stakeholders. Good for understanding unexpected outcomes. **Cons:** Requires the evaluator to be very intentional in avoiding bias.
Rapid Evaluation[18]	An approach for quickly and systematically conducting an evaluation with limited resources. Iterative and flexible designs useful for collecting real-time information to support programming and policies. Can be helpful for early-stage evaluations of non-linear interventions employing adaptive management.	**Pros:** Quick, less costly, timely, iterative, and can be participatory. **Cons:** Shallow or high-level findings. Only good for evaluating certain process components. Limited applicability to long-term outcomes.

15. Wilson-Grau 2023.
16. Global Evaluation Initiative 2023.
17. Remnant & Avard 2021.
18. Williams 2022.

Approach	Description	Pros & Cons
Realist Evaluation[19]	Focused on understanding what works in what contexts and for whom. Seeks to explain the "how" underlying the outcomes. An important goal is to test the underlying theory of change.	**Pros:** Grounded in the reality of the specific context. Can help identify the right contexts for certain interventions. **Cons:** Since causality is used, claims can only be modest.
Strategic Evaluation	Useful for evaluating the strategic approaches of organizations to have environmental peacebuilding impact, e.g., through strategic plans, impact partnerships, alignment of programs to strategies, resource investment in strategies that is commensurate with ambition, etc.	**Pros:** Provides useful information on strategy and organizational structure. Can help establish standards. **Cons:** Requires a well-developed strategy to assess.
Theory-Based Evaluation[20]	Assesses an explicit theory of change to understand what worked, why, and how. While this approach is often used with an existing theory of change, it can also be used to develop a theory of change at the start of an evaluation.	**Pros:** Can help an intervention to explicitly identify its theory of change. This is important as environmental peacebuilding interventions often rely on implicit or unexamined theories of change. **Cons:** Can only be used if there is a known or identified theory of change in place. This can be challenging for some interventions to develop, or in the case where an intervention has evolved but its theory of change has not.

19. Van Belle, Westhorp, & Marchal 2021.
20. Intrac 2017.

Approach	Description	Pros & Cons
Multiple Interventions (i.e., Projects and/or Programs)		
Cluster Evaluations[21]	Assessments of a group of related or similar projects that can produce broader lessons.	**Pros:** Identifies higher-level results and learnings, making it more useful as a general learning exercise for that field, theme, or sector. May require fewer resources for travel and primary research/data collection. Useful for looking at synergies between and across interventions. Can help with assessing long-term impacts.
Thematic or Sector Evaluations	Covers one theme or sector across different projects.	
Meta Evaluations (Evaluation Synthesis)[22]	An assessment of existing evaluations to explore lessons learned, larger patterns, and otherwise glean knowledge that is useful.	**Cons:** Can be difficult to evaluate a cluster or projects using the same criteria. Comparability can be challenging.

While there are numerous approaches to evaluation, the ones shared here show promise for environmental peacebuilding work because they seek to understand the multi-dimensional nature of change, gather diverse perspectives, seek to understand the various causal mechanisms behind outcomes, and support adaptive programming. These approaches recognize that it is unlikely that there will be a control group or case available and that environmental peacebuilding work happens within complex systems with various dynamics.

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21. Sanders1997.
22. Uusikylä &Virtanen 2000; Stufflebeam 1974.

Step 3: Conduct the Evaluation

With your approach and methods outlined, it is time to undertake the evaluation. During the evaluation, consider the following:

- **Make sure to communicate what you are doing before and during the evaluation.** Stakeholders should be clear on what the evaluation is for, when it will take place, and what it entails before it starts. Additionally, depending on the length of time the evaluation takes, you may want to provide updates to stakeholders and allow for their feedback as part of the accountability and learning process. This is particularly important if either the evaluation or the conflict context changes. If possible, build in discrete activities for sharing updates with and openly gathering feedback on the evaluation process from a variety of stakeholders.

- **Monitor the evaluation process closely to ensure you are doing no harm.** Even if your evaluation was planned to be conflict-sensitive (see Box 4.6), it is impractical to account for every possibility beforehand. Check in with key stakeholders during the evaluation process, monitoring contextual indicators that are relevant to your intervention and include questions about the evaluation, and its impact as part of your methodology.

- **Ensure that your evaluation examines the differentiation in effects or impacts among different groups,** particularly women and other historically marginalized groups. Interventions at the intersection of conflict and the environment can affect different groups or communities in varying ways; while some people are empowered, others may feel excluded or marginalized. Elite capture of resources or new institutions is also a concern.[23] Good evaluations will explore the full variety of an intervention's effects by gathering diverse and inclusive information that captures multiple and even divergent perspectives.

- Related to all of the above points, **make sure you have a plan in place to ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity.** While it is always important to protect the autonomy and agency of people participating in an intervention or its evaluation, this is all the more important in an environmental peacebuilding context where participation can have substantial negative impacts for individuals or groups, including intervention staff and evaluators.[24] The ways in which you protect confidentiality and anonymity and secure informed consents will be highly dependent on your evaluation, stakeholders, and the context.

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23. See Stark et al. 2022 for additional information related to participatory natural resource management.
24. See Jean, Nelson, & Ris 2019 for an in-depth discussion of risks.

Box 4.6: Something to Consider—Conflict-Sensitive Evaluations

Even if you are evaluating an intervention with peacebuilding objectives, conflict sensitivity is not guaranteed. To make sure your environmental peacebuilding does not exacerbate the conflict context, consider the following:

- Have you conducted a conflict analysis (or has one been conducted recently) that can be used to inform your evaluation design?

- How will including some stakeholders and not others in interviews, focus groups, etc. affect the conflict dynamics? Might certain stakeholders perceive your data collection process as unfair or illegitimate, depending on who is included? What kind of implicit political messages might you be sending?

- Who should be part of the evaluation team? What message(s) will their participation send? How might their involvement affect your ability to conduct the evaluation? For example, if you hire local evaluators, how might their involvement be perceived by different stakeholder groups (who may be of a different gender, ethnicity, or background)?

- How might the way you go about conducting the evaluation, including the questions you ask and the language you use, negatively affect conflict dynamics? How can you conduct the evaluation in a way that avoids negatively shaping people's perceptions of the conflict or other stakeholders?

- How can you share evaluation results with community members and other stakeholders in a way that promotes peace and avoids exacerbating conflicts? What information should you share to balance transparency with avoiding worsening the conflict?

Step 4: Once the Evaluation is Complete

Once your evaluation is complete, it is essential to make sure that you use the evaluation in a way that supports your intervention and future interventions. As you use the evaluation, one of the challenges is to balance the transparency of reporting results with the need to avoid harming participants or otherwise negatively affecting the context. All of this requires conflict sensitivity. Based on your intervention, the stage of your intervention, and the results, consider the following:

- **Share your results.** Sharing your results is important for both accountability and learning. Funders will want to know how the intervention progressed, and there is an important need in the field of environmental peacebuilding generally for more evidence on what does and does not work, and under what circumstances. Community members and other stakeholders or beneficiaries will also want to know about the results, which should be shared with them in an appropriate and relevant way. Developing a communication plan can help you think through what people care about in advance, and ensure you present evaluation results with context. It can also help you think through the risks related to what information you share and how (see below).

- **But share your results in a contextually appropriate and conflict-sensitive way.** What you share, and how you share it, will depend on the stakeholders and the context. For example, while funders may request a long report with as much quantitative data as possible, community members may not. Instead, they may want to see a presentation, in their local language, that highlights the results that affect them and their lives. You will also want to consider how the way in which you share evaluation results could affect the intervention or the context. Sharing positive outcomes with spoilers may prompt them to sabotage the intervention's work, undermining its long-term sustainability. Sharing how one group benefited and another group did not may prompt retaliatory behavior. Alternatively, sharing how collaboration led to positive environmental outcomes could further cement trust between different groups.

- **Use your results.** Many evaluations sit on shelves, unread or underread. Evaluations can be a valuable source of learning, particularly on environmental peacebuilding. Make a plan with your stakeholders to use the results and disseminate them, and document that plan. You can also use the outcomes when planning future interventions by returning to the evaluation as you design your next program or project, or by sharing it with the wider environmental peacebuilding field through a presentation or white paper.

4.4. Programmatic Evaluations

Programmatic evaluations assess the effectiveness of a group of projects (a program) and identify what is working and what is not at the intersection and amalgamation of those projects. Programmatic evaluations often assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of a set or portfolio of projects with a shared objective, documenting high-level lessons learned and best practices, and determining the progress made toward the program's stated objectives as well as the reasons why a program did or did not achieve those objectives (Walter et al. 2017).

Programmatic evaluations can be useful for a range of reasons:

- Programmatic evaluations are especially important because they can **identify long-term impacts and synergistic effects across projects operating at multiple scales** and characterized by interconnected stakeholders and systems. This is especially useful for environmental peacebuilding work, as change may take a long time to manifest and is often the result of multiple interlinked projects (Kupermintz & Salomon 2005; Swain 2016). Programmatic evaluations can help practitioners and decisionmakers understand how different projects affect one another and how various projects alter environmental and conflict landscapes over time, reinforcing or undermining one another, and creating ripple effects across sectors, time, scales, and geographies. Box 4.7

summarizes such a programmatic evaluation of more than 25 years of programming by EcoPeace Middle East.

- Where an organization has started a new line or group of projects under a specific program area, a programmatic evaluation can help the organization to **learn from an initial tranche of projects** and decide whether to continue that programming, scale up, or refine project design and implementation in particular ways. For example, the UN Peacebuilding Support Office undertook a thematic review of more than 70 projects that the UN Peacebuilding Fund had supported to inform future programming directions. For more information, see Box 4.8.

- Programmatic evaluations can also **provide information regarding how external factors are affecting programming.** For example, an environmental organization may want to understand how conflict and fragility influence the effectiveness and sustainability of its programming. This sort of evaluation can be sensitive, though, as project staff may be concerned that they are being judged on factors that are outside the organization's mandate, expertise, or control. Rather than being an accountability exercise, though, such programmatic evaluations are focused on learning and identifying ways that projects and programs can better meet their identified objectives. Box 4.9 summarizes such an evaluation conducted by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of projects it supported in fragile and conflict-affected situations (GEF IEO 2020).

Evaluating the long-term effects of a suite of projects requires crafting evaluation questions that seek to understand synergetic effects of projects across time, geographies, and scales. Like evaluations more generally, programmatic evaluations should begin with a clear objective and a set of questions. Often, programmatic evaluations will focus on the long-term and intersecting impacts of environmental peace-building work or how environmental peacebuilding projects overlapped, interacted, and/or built off one another over time and at different scales.

By being able to take a longer time scale, programmatic evaluations are better able to ascertain (1) whether benefits were sustained, (2) any unintended consequences (positive or negative), and (3) linkages between a cluster of related projects. While a project evaluation usually looks at one project over a period of one to three years, a programmatic evaluation often examines dozens (or even hundreds or thousands) of projects across 20 or 30 years. Box 4.7 illustrates a program evaluation that examines an organization's portfolio of projects across more than 25 years. Some program evaluations cover a shorter period. Box 4.8 provides a brief case study of a thematic review conducted for climate-security projects supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund over seven years.

Box 4.7: Assessing the Potential for Environmental Peacebuilding over Shared Waters through EcoPeace Middle East's 25+ Years of Experience in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan

EcoPeace Middle East has fostered cooperation between Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians to conserve and restore their water resources for more than 25 years. Its work is frequently cited as an international model for how concerns and interests around shared environmental resources can be leveraged to catalyze cooperation and build peace between people in conflict. A team of researchers, led by Laura E.R. Peters and Jamon Van Den Hoek at Oregon State University and American University, and with support from a U.S. Institute of Peace grant on Environment, Conflict, and Peacebuilding, is undertaking an assessment of EcoPeace's on-the-ground engagement to evaluate (1) whether there is evidence of a virtuous cycle between environmental and peacebuilding gains (i.e., they are mutually supportive) and (2) whether gains in one domain depend on gains in the other (i.e., they are mutually dependent).

Theory of change

EcoPeace has taken a combined top-down and bottom-up approach to environmental peace-building, aimed at encouraging and supporting people and institutions to cooperate for mutual gains based on their own self-interest. EcoPeace complements its bottom-up strategies (including education and awareness campaigns) with top-down initiatives (including policies) to achieve the necessary changes for sustained and sustainable environmental and peacebuilding gains at local-to-national levels. This research interrogates that theory of change in light of more than 25 years of experience and evidence.

Developing a research methodology around the theory of change

Developing a research methodology around the theory of change. The research was designed around a mixed methodology, including a literature review, archival analysis, and six in-depth case studies to tease out the interplay and impacts of EcoPeace's interventions. The team conducted 70+ in-depth semi-structured interviews with diverse respondents with different degrees of proximity to EcoPeace in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. Interview questions sought to understand the sustainability of programming and its impacts, such as the transfer effect (i.e., extending the benefits of programming aimed at cooperation over shared water resources to political peace) and the spillover effect (i.e., extending the benefits of programming aimed at cooperation over shared water resources to people and sectors not directly involved).

Challenging assumptions of top-down and bottom-up approaches to change

The research called into question the artificial dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding, which focus largely on either the state or community level, and assumes a worldview framed around homogenous or flat social, political, and environmental stakeholder groups. For example, the assessment found that regimes beyond national governments affect outcomes, with actors wearing multiple institutional hats and holding multiple interests; accordingly, considerable influence is wielded outside standard channels within and across countries.

Challenging assumptions of discrete efforts leading to discrete impacts

The research also faced the challenge of establishing causal relationships between specific project outputs and desired environmental and peacebuilding outcomes. Project milestones were often found to be the result of combined interventions, each with their own set of relative successes and failures that sometimes change over time in regard to their influence on broader goals due to outside influences. Outputs and outcomes are often separated spatially and temporally and are rarely linear, and the results of evaluating potential causality are highly dependent on the start and end dates framing the analysis.

Overarching challenges to evaluation

Overarching challenges to evaluation. The challenges of evaluating the potential for environmental peacebuilding through this research are accentuated by several underlying realities:

1. Evaluation methodologies for the field of environmental peacebuilding are challenging when the broader conflict is ongoing and may obscure or undermine gains.

2. Assessing changes in the environment associated with an intervention, such as changes in water quality or quantity, is challenging due to the subjective and dynamic nature of the environment and its connection with diverse material and cultural needs.

3. Progress across multiple nested conflicts and potentials for peace is uneven and nonlinear, and emphasizing a specific conflict in the analysis changes perspectives on results and what coalitions for peace may be needed.

4. Evaluation is challenging when there is not a single definition or experience of "peace." For some, peace may be construed as security and finding ways to coexist within the broader status quo, and for others, it may be centered around questions of social justice and a redistribution of decision-making power.

Photos taken on the Palestinian (left) and Israeli (right) side of the same shared cultural and environmental landscape at the site of an environmental peacebuilding campaign by EcoPeace Middle East.

Source: Laura E.R. Peters

The full case study of this evaluation is available at https://m-and-e.environmentalpeacebuilding.org/toolkit. More information about EcoPeace is available at https://ecopeace-ceme.org/. For further information on this assessment, please contact Laura E.R. Peters peterlau@oregonstate.edu and Jamon Van Den Hoek vandenhj@oregonstate.edu. This work was supported by a United States Institute of Peace grant on Environment, Conflict, and Peacebuilding.

Some things to consider prior to conducting a programmatic or multi-program evaluation include:

- **How will the evaluation measure long-term impacts and link a program's environmental and peacebuilding dimensions** through the various projects included? Evaluators of environmental peacebuilding programs must determine causal relationships -albeit often in the form of contribution rather than sole causation- between interventions, environment, and peace outcomes over time and across projects.

- Are there **consistent or comparable** indicators across projects?

- How do the projects or programs **build upon or interact** with one another over time?

- How can the evaluation account for **contextual or secondary factors** that influence outcomes, such as climate change, sociopolitical change, etc.?

- **When will the evaluation take place?** When the evaluation is conducted, it could determine whether a program is deemed to have met its objectives. This is particularly important in environmental peacebuilding, where programs typically seek to yield long-term impacts, and the timeframe of those impacts may vary between environmental and peacebuilding objectives.

- As with any program, when evaluating the outcomes of an environmental peacebuilding program, **it is strongly recommended to examine whether there were any unintended consequences.** These consequences can be beneficial, neutral, or detrimental to the program. Surveying the unintended consequences of a program can help shed light on not only unintended outcomes stemming from a single project, but also how projects may have unintentionally influenced each other or even worked at odds against one another. Understanding unintended consequences is particularly relevant to environmental peacebuilding as the knowledge base regarding the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, co-benefits, and other impacts of particular interventions (and theories of change) is still relatively modest.

While it is relatively common to budget for project evaluations, often by allocating a portion of the project budget to M&E, it can be more challenging to find funding for a programmatic evaluation. Because programmatic evaluations assess a group of projects, this may mean that a programmatic evaluation falls outside of normal funding cycles or project evaluation mechanisms and thus requires seeking out and designating specific supplemental resources. As such, it is advisable to develop program plans and budgets with programmatic evaluations in mind. Developing a standardized cycle of programmatic evaluations can be a useful learning mechanism and a good long-term investment for organizations.

Box 4.8: Thematic Review of Climate Security Projects Supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund

Established in 2006, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is the UN's primary financial instrument designed to support and build peace in countries at risk of or affected by violent conflict. PBF support seeks to address the root causes of conflict through integrated responses involving national, cross-border, and regional engagement. To examine past practices, identify lessons learned, and consider promising innovations, the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) commissions regular thematic reviews as part of its efforts to continuously learn and improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding.

The PBSO engaged the UN University to develop *Climate-Security and Peacebuilding: Thematic Review* (Gaston & Brown 2023). The review considered 74 climate-security and environmental peacebuilding projects that the PBF supported between 2016 and 2021. These totaled approximately $162.7 million and were implemented in 33 countries. The Thematic Review placed the PBF-supported interventions in a broader global context, seeking to assess results, understand good practices, identify areas for improving programming, and ultimately guide future investments and policies in climate security. Distinct from programmatic evaluation in its larger-scale analyses, approaches, and outputs, the Thematic Review produced policy and strategic investment inferences by conducting an overarching assessment of the entire PBF climate security project portfolio, analyzing global trends within it, and extracting findings across projects.

Methodology

The Thematic Review was conducted through three core research steps: (1) a global trends analysis; (2) an analysis of key project themes, cross-cutting issues, and intervention types; and (3) three geographic case studies. To conduct research, the Thematic Review drew upon a background literature review, expert interviews, desk research on PBF-funded projects, a few in-depth case studies, and global cross-referencing of indexes such as ND GAIN, Fragile States, IEP Global Peace, and the Uppsala Conflict Database Program.

At the global scale, the Thematic Review assessed overall portfolio characteristics including funding by region, regional diversity, cross cutting and thematic issues, typologies, and responses. The Thematic Review's intermediate work analyzed 32 projects to explore theories of change and project design, which inevitably necessitated country context analysis. In analyzing the theories of change, the Thematic Review explored common trends, weaknesses and strengths, and compliance with PBF guidance, aiming to understand what projects identify as key change mechanisms and if they are effective. The Thematic Review primarily used project documents to extract or intuit theories of change, using a combination of documentation with actual outcomes to assess theories of change in circumstances where they were not clearly delineated or absent. The Thematic Review analyzed three diverse climate security project case studies

that enabled exploration of cross-cutting and regional-specific themes and practices in environments facing different security and environmental challenges, helping to contextualize the global analysis findings with contextually specific examples.

Several challenges emerged in conducting the Thematic Review. One of the first challenges was **definitional**: what constitutes climate-security risks and what is a climate-security project for purposes of the analysis? These questions were ultimately resolved, with the result that of the 74 projects initially identified, 43 were identified as having a climate-security focus.

The project team faced challenges to **theory of change validation and analysis,** as the project document-based nature of research restricted the project team's ability to validate theories of change in cases when there was a disconnect between project design and implementation or when a project was shaped by the implementation process over design. Theory of change validation was additionally challenged because ongoing projects constituted over half of the project sample.

Findings

The Thematic Review produced critical learning for both the United Nations and broader audiences. **The varying centrality of climate security dimensions** to projects posed the question regarding how climate security concerns may be better focused in PBF-funded projects. The Thematic Review additionally revealed **emerging dynamics and best practices** emphasizing the importance of greater environmental awareness in conflict awareness; greater efforts to have integrated approaches, cross-border engagement, and linkages between human security and climate change vulnerabilities; and enhancing climate change-related components in security-related activities.

Another finding related to **gender and climate security linkages.** The Thematic Review found that a significant proportion of projects were gender-focused, with sometimes only superficial climate or environmental dimensions, rather than climate security projects with gender dimensions. This may reflect a broader "trend of not fully realizing synergies in the gender-climate-security sector" (Gaston & Brown 2023, p. 5). The Thematic Review observed that natural resource management and climate change projects are often used as entry points for empowering women. It noted the importance of further learning from projects regarding the synergies between the climate and environmental dimensions of a project and women's empowerment.

The Thematic Review noted that 9 of the 10 countries that received the most funding from the PBF were the most vulnerable to climate change, and 6 of the 10 were among the most fragile states; this highlighted the **unique role that the PBF has in being willing to invest in situations that other donors may deem too risky.** As such, PBF investments seek to provide "proof of concept that these approaches can work even in volatile environments [and] will persuade larger funds or other donors to pursue similar investments in the future" (Gaston & Brown 2023, pp. 58-59). Moreover, the Thematic Review found that climate security projects were often quite effective at addressing other social issues, such as the marginalization of women and youth, through the classic environmental diplomacy mechanism of bringing together communities over shared environmental challenges.

By emphasizing learning, the Thematic Review will help to inform United Nations policy trajectories and strategic investments while also highlighting emerging issues and important climate security themes more broadly.

Box 4.9: Evaluation of GEF Supporting Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a multilateral trust fund that provides support to developing countries to implement multilateral environmental agreements. The GEF's work is organized around five focal areas: biodiversity loss, chemicals and waste, climate change, international waters, and land degradation. In previous evaluations, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the GEF had observed concerns regarding the work that the GEF supports in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Despite the GEF's programming in such contexts, the GEF lacked a definition, policies, and procedures for designing and implementing projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

The IEO commissioned the Environmental Law Institute to undertake an evaluation of GEF support in fragile and conflict-affected situations. The evaluation sought to answer four questions:

- How prevalent is conflict and fragility in the context of GEF-supported projects?

- Does the conflict or fragile context affect the outcomes of GEF-supported projects?

- To what extent do GEF-supported projects take into account the conflict or fragile context in their design and implementation?

- What conflict-sensitive measures could the GEF, its Agencies, and partners adopt to improve the performance and outcomes of GEF-supported interventions?

In undertaking the evaluation, staff expressed potential concern that they might be evaluated on actions (or inactions) that are outside their mandate, expertise, and control. The GEF is neither a peacebuilding nor a conflict-management organization. To preemptively address such concerns, the evaluation was framed not as an evaluation of whether projects were fulfilling their obligations but as an **evaluation to learn whether there are systemic factors that may influence intervention success and identify measures that could address those factors.**

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation assessed the impacts of conflict and fragility on the design and implementation of GEF interventions on three scales: globally, at the country and regional levels, and at the project level. At the global level, the evaluation examined the full GEF portfolio, considering the extent, nature, and results of GEF-funded interventions in countries affected by fragility and major armed conflict (i.e., conflicts with more than 1,000 battle deaths) vis-à-vis other countries. At the country and regional levels, the evaluation selected seven situations of focus using criteria such as regional diversity and the presence of major armed conflict since 1989. The selected situations were Afghanistan, the Albertine Rift (including parts of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tan-

zania, Uganda, and Zambia), the Balkans (including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, (North) Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia), Cambodia, Colombia, Lebanon, and Mali. In each situation, the evaluation team reviewed the available project documents for all projects and then selected 6-10 illustrative projects for further analysis. The analysis utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods. In addition to reviewing of project documents, the evaluation team conducted a literature review and undertook interviews with project staff, former employees, GEF Secretariat staff members, GEF Agency staff, and civil society informants.

Findings

The evaluation (GEF IEO 2020) found that the vast majority (88 percent) of GEF projects occur in countries affected by fragility. As of July 2020, the GEF had invested $4 billion (> 1/3 of its portfolio) in countries affected by major armed conflict. Second, the evaluation found that fragility has a statistically significant impact on all performance indicators, and conflict and fragility had statistically significant impacts on a project being cancelled or dropped, as well as an increased duration of delays. Third, many GEF projects have already innovated ways to manage the risks associated by conflict and fragility.

Typologies

Drawing on GEF innovations and experiences, the evaluation organically developed two notable typologies. The typologies were based on the observations collected during the evaluation, including the findings of the in-depth analysis of designing and implementing GEF projects. The first typology presents the key pathways by which conflict and fragility affect GEF projects: insecurity, social conflict, economic drivers,

political fragility and weak governance, and coping strategies (see figure below). The second typology identified the approaches to conflict-sensitive programming that GEF projects have innovated in the absence of a broader GEF approach to managing conflict- and fragility-related risks: acknowledgment, conflict avoidance, mitigation of risks, engaging in peacebuilding, and learning. These typologies were particularly notable for drawing upon a substantial evidence base of GEF experiences, while also being consistent with the broader literature.

	PHYSICAL INSECURITY	SOCIAL CONFLICT AND MISTRUST	ECONOMIC DRIVERS	POLITICAL FRAGILITY AND WEAK GOVERNANCE	COPING STRATEGIES
Negative impact	• Impedes access to project site • Physical safety of project staff and partners • Difficulties hiring staff	• Land tenure issues • Sensitivities hiring project staff	• Illicit extraction and trade of natural resources • Competition over resources can drive conflicts and put staff and parties at risk • Currency depreciation	• Institutional capacity and legitimacy • Financial capacity • Corruption and rule of law	• Conflict between internally displaced persons/ refugees and local communities • Decreased carrying capacity • Vulnerability enhanced by climatic stressors
Positive impact		• Projects designed to increase cooperation among groups	• Projects focused on livelihoods and sustainable natural resource management	• Projects designed to align with governmental priorities, including implementation of peace agreement	

COVID-19

While the evaluation was under way, the COVID-19 pandemic erupted. Travel restrictions hindered GEF project staff from working on the ground, affecting the ability of projects to establish trust with the local populations. Such restrictions made it difficult to undertake consultations to develop a project or build public consensus. The resort to virtual communications over the phone or internet rendered the projects distant from local communities. While the pandemic had some modest effect on the evaluation -affecting travel- it had a broader relevance, highlighting the importance of adaptive approaches to GEF programming. Indeed, one of the notable findings of the evaluation was that it was often difficult for projects to adapt nimbly to fragile and conflict-affected contexts that are often volatile and dynamic. COVID-19 reinforced the broader relevance of the findings and recommendations related to adaptability as being important far beyond fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Recommendations

The evaluation made five key recommendations:

- The GEF Secretariat should use the project review process to identify conflict- and fragility-related risks to a proposed project and develop measures to mitigate those risks.

- The GEF Secretariat could develop guidance for conflict-sensitive programming.

- The GEF Secretariat and the Agencies should leverage existing platforms for learning, exchange, and technical assistance to improve conflict-sensitive design and implementation of GEF projects.

- The current GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards could be expanded to provide more details so that GEF projects address key conflict-sensitive considerations.

- The GEF Secretariat could consider revising its policies and procedures to enable projects to better adapt to rapid and substantial changes in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

The GEF Council discussed the evaluation and its findings, and endorsed the five recommendations.

Worksheet: Evaluation

Objectives:

- Design a systematic assessment (evaluation) of your intervention, with a focus on answering key evaluation questions.

- Ensure that your evaluation aligns with the questions, evaluation users (stakeholders), approaches, and methods.

- Address accountability and learning-related needs and priorities.

- Capture and link your intervention's environmental and peacebuilding dimensions in understanding its contribution to change.

Evaluation Questions

When designing your evaluation questions, which will in turn inform the selection of an evaluation approach and methods, answer the following:

- **Who are the intended users** of or the audience for the evaluation? How should they be involved in the design and implementation of the evaluation? List all the stakeholder groups who will use or be an audience for the evaluation.

    - Revisit the Persona Tool in Chapter 2 (Design) to review your stakeholder groups.

    - Common intended users include your team, your organization, your funders, intervention partners, the community in which the intervention took place, government representatives, and the larger environmental peacebuilding field.

    - Note that increasing the number of users for your evaluation can increase the complexity of the answers to the questions.

- **What do you want to learn** from this evaluation? What are the needs or interests of the other intended users vis-à-vis the evaluation?

    - You may want to revisit your theory of change and look at places where evidence is so far lacking or limited.

    - Your original learning questions are also a good guide.

    - Remember, you are likely unable to include all users and all needs, so carefully consider what is feasible to include in the evaluation.

- What **specific questions** need to be answered to address your learning needs and the interests of other intended users?

  - In outlining the key questions, you may want to include sub-questions.

  - Ensure that you include questions that link the environmental and conflict/peace dimensions of your intervention.

  - In general, it is a good idea to limit the questions to what you need to know versus what is nice to know. This makes the evaluation more manageable.

  - Consider using the OECD DAC evaluation criteria as a guide.

- **Can you feasibly answer** your evaluation questions? Consider your project context, stage, and resources.

  - If not, are there other questions that can serve as a proxy?

- **How might your evaluation positively or negatively affect the conflict context?**

  - What steps can you take to mitigate risk and achieve environmental peacebuilding objectives?

  - This is a question to ask repeatedly throughout the evaluation process.

Evaluation Design

Having developed the evaluation questions, it is time to design the evaluation approach and methods. You should consider the following:

- What **approaches and methods** will produce valid and credible information for both your evaluation questions and your intended users?

- How will you capture and reconcile **multiple, diverse perspectives?**

  - Should you seek out an interdisciplinary evaluation team that is able to capture the complex, multi-faceted dimensions of environmental peacebuilding?

  - How are you capturing different gender perspectives?

  - How can you include a diversity of stakeholders in a conflict-sensitive and inclusive way?

- How will you capture **unintended consequences** or outcomes?

- Are these methods **appropriate for the context and the intended users?** Are they culturally and conflict sensitive? How will you keep stakeholders safe as you capture their perspectives?

  - Are there any considerations regarding the collection of information from women? Such considerations include, for example, female enumerators and groups with only women.

  - How might your evaluation approach and methods affect the success of your intervention and/or the larger context, either intentionally or unintentionally?

  - Is it safe enough to conduct an evaluation?

- Is this the **right time** for an evaluation, considering the evaluation questions you have? Has there been sufficient time for change to occur?

- Do you have **sufficient resources** to conduct an evaluation that incorporates these approaches and methods? If you are conducting the evaluation internally, do you have sufficient expertise?

  - Remember, it is more important to do an evaluation that is right-sized to your needs and context than to do a "perfect" evaluation.

Evaluation Implementation

As you begin your evaluation, think about the following:

- Have you **communicated your evaluation plans** to relevant stakeholders prior to starting?

  - This includes information on the evaluation purpose, process, and how the results will be shared and used once complete. Remember, you should balance transparency with conflict sensitivity.

- Do you have a plan for providing **regular updates** to stakeholders during the evaluation? What strategies can you employ to communicate with different stakeholders effectively and safely?

  - Consider cultural norms, preferred language, and gender dynamics of your audience.

- How will you **monitor** the evaluation process?

  - You may, for example, develop a plan to regularly consult stakeholders about how the evaluation is going, monitor contextual indicators, and assess the potential effects of conducting your evaluation.

Using Your Evaluation Results

When planning to use your evaluation results, consider the following:

- How will you **use the findings?** Have you made a plan for responding to the evaluation findings that is concrete and includes action stems, persons responsible, and timelines?

  - Ensure accountability by documenting and sharing your plan with relevant stakeholders.

- With **what audiences** will you share your evaluation?

  - Community members, stakeholders affected by your intervention, funders, policymakers, your organization, and others in the environmental peacebuilding field may all be interested in the evaluation, or a sub-set of findings.

- In **what formats** should you share the evaluation?

  - Different formats will be necessary for each stakeholder group; communities may prefer an in-person presentation in their own language, while funders may prefer a full report.

  - Ensure that your evaluation is shared in contextually and culturally appropriate ways.

- How can the way in which you share your evaluation contribute to your objectives? How can you share in a way that avoids doing harm?

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