



SCeNe Coalition's

# CRITERIA FOR HIGH-INTEGRITY NATURE-BASED CARBON PROJECTS



**SCeNe**  
Coalition

## Authors

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## Version 1.0

The Southeast Asia Climate and Nature-based Solutions (SCS) Coalition, a network of leading environmental NGOs, has developed practical Criteria to guide the design and implementation of high-integrity nature-based carbon projects that deliver “triple benefits” for climate, biodiversity, and communities. These Criteria respond to growing concerns over the credibility of voluntary carbon markets (VCM), which have faced declining confidence due to issues of credit quality, social safeguards, and biodiversity trade-offs. While global initiatives such as ICVCM’s Core Carbon Principles and VCMI’s Claims Code aim to strengthen market integrity, gaps remain in translating principles into actionable, on-the-ground practices.

The following Criteria complement existing standards by providing implementation-focused guidance for project developers, buyers, and assurance bodies to achieve robust social and environmental outcomes alongside carbon benefits. Designed for global applicability, they promote continuous improvement, harmonization with leading standards, and alignment with sustainable development goals. By clarifying what high integrity looks like in practice, the Criteria aim to restore confidence in NbS carbon projects, support fair pricing that reflects true costs, and enable transformative change through nature-based solutions.

with support from 

# About the SCS Coalition

The SCS Coalition is a partnership of nine international environmental NGOs working to accelerate Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in Southeast Asia by addressing systemic barriers such as data gaps, financing challenges, and capacity constraints. Leveraging regional expertise and collaborative strength, the Coalition operates through three integrated workstreams: the NbS Tool, NbS Incubator, and NbS Portfolio. These initiatives unite expertise and resources to unlock transformative impact across the region.

The **NbS Tool** is a free, open-access digital platform offering spatial analysis, baseline data, and project management features to help frontline organizations and investors identify and design NbS opportunities. **The NbS Incubator** provides tailored support to selected organizations during the high-risk early stages of project development, while the **NbS Portfolio** embeds SCS’s Criteria to ensure integrity and triple benefits for climate, biodiversity, and communities. These Criteria complement global frameworks by providing practical guidance for implementation, ensuring projects meet high standards and deliver transformative outcomes.

## For further information

Visit SCS Coalition [website](#)



## Roles of Organisations within the Coalition

Participation by all nine member organisations in the SCS Coalition does not constitute endorsement or validation of individual carbon projects or market-related claims.

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# 1.0 Background

## 1.1 Contextual background

The Southeast Asia Climate and Nature-based Solutions (SCeNe) Coalition is a platform of nine environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) advocating for the advancement of high-integrity nature-based solutions (NbS), including nature-based carbon projects (NbS carbon projects), that deliver “triple benefits” for nature, people and climate. The members of the Coalition have decades of shared experience of what constitutes effective and equitable conservation to help market participants understand what it takes (and what it costs) to deliver credible and transparent outcomes for biodiversity and local people, alongside emissions reductions and removals.

Although the Coalition’s experience and initial motivation is grounded in Southeast Asia, the Criteria are designed with a global outlook. Many of the implementation challenges they address are common across regions; therefore, the guidance is intended to be applicable worldwide. The rapid growth of the voluntary carbon market (VCM) in recent years has led to the mobilization of significant private financing to protect or restore high-carbon ecosystems, including terrestrial forests. By 2030, the VCM’s value is expected to grow to between USD 15 billion (Bloomberg NEF, 2023) and potentially over USD 40 billion (Boston Consulting Group, 2023), up from USD 2 billion in 2021. If implemented with high integrity, as ensured by applying the Criteria, the VCM holds considerable potential to contribute to global climate goals, direct finance to nature-based solutions, and support sustainable development in the Global South. Yet, since the market’s peak in 2021, there has been a decline in market confidence, driven by concerns regarding credit quality, integrity, and the role of offsetting in corporate net zero commitments.

In early 2023, REDD+ voluntary carbon credits depreciated by nearly half their value, following a series of well-publicized investigations into REDD+ projects and certification bodies (Yin, 2023), dropping to approximately \$1.70 per metric ton of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. These highlighted concerns regarding the failure of projects to deliver on their climate objectives, suggesting that their credits did not genuinely reflect carbon reductions. Other analyses have also suggested that optimizing for carbon can come at the expense of restoring or protecting biodiversity (Soto-Navarro et al., 2020) and cause direct harm to Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities (LCs), including human rights abuses (Carbon Brief, 2023).

While these investigations primarily targeted REDD+ projects, they had knock-on effects on the credibility of the voluntary carbon market as a whole, dampening demand across multiple project types. However, not all project categories were equally affected. Afforestation, Reforestation and Revegetation (ARR) projects, in particular, have seen increased interest in recent years, partly driven by the development of more robust and transparent methodologies, and by growing appetite for high-integrity nature-based removals credits. According to Abatable (2025), ARR credits represented nearly 35% of new issuances in the first half of 2024, and demand has remained relatively resilient, especially for projects aligned with science-based targets or corporate removals strategies.

Furthermore, to restore market confidence and revitalize the market, there has been an industry-wide effort to work towards consensus on a definition of high-quality carbon credits and the standardization of voluntary claims. The first relates to the concerns of the quality of current credits (supply-side), and will likely be guided and

converge towards the [Core Carbon Principles](#) developed by the [Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market \(ICVCM\)](#) in 2023. The second relates to concerns around the use of carbon credits (demand-side), with guidance by the [Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity \(VCMI\)](#)'s [Claims Code of Practice](#) developed in 2024.

These initiatives represent important milestones in strengthening the credibility and effectiveness of the VCM. Encouragingly, 2024 saw the first signs of recovery in forward transactions and corporate offtake agreements, particularly for credits underpinned by strong social and environmental safeguards. With clearer guardrails in place, continued improvements in methodologies, and greater alignment between supply and demand actors, the market is well positioned to scale its impact and contribute meaningfully to global climate and biodiversity goals.

## 1.2. Why has SCSNe developed these criteria?

This document provides practical, implementation-focused guidance to help projects and buyers consistently deliver and recognize high-integrity climate, biodiversity and social outcomes. It complements (not replaces) existing carbon crediting standards and labels by translating principles into on-the-ground activities across the project life cycle. Project developers and frontline groups can use the Criteria to plan activities to manage NbS carbon projects so that they can build ambition over time; buyers and investors can use them to evaluate the quality of NbS carbon projects; and standards/assurance bodies can use them to harmonize expectations around non-carbon outcomes. Given that the criteria are not designed as a separate label and/or standard, they can be applied at the discretion of the project developer, as adherence

to the guidance is not intended to be validated.

With the expected rapid growth of the VCM, it is critical that private financing is directed towards high-quality projects that deliver triple-benefit outcomes across climate, biodiversity and social outcomes. However, there remains a gap in existing and emerging guidance on how NbS carbon projects can achieve high-quality biodiversity, social, and climate outcomes (see details in Annex 1)

**While multiple initiatives set principles, buyer guidance and verification requirements for high-integrity NbS projects, there is limited integrated, practical guidance for the design and implementation of on-the-ground activities to achieve these outcomes.**

To fill this gap, the SCSNe Coalition has developed a set of Criteria in this document that are intended to complement industry efforts underway to enhance the quality of carbon credits and to build upon existing voluntary carbon standards, such as Verra's Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standards, Plan Vivo, and the Gold Standard. Most carbon certification standards focus heavily on the documentation and verification of outcomes, with less emphasis on providing detailed guidance for the design and implementation of on-the-ground activities. The Criteria aim to complement these standards by offering practical direction for activity planning and execution. For climate outcomes, they reference well-established carbon accounting best practices for NbS projects rather than introduce new approaches, with focus of the Criteria being largely on biodiversity and social outcomes.

The Coalition recognizes that delivering high-integrity NbS projects is more costly than minimum-compliance approaches. These costs arise from deeper and sustained participation with rights holders, robust safeguards and grievance mechanisms, more complex monitoring systems and technologies, and the capacity and governance required to maintain them over time. Current average credit prices often do not cover these real requirements.

**We therefore encourage buyers and investors to align pricing and financing terms with the full value and cost of verified climate, biodiversity and community outcomes.**

By clarifying what high integrity looks like in practice, the Criteria aim to help projects evidence these outcomes and provide clearer signals for fair pricing.

The Criteria reference the CCB Standards as a baseline benchmark. The CCB Standards are widely acknowledged within the industry for ensuring that carbon projects also contribute to biodiversity conservation and community benefits. By layering on top of the CCB, the Criteria can be used to elevate and enhance the climate, biodiversity and social impacts achieved by projects utilizing this standard. Additionally, by also focusing on biodiversity and social impacts, the Criteria are aligned with Principle 9. Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards of ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles.

### 1.3. About the Criteria

Nature-based solutions have the potential to address multiple climate, biodiversity and socio-economic sustainability issues in tandem. Hence NbS can contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) to deliver transformative change (Almássy, 2020). Such changes include system-level shifts in practices, governance, incentives and ecosystem conditions that sustain climate mitigation, biodiversity gains and equitable socio-economic outcomes beyond the project boundary and lifecycle. To enable this long-term transformative potential, NbS interventions must be aligned with high-quality standards for design and implementation. The Coalition recognizes that attaining best-in-class status from the outset is an unrealistic expectation for many NbS carbon projects and has therefore designed the Criteria with a progressive, iterative approach that supports continuous improvement over time. The Coalition also recognizes the urgent need to scale the implementation of and investment in NbS carbon projects to achieve national and global climate goals now.

#### Who the criteria are intended for:

The Criteria provide a framework for continuous improvement to guide the design and implementation of and investment in NbS carbon projects from a minimum threshold to achieve ever higher-quality impact over time.

The Criteria thus aim to guide decision-making related to NbS projects and serve three key audiences:

#### Project-level implementers

These are stakeholders such as carbon project developers and local NGOs or frontline organizations, who are responsible for designing and implementing NbS carbon projects on the ground, with the aim of enhancing the project's biodiversity, social and climate outcomes. The Criteria act as a guide for these implementers, clarifying the minimum requirements for a high-quality, triple-benefit project and providing actionable steps to continually improve outcomes throughout the project's lifecycle. By adhering to these Criteria, implementers can effectively translate the principles of a triple-benefit NbS carbon project into practical implementation across all stages of the project's development and operation.

#### Secondary stakeholders (crediting standards, label initiatives, and accreditation bodies).

This group includes program owners and scheme operators (e.g., voluntary carbon standards), quality-label initiatives, and bodies that accredit/approve validation-verification bodies (VVBs). They influence what "high quality" means in the market and how it is evidenced. The Criteria can help such stakeholders strengthen and harmonize requirements for biodiversity and social integrity, promote more consistent interpretation in assessments, and support continuous improvement across NbS carbon projects

#### Buyers and investors in NbS carbon projects.

These are stakeholders such as financial institutions, governments, funds and corporate buyers of carbon credits seeking to ensure their investments in NbS carbon projects are directed towards high-quality projects that can assure the effectiveness and durability of their outcomes. The Criteria serve as a guide for these buyers and investors to identify and evaluate high-quality projects that align with their objectives, thereby supporting purchasing

or investment decisions. Furthermore, the Criteria provide a framework for buyers to assess the full suite of positive impacts a project delivers - such as biodiversity conservation, community benefits, and climate mitigation - allowing them to determine a fair price that accounts for these multiple benefits.



# 2.0

## Introduction to the Criteria

### 2.1. Designing effective and impactful projects using the Criteria

During consultations with industry stakeholders in Phase 1 of the development of the criteria (details provided in Annex 2), two core themes emerged on the areas of improvement for carbon projects in the VCM which were currently hindering the ability of projects to optimize their climate, biodiversity and social outcomes.

#### The first is the need for high-quality monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans in NbS carbon projects.

Stakeholders voiced concern that M&E plans in carbon projects are often a box-ticking exercise, rather than a tool for learning and improvement. A robust M&E plan should clearly define indicators, timeframes, responsibilities, and methods for data collection to support adaptive management, strengthen accountability, and ensure that social and ecological outcomes are being met. At the same time, challenges such as limited resources, data gaps, and difficulties in measuring biodiversity and social impacts were widely acknowledged.

#### The second is the need to ensure the long-term continuity and impacts of project interventions.

Stakeholders emphasized that projects should be designed to deliver durable outcomes by addressing the root causes of ecosystem degradation and creating the conditions for sustained change. This includes embedding interventions within broader landscape strategies, ensuring strong local ownership, and building the capacity and incentives necessary for communities and stakeholders to continue activities beyond the project's lifespan.

Taking into account these two themes, the Criteria are designed to ensure that a project is designed, managed and

implemented with purpose and informed by evidence. This will ensure it is equipped to respond to changes or unforeseen challenges accompanied by an adaptive management approach. Projects should also consider cost-effectiveness when prioritizing activities. For example, calibrating biodiversity monitoring intensity so it strengthens learning without crowding out community benefits and transparently justify major cost trade-offs in plans and budgets.

In addition, the Criteria are informed by widely adopted best practices for conservation project design and implementation, particularly the Conservation Standards 4.0 developed by the Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP, 2020). These open-source standards follow a five-step adaptive management cycle and provide a practical framework for designing, managing, and monitoring high-integrity conservation projects.

To support the practical application of the Criteria, the SCeNe Coalition will integrate these in the NbS Identification Tool and the NbS Incubator. The NbS Identification Tool is a digital project management platform designed to help frontline organizations (FOs) plan and prepare high-integrity NbS projects by providing access to relevant data, guidance, and analytical support. It includes features such as a project dashboard, document templates, and will include a checklist version of the Criteria to guide users through key design requirements. Complementing this, the NbS Incubator is a dedicated support program that helps selected FOs scope, develop, and scale NbS projects through technical

assistance, seed funding, and tailored capacity-building.

The Criteria will serve as a core reference throughout the Incubator's scoping and development phases, helping to ensure that participating projects deliver measurable benefits for climate, nature, and people. They will also be embedded in the Incubator's learning modules, supporting FOs to build the skills needed to design and implement high-quality, long-lasting interventions from the outset. By showcasing projects that meet the Criteria across these platforms, SCeNe helps buyers differentiate quality and channel finance toward higher-integrity pipelines.

Certain foundational capacities apply across all criteria. Project proponents are expected to demonstrate strong management capacity and dedicated resources, including technical expertise across climate, biodiversity and monitoring, evaluation and learning. This also includes social performance expertise in human rights, safeguards and gender, and a team that is diverse and reflective of the community context.

## 2.2. Structure of the Criteria

The Criteria provide a practical framework for continuous improvement in the design and implementation of NbS carbon projects. They are guidance rather than a carbon crediting standard and are intended to be used alongside recognized programs and methodologies.

Each criterion sets out what high-integrity practice requires and the outcomes to be achieved. The sub-criteria specify the project requirements. The progression arcs (see section 3) show how practice can evolve from minimum to enhanced across recurring dimensions such as stakeholder participation, baseline quality, project activities, geographical scale, monitoring, evaluation and learning, and risk management. Read together, they offer guidance for planning and implementation, and for tracking improvement and evidencing results over the life of the project.

The Criteria represent a framework of continuous improvement to guide the design and implementation of, and investments in NbS carbon projects from a minimum threshold to achieve ever higher-quality impact over time. As such, the Criteria are structured around the following questions:

### a. What defines a high-quality NbS project?

In this document, we lay out six criteria, each containing high-level requirements for nature-based carbon projects to deliver climate, biodiversity and social benefits.

Each criterion consists of multiple sub-criteria, representing key project requirements that satisfy the criterion.

### b. How can stakeholders ensure projects deliver durable and effective solutions across climate, biodiversity and socio-economic challenges?

Through the sub-criteria, we expand on how projects can apply the criteria through a continuous improvement framework, or a set of 'progression arcs' (further detailed in Section 3 below).

Projects can be strengthened over time by applying best practices for conservation project design and implementation.

These practices almost certainly result in higher project design and implementation costs which the Coalition believes should be taken into account in pricing decisions.



# 3.0 Progression Arcs

This continuous improvement framework is represented by what the Coalition calls 'progression arcs' which articulate the foundational activities projects can focus on and build upon incrementally. These have been identified as key areas for driving continuous improvement over the project's lifecycle to achieve higher-quality, triple-benefit impact over time. Investing in these incremental enhancements to increase a project's impact should also provide a basis for credits earning a higher price.

Projects can build on foundational activities to achieve higher-quality outcomes, through the following 'progression arcs'

- A. **Quality of stakeholder participation**
- B. **Quality of baseline projection**
- C. **Scope of project activities**
- D. **Geographic scale of project activities**
- E. **Quality of risk and mitigation plan**
- F. **Quality of monitoring, evaluation and learning plan**

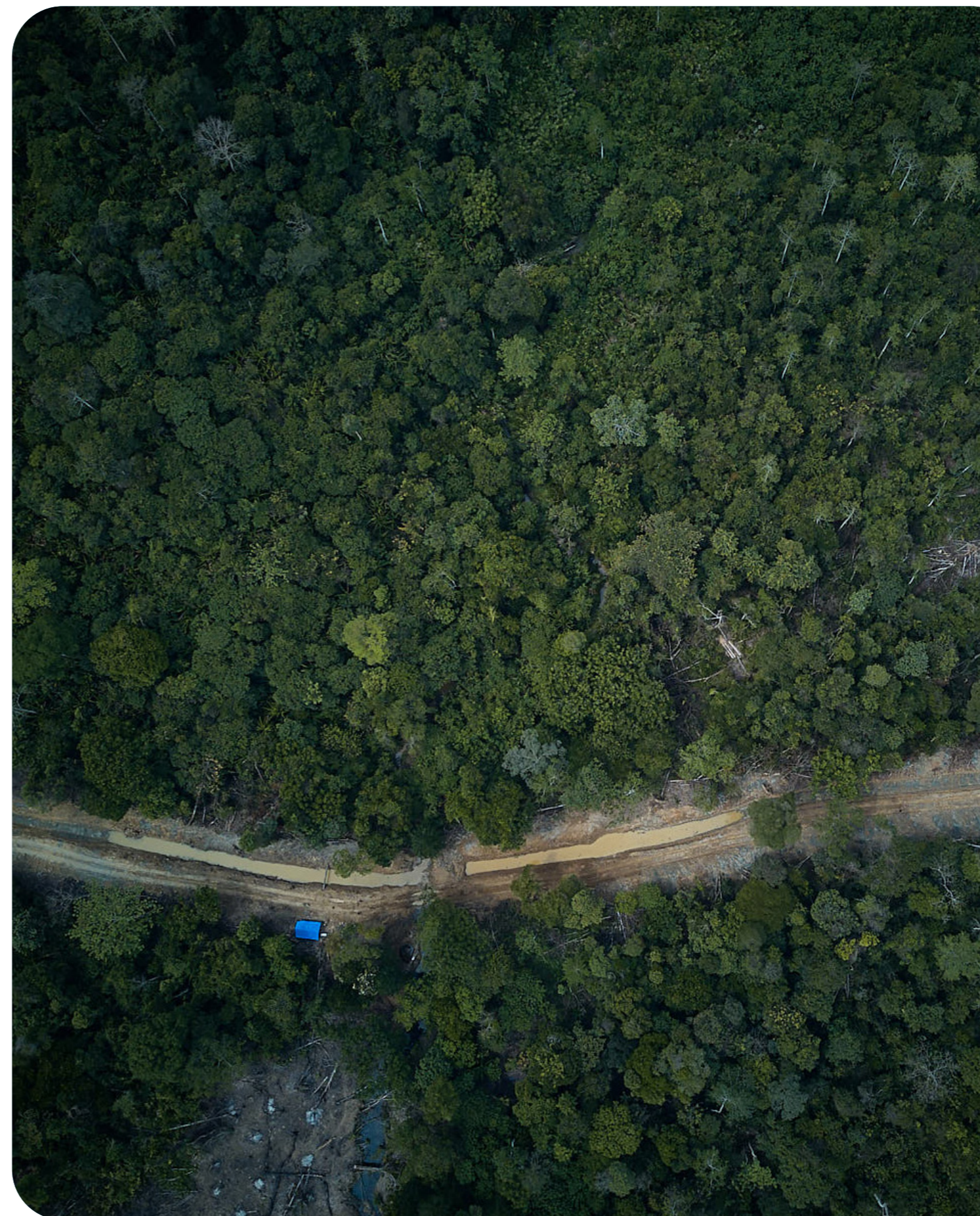


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## PROGRESSION ARC A

### Quality of stakeholder participation

This progression arc focuses on the inclusiveness, responsiveness and quality of stakeholder participation throughout the project lifecycle, from origination to implementation and beyond. Effective participation ensures that stakeholders, especially rights holders and those directly affected and/or from marginalized groups, can meaningfully participate in, influence and, ultimately, lead in decision-making (ICAT, 2020). It also fosters ownership and long-term support for project outcomes (Cobb et al., 2024). Figure 2 below gives an example of what the stakeholder participation spectrum can look like across the project lifecycle.

#### Stakeholder Participation Spectrum

Low level of stakeholder participation		Mid Level of Stakeholder participation	High level of stakeholder participation	
Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to help them understand the problem, alternatives and solutions	Obtain stakeholder input on analysis, alternatives or decisions	Work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with stakeholders in each aspect of decision-making, including developing alternatives and identifying preferred solutions	Place decision-making in the hands of the stakeholders
"We will keep you informed."	"We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influences the decisions."	"We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how the stakeholder input influenced the decision."	"We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions, and incorporate your advice and recommendations in the decisions to the maximum extent possible."	"We will implement what you decide."

Figure 2. Stakeholder participation spectrum.  
Source: Adapted from IAP2(2014) / ICAT (2020)

Stakeholder engagement should go beyond information sharing to include capacity strengthening and active engagement, enabling stakeholders to express their needs and contribute to project design. A strong stakeholder participation plan ensures that all groups are informed, empowered to participate, understand how their input influences decisions, and that rights holders in particular have the opportunity to lead in decision-making.

#### Key elements of a project's stakeholder engagement plan to improve its quality include:

##### 1. Identifying appropriate stakeholder groups.

Projects should conduct stakeholder mapping to identify those most affected and to assess levels of influence. This helps prioritize engagement and tailor communication methods. At a minimum, consultations should involve community-identified leaders and extend to vulnerable groups such as Indigenous Peoples (IPs), Local Communities (LCs), vulnerable and/or marginalized groups including women. To ensure inclusive representation, projects can disaggregate stakeholders further by other social groupings and factors (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, minority ethnic groups), to better understand diverse needs, perspectives, and participation barriers within communities.

##### 2. Understanding participation barriers and needs.

Engagement should begin by understanding participation barriers and needs for each group, then be tailored accordingly, from information-sharing through to full collaboration (see Figure 2). Before initiating FPIC, agree with communities on the decision-making process itself, ideally through a

community-defined FPIC Protocol that sets out how they wish to deliberate and decide. At a minimum, projects should inform, consult, and obtain Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from rights holders and follow all major internationally agreed human rights standards and safeguards<sup>2</sup>. Addressing participation barriers may require targeted capacity-building so communities are fully informed of, and able to exercise their rights, including the ability to decide on proposals that affect them. FPIC is an ongoing, iterative process and should be maintained as continuous dialogue throughout the project cycle, with consent revisited at key milestones and whenever activities, risks or benefit-sharing arrangements change. Participatory processes should support co-development of management plans and capacity-building in governance and resource management, including communication and facilitation skills to support effective consultation. For example, empowering IPs and LCs through support for community-led institutions and platforms can enhance long-term project sustainability (WWF et al., 2021).

##### 3. Adapting consultation methods.

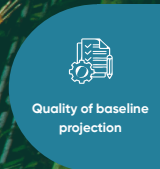
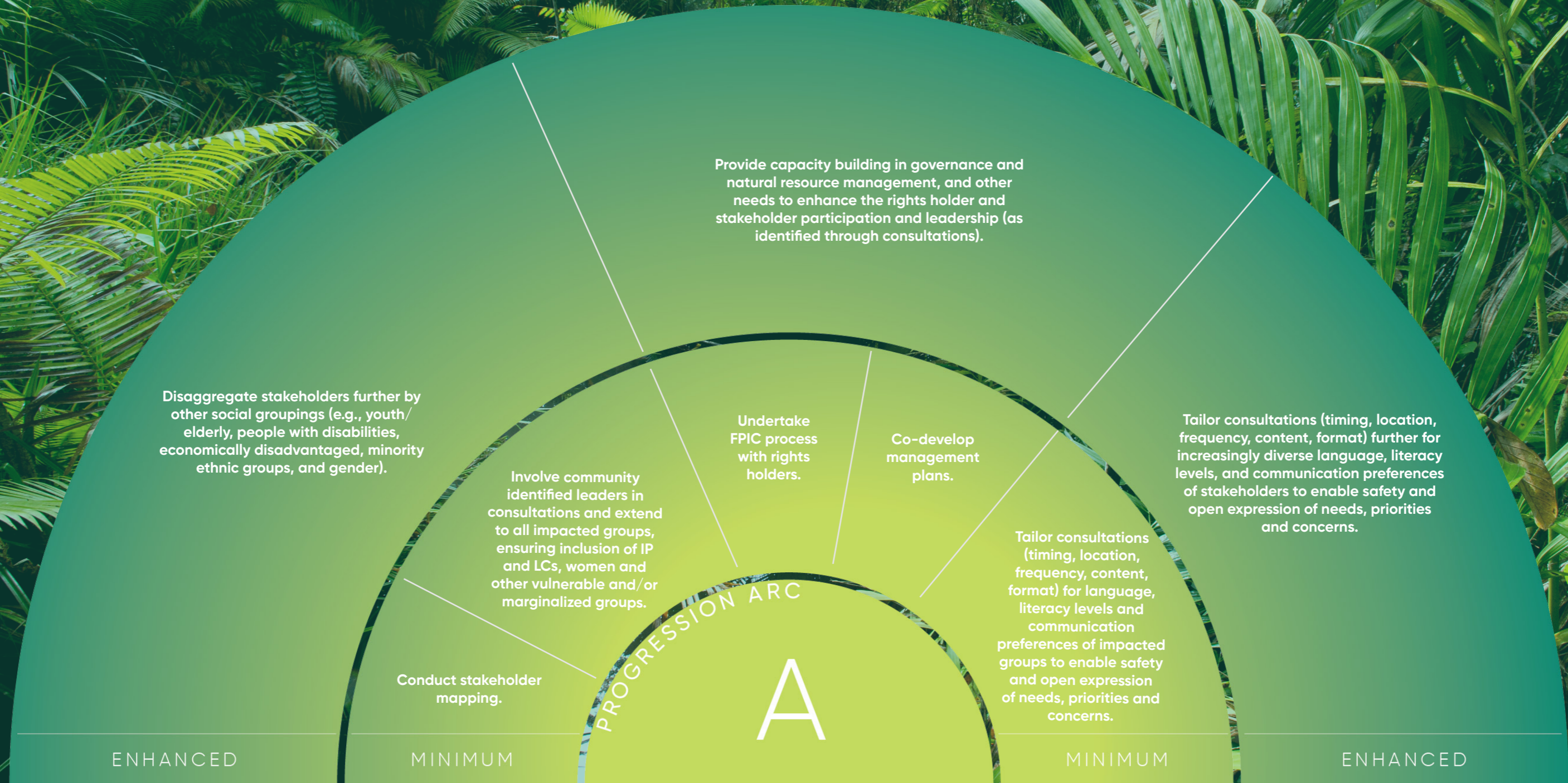
Engagement approaches should consider accessibility factors such as language, literacy, and preferred communication channels, as well as participants' time and opportunity costs, alongside social factors such as gender and ethnicity. Frequency and format should reflect the scale and impact of project activities as well as the social, cultural, economic context of the area. For example, benefit-sharing mechanisms may require regular engagement to remain adaptive and inclusive.

In addition, as part of stakeholder engagement, projects should put in place a baseline agreement with rights holders, IPs, and LCs, to safeguard their intellectual property and traditional knowledge.



# QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

The actions described within the minimum and enhanced arcs, represent the areas of advancement for each progression arc, helping describe where a project can evolve to maximise its impact. To ensure the progression arcs are applied effectively, refer to the explanatory section on the previous page for additional context and guidance.



## PROGRESSION ARC B



## Quality of baseline projection

A baseline projection is a quantitative estimate of future conditions or trends under a “business-as-usual” scenario, used to assess the potential impacts of project interventions on biodiversity and community outcomes. In a NbS carbon project, it helps establish the counterfactual scenario required to determine additionality of impact (Coetzee and Gaston, 2021).

Inaccurate or inflated baseline projections can undermine credibility, overstate additionality, and hinder accurate evaluation of biodiversity, social and climate benefits from the project (Thomson, 2023). High quality projections support reliable decision making and adaptive management.



### This progression arc identifies key elements for developing robust baseline projections:

#### 1. Timing.

Projections should be conducted before interventions begin and integrated into project design. Exploring multiple counterfactual scenarios early, both with and without project interventions, helps clarify the implications of different approaches (Coetzee and Gaston, 2021). Where dynamic baselines are used, projections should be reassessed at regular intervals (e.g., in line with the project’s monitoring/verification cycle) and when predefined triggers occur (e.g., major policy or land-use changes, extreme events, or materially improved data).

#### 2. Spatial scale.

Projects should define whether baseline projections apply at the project or landscape level, aligning the chosen scale with how outcomes will be delivered and how conditions are best addressed. In some cases, achieving project benefits requires working beyond the project boundary. For example, protecting nesting and feeding sites of wide-ranging species that move across the landscape, or

addressing land and resource tenure at a jurisdictional scale to enable policy and/or regulatory reforms that affect communities in and around the project area. Expanding the spatial scale of projections helps capture broader ecological and social dynamics, ensuring a more accurate assessment of project impact.

#### 3. Temporal scale.

Outcomes can be assessed against a fixed baseline or a projected trend in biodiversity or socio-economic indicators, depending on the project’s goals.

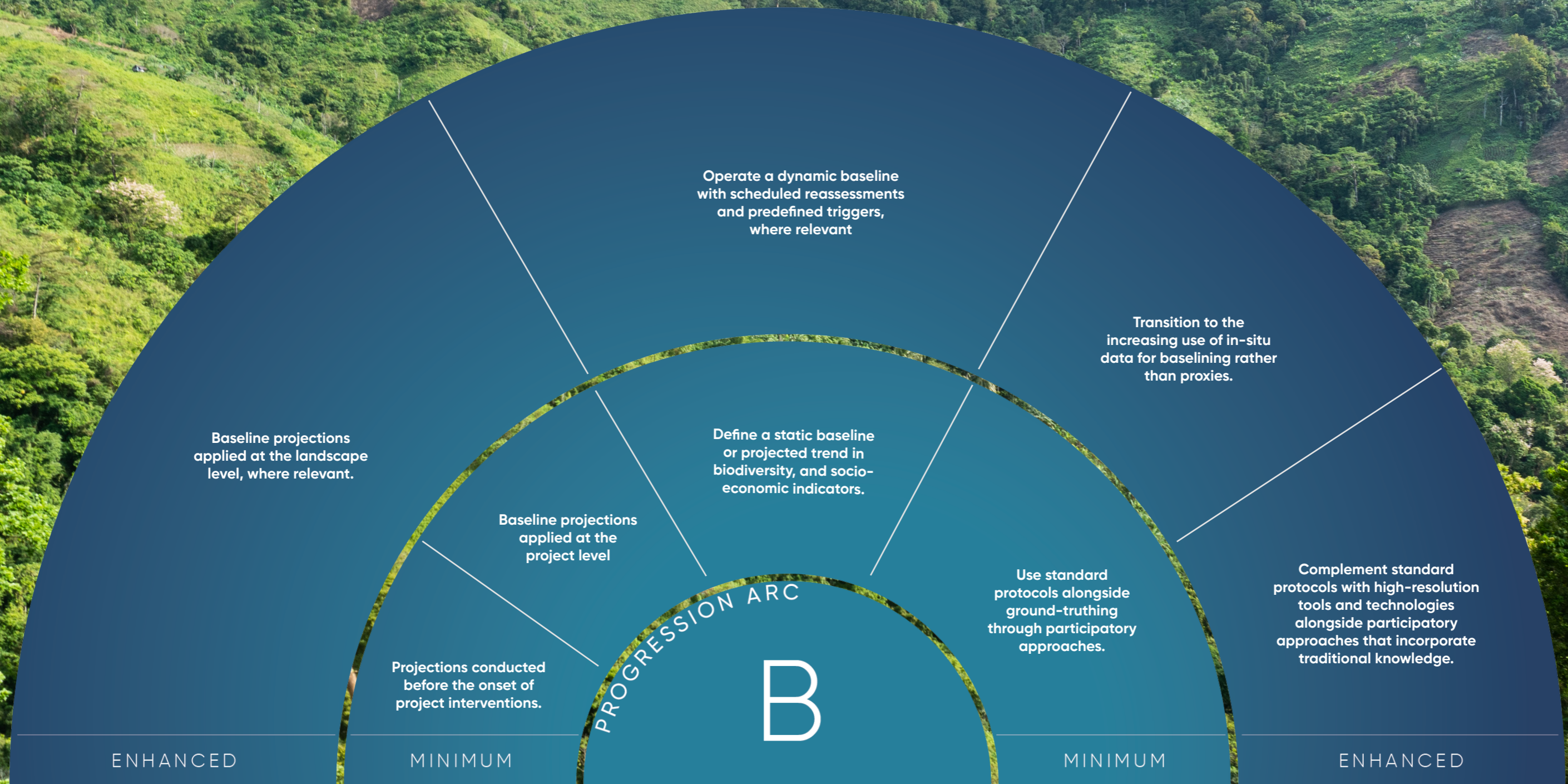
#### 4. Methods and tools used.

Scientifically robust and transparent methodologies are essential for collecting and analyzing baseline data. Projects should use standard protocols and integrate more precise and scalable tools using GIS, remote sensing or other high-resolution technologies alongside participatory approaches that incorporate local knowledge. This enhances the accuracy, credibility, and adaptability of projections.



# QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

The actions described within the minimum and enhanced arcs, represent the areas of advancement for each progression arc, helping describe where a project can evolve to maximise its impact. To ensure the progression arcs are applied effectively, refer to the explanatory section on the previous page for additional context and guidance.



## PROGRESSION ARC C



## Scope of project activities

This progression arc recognizes projects that adopt a broader and more integrated scope of activities to deliver additional benefits for biodiversity, people, and the climate. These projects go further by implementing interventions aimed at strengthening ecological integrity and improving local well-being across a broader suite of dimensions. This includes conserving and/or restoring a wider range of species and ecosystems, improving ecosystem function, and addressing the needs, priorities, and capacities of a wider set of local communities and stakeholders.

### Benefiting biodiversity

To maximize ecological impact, projects should prioritize areas of high biodiversity significance, as these regions host globally threatened and irreplaceable species but also support local livelihoods and cultural practices. Focusing conservation efforts in these areas enhances both impact and resource efficiency.

#### Key activities may include:

- Conservation of sites with high biodiversity value identified through international frameworks such as [High Conservation Values \(HCVs\)](#), the [High Carbon Stock Approach \(HCSA\)](#) or the [Key Biodiversity Areas \(KBAs\)](#), or local/regional frameworks where available.
- Restoration of degraded ecosystems, targeting species and ecosystem services of ecological and socio-cultural importance (e.g., keystone species or culturally significant species).
- Implementing activities that enhance ecological resilience to climate hazards such as flooding, runoff or shoreline erosion.
- Establishing landscape connectivity, through habitat corridors to support species movement and genetic diversity (Cobb et al., 2024).
- Monitoring biodiversity trends to detect early signs of ecosystem degradation.
- Expanding the number of species and ecosystem services targeted by the project.
- Integration of traditional ecological knowledge, especially from IPs and LCs, to inform biodiversity management.
- Plan corridors, restoration targets and species mixes using forward-looking climate and land-use scenarios to anticipate range shifts, climate refugia and resource-pressure hotspots.

### Benefiting local communities

Projects can expand positive impact for people by including additional activities to build capacity beyond the immediate needs of project activities and/or increase the number of human well-being outcomes achieved and measured, such as expanding beyond economic benefits, to include tenure security, health, culture and education benefits.

#### Key activities may include:

- Capacity strengthening for local stakeholders (e.g., training in conservation, sustainable livelihoods, business development, self-governance, etc.).
- Support for community development initiatives such as nature-based enterprises, sustainable agriculture, and other livelihood initiatives.
- Support for activities to deliver additional sustainable development outcomes (health or education outcomes), in response to needs and priorities of project stakeholders.
- Activities that improve access to ecosystem services including clean water, food, fuelwood and medicinal plants, through better ecosystem management.
- Environmental education and awareness-raising, including intergenerational knowledge transfer to foster long-term stewardship and cultural ties to nature).
- Deliver early benefits co-designed with communities to sustain interest and engagement during the early development process (e.g., livelihood pilots, small-scale community infrastructure or services, restoration jobs/cash-for-work).

### Expanding impact over time

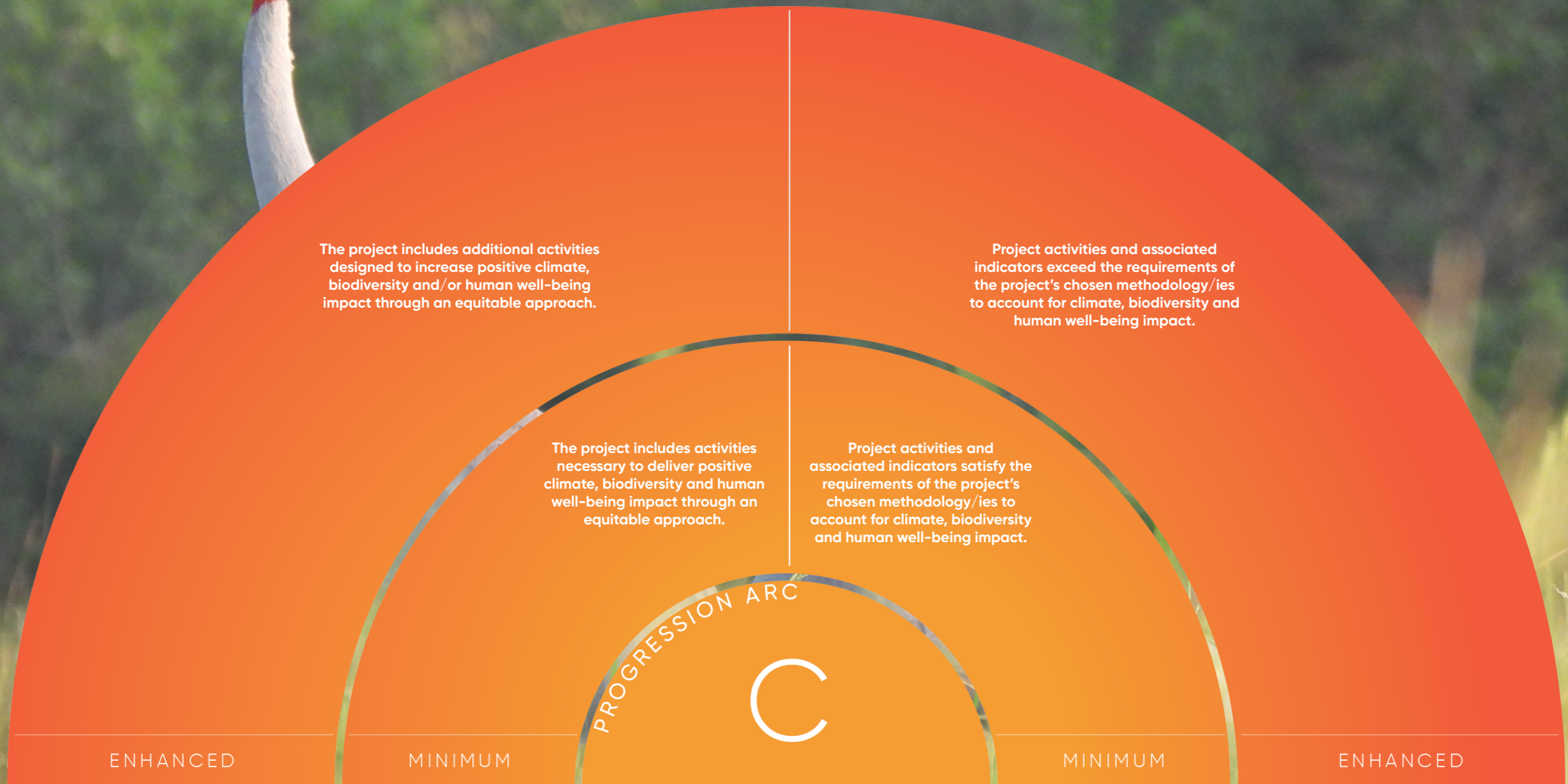
Projects can enhance their long-term impact by gradually expanding their scope of interventions to include additional species, ecosystem services, and community-focused actions. For example, monitoring species currently classified as “least concern” may be important to detect early warning signs of ecosystem degradation, while investing in education or women-led enterprises can improve both social equity and conservation effectiveness over time.





# SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The actions described within the minimum and enhanced arcs, represent the areas of advancement for each progression arc, helping describe where a project can evolve to maximise its impact. To ensure the progression arcs are applied effectively, refer to the explanatory section on the previous page for additional context and guidance.



Quality of stakeholder participation



Quality of baseline projection



Scope of project activities



Geographic scale of project activities



Quality of risk and mitigation plan



Quality of monitoring, evaluation and learning plan

## PROGRESSION ARC D

GEOGRAPHICAL SCALE  
OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

This progression arc considers how expanding project activities beyond the immediate project zone to surrounding landscapes can significantly enhance biodiversity, climate and community outcomes within the project zone. Surrounding landscapes in this context refer to adjacent areas where biodiversity present in the project area occurs and the broader socio-ecological systems that influence, and are influenced, by project activities, including the actions of IPs and LCs, institutions, and government.



**Projects should assess the relevance and extent of including surrounding landscapes by considering:**

- Ecological processes that operate at different spatial scales, such as species migration and wide-ranging species, which are best addressed at a landscape or regional scales (Poiani et al., 2000);
- Effective biodiversity conservation involving protecting representative ecosystems and communities across scales (Cobb et al., 2024);
- Landscape connectivity to support species movement and genetic diversity (Cobb et al., 2024);
- Integrated landscape approaches that align social, economic and environmental goals, enabling coordinated management across jurisdictions (IUCN, 2020);
- Human activities in adjacent areas, such as land use and resource extraction, that can affect project permanence, leakage and other project benefits;
- Engaging with government planning and policy at the landscape level in support of long-term sustainability and land-use governance;
- Improved access to ecosystem services and livelihood opportunities for communities that result from restored or better managed ecosystems at the landscape level.

Scaling project activities beyond the project zone may include expanding baselining and monitoring, addressing external threats, participating in higher scale governance and planning processes, and enhancing habitat connectivity.



# GEOGRAPHIC SCALE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The actions described within the minimum and enhanced arcs, represent the areas of advancement for each progression arc, helping describe where a project can evolve to maximise its impact. To ensure the progression arcs are applied effectively, refer to the explanatory section on the previous page for additional context and guidance.

Assess the relevance and extent of including the surrounding landscape beyond the project zone in the scope of project activities (including baselining, monitoring and project interventions) to achieve broader and more meaningful project outcomes.

Scale project activities to the surrounding landscape, inclusive of the project zone, where relevant

The scope of project activities, including baselining, monitoring and planned interventions, is implemented within the project zone.

PROGRESSION ARC  
D

ENHANCED

MINIMUM

MINIMUM

ENHANCED



Quality of stakeholder participation



Quality of baseline projection



Scope of project activities



Geographic scale of project activities



Quality of risk and mitigation plan



Quality of monitoring, evaluation and learning plan

## PROGRESSION ARC E

### QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

A strong risk and mitigation plan is essential for anticipating challenges and ensuring project resilience. By proactively identifying and addressing potential threats, projects can safeguard outcomes and adapt effectively to changing conditions.



**This progression arc outlines key elements of a project's risk and mitigation plan to improve its quality:**

**1. Scope of risk management.**

Projects must identify and assess programmatic risks (e.g., political instability, natural disasters, future climate risks) using up to date models and operational risks (e.g., leadership changes, limited partner capacity) that could impact project success (CMP, 2020). In addition, projects should also assess human-rights risks (e.g., land/tenure conflicts, failures in FPIC, labor rights violations, discrimination and gender-based violence risks, security-force conduct, displacement/elite capture) relevant to the project. A comprehensive risk assessment should prioritize high-risk factors for mitigation based on their potential impact.

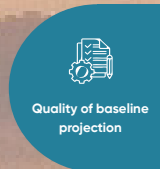
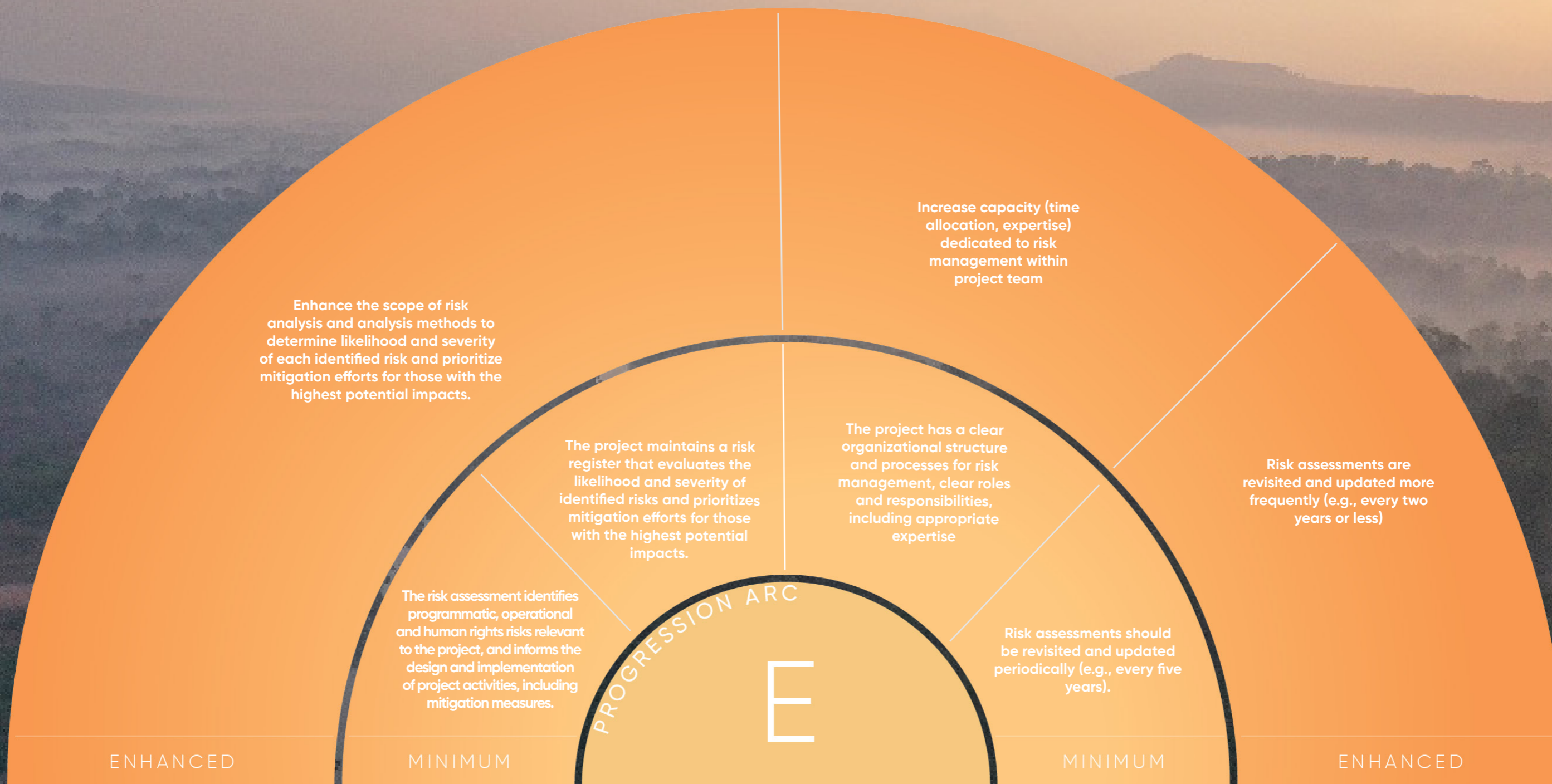
**2. Frequency of risk management.**

Risk assessments should evaluate both the likelihood and severity of each risk to guide mitigation efforts. To support adaptive management, projects should revisit and update their risk assessments more frequently, ideally every two years or less, to incorporate new risks and adjust mitigation strategies accordingly.



# QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

The actions described within the minimum and enhanced arcs, represent the areas of advancement for each progression arc, helping describe where a project can evolve to maximise its impact. To ensure the progression arcs are applied effectively, refer to the explanatory section on the previous page for additional context and guidance.



## PROGRESSION ARC F

QUALITY OF MONITORING,  
EVALUATION & LEARNING

Effective monitoring is essential for tracking project implementation, testing assumptions in the theory of change, reducing uncertainty, and enabling adaptive management (CMP, 2020). It ensures consistent data collection throughout the project lifecycle to support evidence-based decision-making and learning. A critical component of this process is the early establishment of baseline values (see Progression Arc B), which are essential for measuring progress and identifying deviations (Bull et al., 2014).

This progression arc focuses on improving the accuracy and reliability of monitoring by clarifying what to measure and how to measure it. Through this, projects can strengthen their monitoring systems, enabling adaptive management and better climate, biodiversity and human well-being outcomes.

What to  
measure

Projects should define clear, relevant metrics, either indicators (specific, often quantitative measures) or indices (composite scores combining multiple indicators), to evaluate outcomes and guide implementation (Oakley et al., 2022). Examples of indicators include the number of people trained, percentage increases in income, and population trends. Common indices include biodiversity measures such as the Shannon Index, Simpson's index and species richness, as well as socio-economic indices that combine variables such as income, education, occupation and housing quality (Vyas and Kumaranayake, 2006).

**The reliability of indicators and indices used in monitoring is determined by:**

**1. Quality**

Indicators and indices must be measurable, precise, consistent, and sensitive to the project's goals to ensure they provide accurate and useful information (Lindenmayer et al., 2013). These can include both quantitative and qualitative indicators and should incorporate indigenous knowledge and methodologies where relevant|

**2. Number**

The number of indicators and indices must be sufficient to cover key aspects without overwhelming resources, balancing comprehensiveness with practicality.

**3. Relevance.**

Indicators and indices must be well-aligned with the project's intended outcomes and relevant to stakeholders, reflecting values important to them. Their ability to generate meaningful insights is essential to supporting informed decision-making and adaptive management. Social indicators should, at a minimum, be disaggregated by gender and other context-relevant social identities.

Failure to choose appropriate indicators and indices may result in poorly designed monitoring plans that lack meaningful insights (Oakes et al., 2022). As best practice, ecological and social indicators or indices should be identified in close alignment with the project's theory of change or results chain.<sup>3</sup>

How to  
measure

Projects should select cost-effective, accurate, and feasible methods for data collection (CMP, 2020). Key considerations include:

**1. Frequency and sampling coverage.**

More frequently and spatially extensive data collection enhances statistical power and reliability (Lindenmayer et al., 2013; Richards and Panfil, 2011).

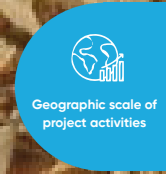
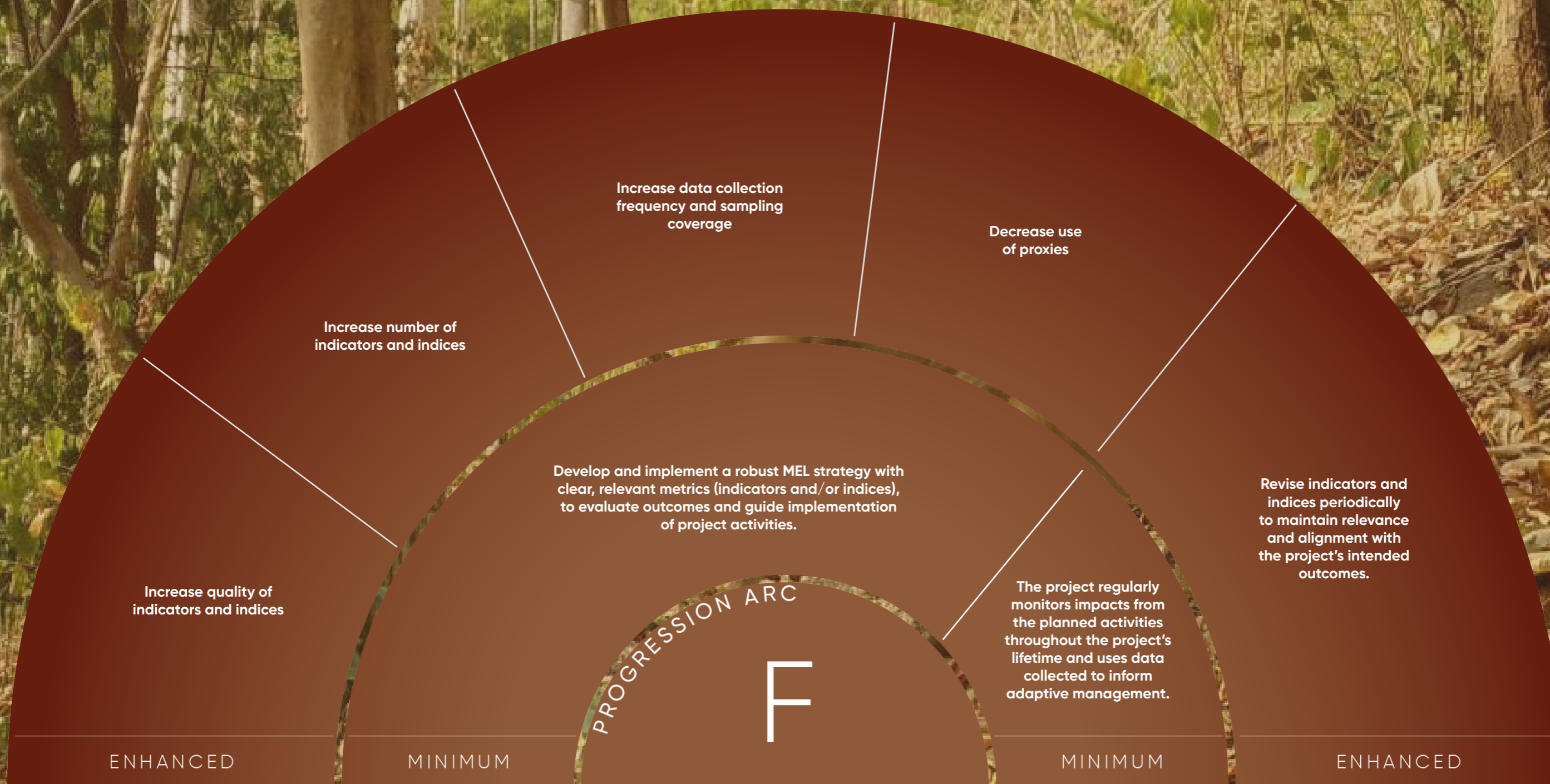
**2. Use of proxies.**

When direct data is unavailable, proxies can be useful but should be validated and calibrated for local relevance (Stephens et al., 2015). However, where feasible, direct data collection is preferred to improve accuracy.



# QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING PLAN

The actions described within the minimum and enhanced arcs, represent the areas of advancement for each progression arc, helping describe where a project can evolve to maximise its impact. To ensure the progression arcs are applied effectively, refer to the explanatory section on the previous page for additional context and guidance.



# Overview of the Criteria



- a. The project identifies and addresses the key drivers of threats to species and their habitats, and ecosystem services through project activities
- b. The project conserves, enhances and/or restores species and their habitat through project activities.

## Overview of the Criterion for Nature

**CRITERION 1** The NbS carbon project protects and enhances species and their habitats.



- a. The project's climatic impact is additional;
- b. The project ensures the permanence of its emission reductions and/or removals;
- c. The project manages and accounts for leakage;
- d. The project employs robust GHG accounting approaches;
- e. There is no double counting of the project's emission reductions or removals; and
- f. There is independent, third-party validation and verification of the project's climatic impact.

## Overview of the Criteria for Climate

**CRITERION 5** The NbS carbon project protects and enhances species and their habitats.

**CRITERION 6** The NbS carbon project protects and enhances species and their habitats.



- a. The project identifies expected climate change impacts on biodiversity and communities and implements measures to build resiliency, reduce hardship and support recovery

## Overview of the Criteria for People

**CRITERION 2** The NbS project governance structure is fair, transparent, and accountable.

**CRITERION 3** The NbS project strengthens rights to tenure, natural resource management and cultural heritage.

**CRITERION 4** The NbS project secures and improves sustainable development outcomes.



- a. The project governance structure is fair by facilitating equitable, meaningful participation of IPLCs in the origination, design and governance of the NbS project.
- b. The project governance structure is transparent. Project activities, timelines, stakeholders, roles, and level of decision-making authority of each stakeholder are clearly defined and publicly documented. Documentation is made accessible to project stakeholders where relevant.
- c. The project is accountable to all stakeholders. The project protects the security of all, including human rights defenders, complainants, and community spokespersons. This is achieved through the identification and implementation of suitable safeguards, including through a robust Feedback and Grievance Redress mechanism, to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy any violation of rights.



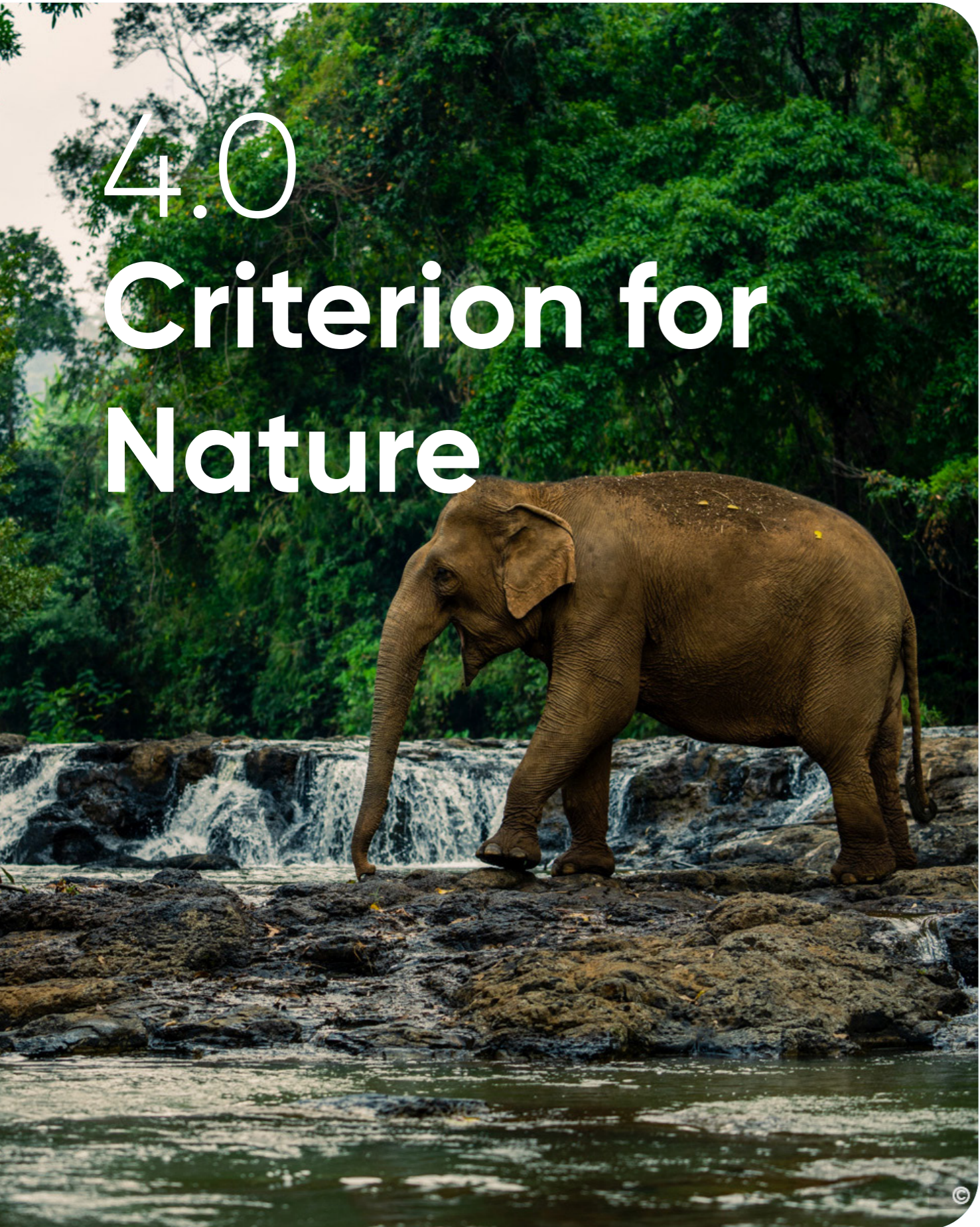
- a. The project works in partnership with IPs and LCs, and resource users that have rights to and/or rely on the project zone to conduct a properly resourced FPIC process informed by best practice."
- b. The project safeguards cultural heritage and respects traditional knowledge.
- c. The project works in partnership with IPs and LCs, and resource users that have rights to and/or rely on the project zone to conduct a properly resourced FPIC process informed by best practice.



- a. The project recognizes and fulfils sustainable development aspirations for IPs and LCs that have rights to and/or rely on the project area, including women and traditionally excluded community members.
- b. The benefit-sharing mechanism considers the principles of efficiency, efficacy and equity in the distribution of monetary and non-monetary benefits, in particular recognizing IPLCs, women and traditionally excluded community members.
- c. The project prioritizes investments in sustainable development activities that are nature-positive.

# 4.0

## Criterion for Nature



## 4.1. Overview of the Criterion for Nature

The Criterion for Nature highlights the importance of maximizing the benefits for nature from NbS carbon projects by protecting healthy ecosystems, restoring degraded ones, and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem function over time. These outcomes should be intentionally designed, rigorously monitored, and continually improved throughout the project lifecycle.

Additionally, although the criterion focuses on outcomes for nature, these strategies should be applied with close consideration for rights holders and project stakeholders within the project zone and should thus be closely considered together with the Criteria for People (Criteria 2, 3, and 4). This highlights that the design of conservation and restoration activities for nature within the project site should result in outcomes for nature, people and the climate.

To ensure that efforts to enhance biodiversity do not result in unintended harm, the Nature criterion is supported by a core set of safeguards. These safeguards reflect widely recognized good practices in ecosystem restoration and conservation and are essential conditions that all projects must meet to avoid negative impacts and uphold integrity.

### Safeguards for the Nature Criterion include:

- The use of synthetic fertilizers, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and biological control agents is not permitted in project activities.
- The project identifies the socio-cultural importance of the project zone, and existing community livelihoods that are dependent on or interact with the priority species and habitats. This is informed through consultation with rights holders (e.g., Indigenous Peoples and, where applicable, local communities or other groups with recognized legal or customary rights) and project stakeholders.
- The project identifies species to be used in restoration with the aim of supporting ecosystem function, prioritizing native species where possible, while allowing for the inclusion of non-native species only where ecologically appropriate. Species selection is informed through consultation with rights holders and other project stakeholders.
- Conversion or degradation of natural ecosystems is not permitted and projects uphold a no-conversion or deforestation safeguard across terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine systems.

1.0

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2.0

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Criteria For People

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### Overview of the Criterion for Nature

Criterion 1. The NbS carbon project protects and enhances species and their habitats.

- a. The project identifies and addresses the key drivers of threats to species and their habitats, and ecosystem services through project activities
- b. The project conserves, enhances and/or restores species and their habitat through project activities.

## 4.2. Criterion 1.

### The NbS carbon project protects and enhances species and their habitats.

An NbS carbon project can contribute to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management (IUCN, 2020) by implementing nature-positive activities that protect, restore and/or regenerate habitats important for species at scale. These activities focus on the conservation of flora and fauna and the restoration of native species populations and habitats. They are arrayed along different stages: reducing impacts, improving species and habitat management, initiating native species recovery, and partially or fully restoring areas of biodiversity significance.

This Criterion, along with its sub-criteria (1.A. and 1.B.), builds upon the requirements of the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity (CCB) Standards (Version 3.1), specifically the Biodiversity Standards (B1 to B4) and the Exceptional Biodiversity Benefits Standard (GL3). These standards provide guidelines for projects to identify and address potential impacts on biodiversity and ensure the protection of areas with exceptional biodiversity value.



## Criterion 1.A

### The project identifies and addresses the key drivers of threats to species and their habitats, and ecosystem services through project activities.

By understanding the root causes of ecosystem degradation, whether from unsustainable land use, invasive species, or other pressures, projects can strategically design targeted interventions that reduce or eliminate these threats. This sub-criterion emphasizes inclusive participation, ensuring that IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable groups contribute their knowledge and priorities to shaping effective threat mitigation. Addressing these drivers is critical to securing long-term conservation outcomes, protecting ecosystem services, and supporting biodiversity resilience. Under this sub-criterion, projects increasingly adopt a comprehensive, landscape-level perspective, combining scientific data and traditional ecological knowledge to anticipate future risks and adaptively manage threats over time.

#### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- Rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, are informed, consulted and engaged in the identification of key drivers of threats and planned mitigation activities.
- Communication methods (timing, location, frequency, content, format) are tailored to language, literacy levels and communication preferences of rights holders and stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project facilitates inclusive, participatory processes that further disaggregate within IP and LCs and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, minority ethnic groups and/or otherwise socially excluded) to identify and prioritize key drivers of threats and root causes.
- Communication methods are tailored to an increasingly diverse set of rights holder and stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded).
- The project supports community platforms to design and implement locally appropriate solutions (e.g., sustainable land-use plans, alternative livelihoods).
- Training is provided to strengthen capacity for community-led natural resource management.
- The project sets up regular engagement sessions based on the scale and impact of project activities to review threat mitigation effectiveness and adapt strategies with stakeholder input.

#### QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project defines a static baseline or projected trend for drivers of threats to species, habitats and ecosystem services within the project zone using standard protocols.
- Projections are conducted before the onset of project interventions.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project evaluates climate model projections across a range of counterfactual scenarios, with and without project interventions, informing mitigation strategies.
- The project considers the broader landscape context when designing its baseline, as key drivers of threats may operate at multiple scales (both locally within the project zone and more broadly across the surrounding landscape).
- The project uses standard protocols and integrates high-resolution tools (e.g., camera and acoustic recorders, eDNA, LiDAR, satellite imagery) alongside traditional ecological knowledge to generate baseline projections.
- The project employs dynamic baseline approaches where relevant.

#### SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project prioritizes and implements a set of prioritized activities to address key threats and drivers affecting species, habitats and ecosystem services. These actions are designed to reduce or mitigate those key threats and deliver net-positive outcomes.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project puts in place a broader and more integrated scope of activities to address the key threats drivers that deliver better outcomes for species, habitats, and ecosystem services, as well as IP and LC rights holders and project stakeholders, including women and other vulnerable groups.
- The project implements protection or mitigation measures to reduce key threats and drivers together with IP and LC rights holders and project stakeholders.
- The project prioritizes integration of traditional ecological knowledge, with appropriate recognition of IP rights, into the management plan.

#### GEOGRAPHIC SCALE OF THE PROJECT

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies and addresses drivers of threats that are directly observable or experienced within the project zone.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project expands threats analysis, baselining, monitoring and mitigation interventions to identify and address threats and drivers to priority species, habitats and ecosystem services in the surrounding landscape, inclusive of the project zone, to achieve broader and more impactful outcomes.
- The project contributes to landscape-level conservation planning and policy development to reduce key threats and drivers in the surrounding landscape, inclusive of the project zone.

#### QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts a risk assessment to identify and quantify the risks key threats and drivers pose to species, habitats, and ecosystem services for the project's lifetime. It quantifies potential losses and impacts on desired outcomes and this assessment informs the strategic design and implementation of the project's management plan.
- The project revisits and updates the risk assessment every five years, to support adaptive management.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project updates its risk assessments every two years, or more frequently as new science and datasets emerge, including the evaluation of relevant climate model projections. Updates are incorporated into strategies and monitoring plans are adopted.
- The project creates a tiered mitigation plan, prioritizing actions based on the risks with highest potential impacts.

#### QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project develops and implements a robust MEL strategy with clear relevant metrics (i.e. indicators and indices) to evaluate outcomes and guide implementation. Example indicators or indices are listed at the end of Section 4 (Criterion for Nature).
- The project regularly monitors the impacts from threat mitigation activities to species, habitats and ecosystems services, as well as IP and LC rights holders and project stakeholders at a frequency that is deemed relevant and appropriate.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- Monitoring efforts are strengthened by improving the quality, number, and relevance of indicators and indices used.
- The frequency and/or spatial coverage of sampling is increased.
- The project incorporates validated proxies where direct data collection is not feasible.

## Criterion 1.B.

### The project conserves, enhances and/or restores species and their habitat through project activities.

Beyond simply avoiding harm, this sub-criterion supports projects that contribute to reversing habitat degradation, improving ecosystem health, and increasing the resilience of species populations. By integrating scientific knowledge with the traditional ecological insights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, projects can design interventions that are ecologically sound and culturally appropriate. This sub-criterion recognizes that conserving and restoring biodiversity is vital not only for the species and habitats themselves but also for the ecosystem services that sustain local livelihoods, climate regulation, and overall ecological balance. Through participatory approaches and adaptive management, projects aligned with this sub-criterion help safeguard critical habitats, maintain genetic diversity, and enhance ecological connectivity, building stronger, healthier ecosystems that benefit nature and people alike.

#### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- Rights holders and project stakeholders, including IP and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups are informed and consulted on sites for restoration and planned conservation and restoration activities.
- Project activities are designed through a participatory process including through consultation with IP and LC rights holders and stakeholders, including women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. This includes the identification and restoration of degraded habitats, as well as identification and conservation of ecosystem services at risk of degradation.
- The project sets up regular engagement sessions based on the scale and impact of project activities to review the effectiveness of conservation and restoration efforts and adapt strategies with stakeholder input.
- Communication methods (timing, location, frequency, content, format) are tailored to language, literacy levels and communication preferences of rights holders and stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project facilitates inclusive, participatory processes that further disaggregate within IP and LCs and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to identify priority areas and culturally appropriate conservation and restoration methods.
- The project provides training to strengthen capacity for community-led natural resource management.
- The project supports community institutions in co-designing as well as leading conservation and restoration activities (e.g., native species planting, wetland rehabilitation).
- Communication methods are tailored to an increasingly diverse set of rights holder and stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded).

#### QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project defines a static baseline or projected trend for species and habitat conditions within the project zone using standard protocols. Projections are conducted before the onset of project interventions.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project evaluates future biodiversity and habitat conditions under multiple counterfactual scenarios, with and without interventions, informing strategic conservation and restoration planning.
- If applicable, the project expands the baseline projection to the landscape level with an ecological connectivity analysis, including assessments of habitat fragmentation and species movement across the broader landscape.
- The project uses standard protocols and integrates high-resolution tools (e.g., LiDAR, satellite imagery) alongside traditional ecological knowledge to generate baseline projections.

#### SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project prioritizes and implements a set of targeted conservation, enhancement and restoration activities with the aim of delivering net-positive outcomes to species and their habitats.
- The project implements activities to identify and protect critical biodiversity areas (HCVs, HCSA or KBAs).
- The project identifies fragmentation between habitat patches within the project zone and restores them using natural or artificial wildlife corridors.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project puts in place a broader and more integrated scope of conservation, enhancement or restoration activities that deliver better outcomes for species and their habitats, ecosystem services, as well as IP and LC rights holders and project stakeholders.
- The project identifies critically endangered and locally extinct (extirpated) species and implements species recovery plans within the project zone
- The project activities increase the number of reproductive individuals and genetic diversity within populations of species of conservation importance.
- If relevant, the project identifies and protects HCVs, HCSA or KBAs in the surrounding landscape.
- If relevant, the project supports HCVs, HCSA or KBAs in the project area and/or surrounding landscapes attain other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM) or protected area status.
- The project implements conservation, enhancement and restoration measures in collaboration with IP and LC rights holders and project stakeholders.
- The project prioritizes integration of traditional ecological knowledge, with appropriate recognition of IP rights, into the management plan.

## GEOGRAPHIC SCALE OF THE PROJECT

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conserves, enhances and restores species and their habitats within the project zone.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project expands baselining, monitoring and interventions to conserve, restore or enhance priority species, habitats and ecosystem services in the surrounding landscape, inclusive of the project zone, to achieve broader and more impactful outcomes.
- The project identifies and addresses the degree of ecological connectivity between habitats in the project zone and those in the surrounding landscapes of the same biome to facilitate species movement and genetic exchange (e.g., using wildlife corridors).

## QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts a risk assessment to identify all programmatic and operational risks associated with planned conservation, enhancement, and restoration activities for species, habitats, and ecosystem services throughout the project's lifetime. It quantifies potential losses and impacts on desired outcomes and the assessment informs the strategic design and implementation of the project's management plan.
- The project revisits and updates the risk assessment every five years, to support adaptive management.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project updates its risk assessments every two years, or more frequently as new science and datasets emerge, including the evaluation of relevant climate model projections. Updates are incorporated into strategies and monitoring plans are adopted.
- The project creates a tiered mitigation plan, prioritizing actions based on the risks with highest potential impacts.

## QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project develops and implements a robust MEL strategy with clear relevant metrics (i.e. indicators and indices) to evaluate outcomes and guide implementation. Examples of indicators and indices are listed below this table.
- The project regularly monitors impacts from the planned conservation, enhancement and/or restoration activities to species, habitats and ecosystems services as well as IP and LC rights holders and project stakeholders.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

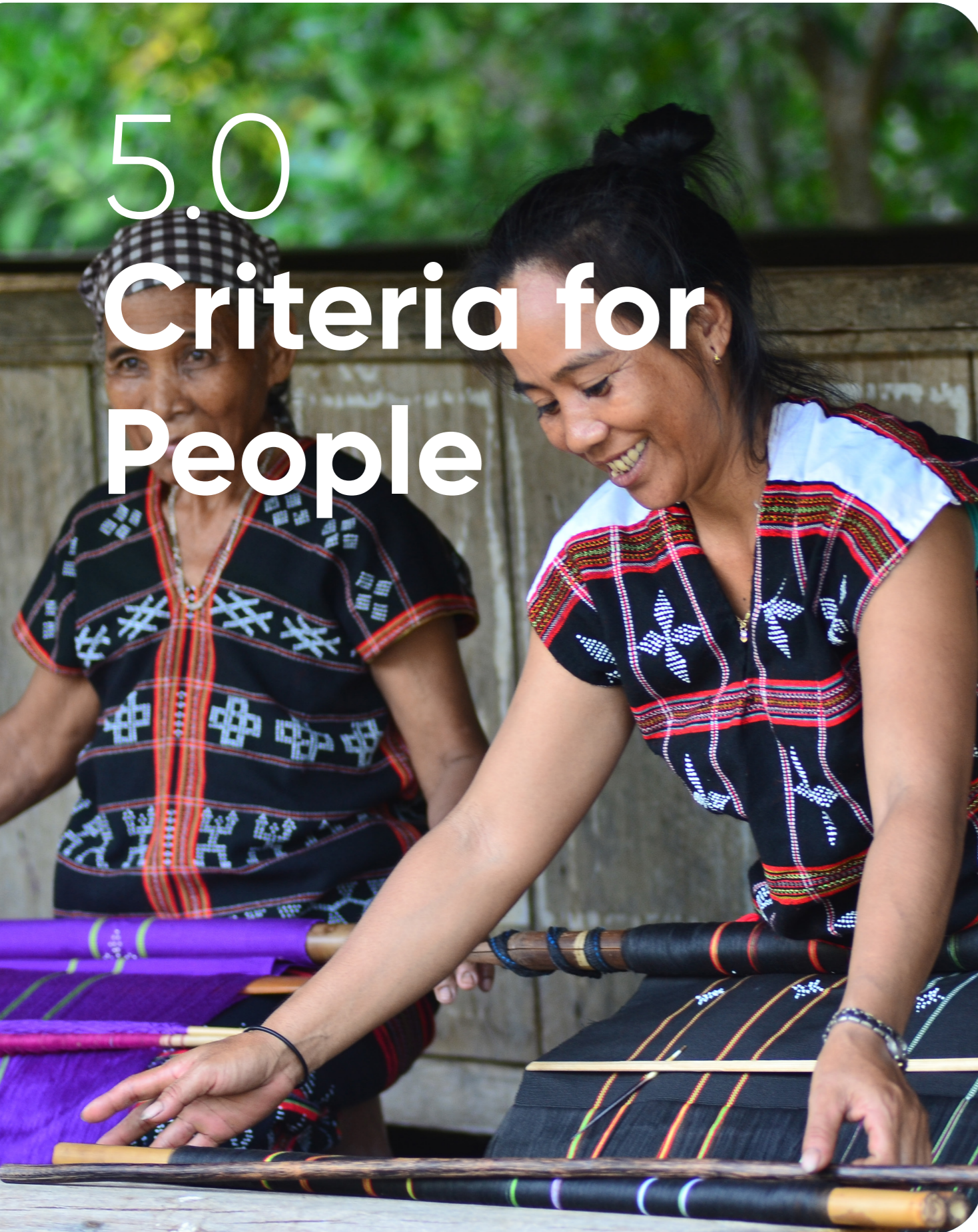
- Monitoring efforts are strengthened by improving the quality, number, and relevance of indicators and indices used.
- The frequency and/or spatial coverage of sampling is increased.
- The project incorporates validated proxies where direct data collection is not feasible.

To aid project developers put the "Criteria for Nature" into practice, the SCS Coalition has put forward some examples of indicators that can be used by projects to report on the impacts of their projects on nature. This list is non-exhaustive, and can be complemented by other resources such as Guidance from the Darwin Initiative (including the [Biodiversity Challenge Funds Standard Indicator Library](#)), or the UN Sustainable Development Goals Indicators.

### These indicators include:

- Positive impacts on species populations and habitats at the project level.
- Reduction in IUCN threat status category for species of conservation importance, if relevant, for example if the species is endemic to one area, and as a direct result of project activities.
- Threats to biodiversity reduced and/or removed in the project zone and the surrounding landscapes.
- Increase in ecological connectivity within and between habitats, demonstrated by barrier removal/mitigation and documented species movement through previously blocked areas (e.g., camera-trap detections at restored passages, GPS/telemetry crossings, acoustic detections).
- Increase or maintenance of biodiversity in the project area and surrounding landscapes.
- Sustained and increasing investment and implementation effort in conservation activities, evidenced by budget execution dedicated to biodiversity actions, patrol effort (e.g., person-hours or km patrolled), expansion of monitored area, and survival/establishment rates of restored vegetation.
- Increase or maintenance of the number of reproductive individuals and genetic diversity within populations of species of conservation importance, keystone species and species of socio-cultural importance (SSI) in the project area.

# 5.0 Criteria for People



## 5.1. Overview of the Criteria for People

Criteria 2, 3, and 4, collectively the “Criteria for People,” highlight the pivotal importance of designing NbS carbon projects that prioritize inclusive engagement with rights holders and all relevant stakeholders.

The success of project interventions hinges on the inclusive integration of diverse knowledge systems and meaningful participation of rights holders and stakeholders, encompassing Indigenous Peoples (IPs), Local Communities (LCs), women, and youth (IUCN, 2020). This will pave the way for local IP and LC leadership in governing and managing natural resources, which is recognized as a critical contributor to global conservation (WWF et al., 2021).

Throughout the Criteria for People, the Coalition refers to “IPs and LCs and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups (including women)”. The explicit focus on women was deliberate and is based on a significant body of empirical evidence, and the experiences of Coalition members, which show that women disproportionately rely on natural resources, yet have the fewest rights and opportunities to influence their management. Promoting

equity within projects requires awareness of existing local power dynamics and respect for community agency. Developers should ensure that efforts to support vulnerable and marginalized groups are informed by local perspectives and proactively seek to avoid unintentionally disrupting social structures in ways that could increase vulnerability.

To safeguard the rights, well-being, and cultural integrity of IPs and LCs and vulnerable groups, the Criteria for People are supported by a set of social and cultural safeguards. These safeguards draw on international best practices in human rights and community-based conservation and represent minimum conditions that all projects must meet to avoid harm and ensure legitimacy. They provide a foundation for building trust, promoting equity, and strengthening the long-term sustainability of project outcomes. In doing so, projects also help prevent conflict and foster lasting, community-led stewardship, building capacity and creating pathways for communities to assume greater roles in the governance and implementation of natural resources beyond the lifetime of carbon projects.

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Criteria For People



Criteria For Climate

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## Safeguards for the Criteria for People include:

- The project shall not involve the involuntary removal or resettlement of rights holders.
- The project shall not exacerbate existing conflicts relating to land use, territories, or natural resources and puts mitigation measures in place to avoid creating new ones.
- The project supports a sustainable land use governance system that respects both customary and statutory laws.
- The project shall ensure that no discrimination or sexual harassment occurs in the project design or implementation.
- The project shall respect human rights in accordance with the International Bill of Human Rights and universal instruments relating to human rights in project design and implementation.
- The project shall provide equal opportunities in the context of gender for employment and participation in consultation and project activities.
- The project shall prohibit the use of forced labor, child labor, and victims of human trafficking, and protect staff and contracted workers employed by third parties in project design and implementation.
- The project shall not cause any harm to the safety of women and girls in the local community.
- The project identifies, recognizes, and protects internationally and nationally and locally recognized cultural heritage sites within the project area.
- The project respects rules and regulations governing benefit sharing at the national level.
- Community leadership and engagement support align with biodiversity goals, recognizing traditional ecological knowledge and local conservation priorities.

The following section introduces the Criteria for People (Criteria 2, 3, and 4) and their associated sub-criteria. Each sub-criterion includes a table outlining minimum expectations and enhanced activities, organized by progression arcs—key dimensions of project quality described in Section 3. The tables aim to guide projects in building long-term, trust-based relationships with stakeholders and rights holders, while promoting more just, locally led, and socially beneficial outcomes.

Examples of minimum and enhanced activities are not included for progression arc D (geographic scale of project activities) under the Criteria for People, as stakeholder mapping and engagement already extend beyond project boundaries. Projects should consider all relevant stakeholders, including IP and LC rights holders, regardless of proximity to the project zone. An integrated landscape approach is recommended, where possible—aligning social, economic, and environmental goals, coordinating across jurisdictions, and engaging with government planning to support long-term sustainability and land-use governance.



### Overview of the Criteria for People

#### Criterion 2. The NbS project governance structure is fair, transparent, and accountable.

**a.** The project governance structure is fair by facilitating equitable, meaningful and representative participation of IPs and LCs and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, including women, in the origination, design and governance of the NbS project.

**b.** The project governance structure is transparent. Project activities, timelines, stakeholders, roles, and level of decision-making authority of each stakeholder are clearly defined and publicly documented. Documentation is made accessible to project stakeholders where possible.

**c.** The project is accountable to all stakeholders. The project protects the security of all, including human rights defenders, complainants, and community spokespersons. This is achieved through the identification and implementation of suitable safeguards, including through a robust Feedback and Grievance Redress mechanism, to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy any violation of rights.

#### Criterion 3. The NbS project strengthens rights to tenure, natural resource management and cultural heritage.

**a.** The project recognizes and upholds the security of rights to lands, territories, and resources, including the statutory, customary and use rights of IPs and LCs.

**b.** The project safeguards cultural heritage and respects traditional knowledge.

**c.** The project works in partnership with IPs and LCs, and resource users that have rights to and/or rely on the project zone to conduct a properly resourced FPIC process informed by best practice.

#### Criterion 4. The NbS project secures and improves sustainable development outcomes.

**a.** The project recognizes and fulfils sustainable development aspirations for IPs and LCs that have rights to and/or rely on the project area, including women and traditionally excluded community members.

**b.** The benefit-sharing mechanism considers the principles of efficiency, efficacy and equity in the distribution of monetary and non-monetary benefits, in particular recognizing IPs and LCs, women and traditionally excluded community members.

**c.** The project prioritizes investments in sustainable development activities that are nature-positive.

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## 5.2. Criterion 2.

### The NbS carbon project governance structure is fair, transparent, and accountable.

The NbS project governance should be designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability amongst project stakeholders.

#### This can often be achieved by ensuring:

- Stakeholders are empowered in the origination, design and governance of the project to participate and/or co-lead;
- Have access to project information; and
- Can rely on a robust mechanism to facilitate feedback and accountability.

This Criterion, including its sub-criteria (2.A., 2.B., and 2.C.), builds upon the requirements of the CCB Standards (Version 3.1), specifically the Community Standards (CM1 to CM4) and the Exceptional Community Benefits Standard (GL2.3, GL2.4, GL2.5, GL2.7, GL2.8, and CL2.9). These standards provide guidelines for projects to identify and address potential impacts on local communities, ensure their participation and consent, and promote equitable distribution of benefits.

NbS carbon projects aiming to enhance their governance structure can be guided through the 'progression arcs'. These progression arcs serve as a framework for projects to incrementally improve their governance practices and enhance their positive impact on local communities over time.

## Criterion 2.A.

### The project governance structure is fair by facilitating equitable, meaningful and representative participation of IPs and LCs, and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, including women, in the origination, design and governance of the NbS project.

This sub-criterion recognizes that equitable governance is fundamental to building trust, enhancing project legitimacy, and ensuring long-term social and ecological sustainability. It places emphasis on inclusive processes that reflect diverse voices, across gender, age, wealth, and other dimensions of vulnerability, and supports community leadership. A strong governance foundation helps align project outcomes with local priorities while safeguarding biodiversity and cultural values, meaning the project is more likely to deliver fair, durable, and locally supported social and ecological benefits.

## QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts a stakeholder analysis that identifies and analyses all rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. It assesses their current well-being, interests, and the potential project impacts, and incorporates an understanding of social, economic, and cultural diversity to tailor engagement approaches accordingly, and identifies groups at risk of being sidelined or negatively impacted by project activities.
- The project develops and implements a stakeholder engagement plan that enables IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups to inform and influence project origination, design and governance structure throughout the project lifecycle, evidenced through documentation.
- The project engages rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups at an appropriate time and cadence to inform key decisions and adaptive management, evidenced through documentation.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project stakeholder analysis further disaggregates within IPs and LCs and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups (e.g., minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, otherwise socially excluded).
- The project ensures that representative participation of rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, is embedded in project decision-making processes, with representation across increasingly diverse sub-groups over time (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, minority ethnic groups, otherwise socially excluded).
- The project creates opportunities for and supports representation in leadership positions within the project governance structure from traditionally marginalized groups, evidenced through documentation.

## QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project governance baseline assessment uses data from the stakeholder analysis to identify pre-existing inequities and power disparities that the project's stakeholder engagement plan and governance structure aims to reduce.
- The project identifies pre-existing statutory and traditional/customary governance structures and institutions in the project zone and incorporates these in the project governance structure where appropriate, taking into consideration how these include women and other vulnerable groups.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project governance baseline assessment includes spatial and temporal analysis of trends in governance effectiveness and equity.
- The project governance baseline assessment incorporates increasingly robust qualitative insights (e.g., from focus groups or perception surveys) and quantitative indicators (e.g., diversity of leadership, meeting attendance patterns) to inform project design and future adaptive governance.

## SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project has a functioning governance structure and decision-making processes that provide for representation and participation from rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project supports rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, through capacity-strengthening activities (e.g., financial literacy and sustainable resource management) to develop knowledge, skills and structures/institutions to enhance participation and to lead the project, where relevant.
- The project includes additional activities designed to improve equity and social inclusivity where there may be existing social dynamics resulting in unfair representation and participation.

## QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies key social risks that could undermine inclusive participation in governance, such as lack of awareness, language barriers, or limited access to decision-making spaces, and includes basic mitigation actions to support more equitable involvement of IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.
- The project assesses the readiness and/or capacity of rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups to adopt and engage with new governance structures, where relevant

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project considers additional factors in its social risk assessment and mitigation plans, by systematically assessing less commonly addressed issues, including historical grievances, conflicts over representation, intra-community power imbalances, and informal governance norms that may result in barriers to the equitable participation of all stakeholders.

## QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project monitors levels of participation in stakeholder engagement activities and/or project governance across all rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups (e.g., women, youth).

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project uses an increasing number of indicators to assess levels of participation across an increasingly diverse set of rights holders and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, otherwise socially excluded groups).
- The project monitors the influence and importance of all stakeholders against suitable criteria and indicators (e.g., their power and political, social and economic status, degree of organization, control of strategic resources and informal influence on others).
- The project monitors perceptions of equity in addition to levels of participation in governance across all IP and LC rights holders and project stakeholders.

## Criterion 2.B.

**The project governance structure is transparent. Project activities, timelines, stakeholders' roles, and level of decision-making authority of each stakeholder are clearly defined and publicly documented. Documentation is made accessible to rights holders and project stakeholders where possible.**

This sub-criterion recognizes that transparency is essential for building trust, accountability, and informed participation among IPs and LCs, and other rights holders and project stakeholders. It emphasizes clear, accessible communication of project activities, timelines, roles, and decision-making authority, tailored to the diverse needs and capacities of all stakeholders. By ensuring information is publicly documented and shared through appropriate channels, the project supports equitable engagement and reduces risks related to misinformation or exclusion. Transparent governance ultimately strengthens project legitimacy and fosters confident, meaningful involvement in project processes and outcomes.

### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project assesses literacy levels and communication preferences of rights holders and stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, and uses this information to design accessible systems for sharing project information (e.g., timelines, decisions, and roles) in appropriate languages and formats as part of the project stakeholder engagement plan.
- The project proactively shares project information with rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, at an appropriate time and cadence to inform key decisions and adaptive management, evidenced through documentation.

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project's stakeholder engagement plan includes systems for sharing project information with an increasingly diverse set of rights holders and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, otherwise socially excluded groups).
- The project tailors governance processes, such as meetings, feedback mechanisms, and decision-making forums, to the literacy levels, languages, and communication preferences of rights holders and stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. These processes enable active, informed participation in project governance.

### QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project governance baseline assessment uses data from the stakeholder analysis and stakeholder engagement plan to identify pre-existing inequities and disparities in access to information that the project's stakeholder engagement plan and governance structure aims to reduce.
- The project identifies existing systems for communicating information about natural resource management in the project zone and incorporates these in the project communications system, where appropriate.

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- As part of the project governance baseline assessment, the project conducts a dedicated baseline assessment of transparency and information access within the project zone, analyzing how rights holders and stakeholders currently access, interpret, and trust information related to project governance.
- The project's baseline assessment of transparency and information access includes an increasingly granular spatial and/or temporal analysis of communication flows, common barriers (e.g., literacy, language, digital access), and information asymmetries.

### SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project's governance structure, including roles and responsibilities and decision-making processes, is clearly defined, agreed with rights holders and project stakeholders and documented.
- The project produces and proactively disseminates communications materials tailored to literacy levels, language(s) and communication preferences of rights holders and stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups as part of its stakeholder engagement plan.

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project produces and proactively disseminates communications materials tailored to literacy levels, language(s) and communication preferences of an increasingly diverse set of rights holders and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded).
- The project identifies and delivers targeted capacity development to strengthen the ability of rights holders and stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to participate meaningfully in project communications and leadership roles. This may include technical training on project activities, foundational skills (e.g., literacy, record keeping), and the selection of community champions to support local communication and coordination.

### QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies basic risks to transparent governance, such as barriers to access, literacy, language, or unequal information distribution, and incorporates these risks into the project's general risk assessment.
- The project establishes and maintains a document management system that stores key project documentation, including records of consultations, decision-making processes, and agreements, and ensures that relevant documents are proactively shared with rights holders and project stakeholders, especially IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, through accessible and appropriate channels.

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts a targeted assessment of transparency-related risks, including the quality and accessibility of information, adequacy of stakeholder engagement, and robustness of documentation and reporting practices, and integrates specific mitigation measures into the project's risk management plan to ensure transparent and accountable decision-making.
- The project designates a focal point responsible for identifying, monitoring and addressing internal and external communication risks, including misinformation or lack of awareness among rights holders and stakeholders, to safeguard project integrity and maintain trust.

### QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project monitors the effectiveness of communication methods and satisfaction with levels of transparency across rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, and adapts stakeholder engagement activities accordingly, if required.
- The project monitors inequities and disparities in access to information among rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups and adapts stakeholder engagement activities accordingly, if required.

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project uses an increasing number of indicators to assess effectiveness of communication, satisfaction with level of transparency and/or inequities and disparities in information access across a more diverse set of rights holder and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged, otherwise socially excluded).
- The project monitors indicators at an increased frequency and adapts stakeholder engagement and communication methods accordingly, where needed. These processes are also reviewed periodically to improve inclusivity.
- The project monitors the level of understanding amongst stakeholder groups in technical topics related to project activities and adapts stakeholder engagement activities accordingly, if required.

## Criterion 2.C.

**The project is accountable to all stakeholders. The project protects the security of all, including human rights defenders, complainants, and community spokespersons. This is achieved through the identification and implementation of suitable safeguards, including through a robust Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy any violation of rights.**

This sub-criterion highlights the importance of accountability to all stakeholders, especially IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. It ensures that everyone has access to safe, confidential ways to raise concerns or complaints. A well-designed grievance mechanism helps prevent and address rights violations, builds trust, and supports fair and respectful project implementation. This approach keeps the project responsive and protects the people it affects.

### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project ensures that rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups are consulted and, where possible, involved in the design of the project's GRM.
- Rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups have access to GRM channels to raise their grievances. These GRM channels are accompanied by the assurances of confidentiality and, where feasible, anonymity.

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project proactively solicits feedback and grievances through regular outreach, community dialogues, and accessible channels, ensuring that all rights holders and stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, are aware of and able to safely use the grievance redress mechanism.
- The project tailors the grievance redress process, including communication of resolutions to literacy rates, preferred language(s) and communication methods of an increasingly diverse set of rights holder and project stakeholder sub-groups, (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged, otherwise socially excluded).

### QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project governance baseline assessment uses data from the stakeholder analysis and stakeholder engagement plan to identify existing ways stakeholder grievances regarding land and resource management are addressed within the project zone and incorporates these in the design of the project GRM where possible/appropriate.

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- As part of the project governance baseline, the project conducts a dedicated participatory baseline analysis of past and potential sources of conflict, human rights risks, and existing grievance mechanisms in the project zone. This includes mapping formal and informal channels for dispute resolution, assessing stakeholder perceptions of their effectiveness, and identifying barriers to access (e.g., fear of retaliation, social norms, or legal constraints).

### SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project clearly defines and documents what a GRM is and communicates its presence and structure to rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, through appropriate methods of disseminating information and at an appropriate cadence (also see sub-criterion 2.B above).
- The project maintains a system to address and report on the status of project grievances (collected through the GRM) on a bi-annual basis.

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project establishes and maintains a process to prioritize and respond more promptly to complaints identified as high-risk or high-impact, ensuring timely resolution and mitigation.
- The project regularly conducts tailored information sessions and capacity-building activities, adapted to the literacy levels, languages, and communication preferences of diverse stakeholder groups, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to ensure that all rights holders meaningfully understand and are able to effectively use the grievance and appeal procedures.

### QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project team includes at least one full-time staff member who is effectively trained and equipped with expertise to implement and manage the GRM.
- The project conducts a human rights risk and impact assessment that identifies potential infringements to rights and security, particularly for IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, and uses the results to inform appropriate safeguards.
- The project conducts a sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment risk/impact assessment to inform the development and implementation of safeguards to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy any infringements and/or adverse impacts on people in the project zone.
- The project includes formalized, rapid-response mechanisms to address any incidents of human rights violations.
- Risk assessments should be revisited and updated periodically (e.g., every five years).

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project appoints a third-party advocate to monitor the GRM and to provide independent technical, legal and financial advice to all rights holders and project stakeholders, including across all vulnerable groups, in the GRM process as required.
- The project analyses an increasingly diverse set of social and cultural factors, such as economic status, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity, that may increase the risk of discrimination or exclusion.
- The project conducts a reassessment of human rights and security risks every 1-3 years and adapts the management plan, accordingly, informed by ongoing monitoring through the safeguards mechanisms that are put in place.
- The GRM is managed by a dedicated team of staff who are effectively trained and equipped with relevant expertise.

### QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

#### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project monitors the level of participation in the project's GRM as well as the representation, trust, and satisfaction with the GRM process across rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

#### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project assesses, at least biannually, emerging risks related to human rights violations or threats to the safety and security of rights holders and stakeholders including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.
- The project regularly monitors the effectiveness of communication materials and methods of dissemination aimed at enabling access to GRM channels.

## 5.3. Criterion 3.

### The NbS carbon project strengthens rights to tenure, natural resource management and cultural heritage.

NbS carbon projects have the responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the people who live in the project area or who are impacted by project activities. NbS project developers can actively support clarifying and strengthening Indigenous Peoples' (IPs) and Local Communities' (LCs) tenure security and their role in land and resource governance in the design, implementation, and monitoring of a project.

This Criterion, along with its sub-criteria (3.A., 3.B., and 3.C.), builds upon the requirements of the CCB Standards (Version 3.1), specifically the Community Standards (CM1 to CM4) and the Exceptional Community Benefits Standard (GL2.1, GL2.2, GL2.3, GL2.4, GL2.5, GL2.7, GL2.8, and CL2.9). These standards provide guidelines for projects to identify and address potential impacts on local communities, ensure their participation and consent, and promote equitable distribution of benefits.

### Criterion 3.A.

#### The project recognizes and upholds the security of rights to lands, territories, and resources, including the statutory, customary and use rights of IPs and LCs.

This sub-criterion affirms the vital importance of respecting and securing the land, territory, and resource rights of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. It recognizes that these rights are central to community identity, well-being, and resilience. By working collaboratively to map, protect, and govern these rights, through participatory processes

and ongoing consultation, the project helps prevent conflicts and supports lasting stewardship of natural resources. Strengthening governance capacity locally ensures that all stakeholders have meaningful roles in decision-making, promoting fairness, stability, and sustainable outcomes.

#### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project works with rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to map their statutory and/or customary tenure and/or use rights and define resource use needs through a participatory process. This is evidenced by a spatially explicit tenure and land use map endorsed by rights holders and project stakeholders including IPs and LCs with representation across women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.
- The project co-develops the project land-use plan with rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs with representation across women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, and re-assesses it every 5 years.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project consults with an increasingly diverse set of rights holder and project stakeholder sub-groups, (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, minority ethnic groups and/or otherwise socially excluded) to review the project land use plan at least every two years, and updates the plan accordingly.
- The project provides training and mentoring for IP and LC leaders, including women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, on land rights, governance, natural resource management, and decision-making processes, to strengthen their governance and management capacity.

#### QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies key user groups with statutory and customary access to land and natural resources in the project zone, and documents current access patterns and associated rights.
- The project assesses how existing and proposed resource access arrangements, including statutory and customary use rights, may affect key habitats and threatened species, and integrates biodiversity safeguards into the project activities to avoid their potential degradation.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts a participatory land and resource tenure assessment, integrating spatial mapping, stakeholder interviews, and legal reviews to identify areas of overlapping or contested rights, and uses the findings to inform project design and risk mitigation strategies.
- The project assesses security of tenure and usage rights among rights holders and project stakeholders in the project zone, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

## SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project recognizes the rights of rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to lands, territories and resources, through signed agreements, permits, or equivalent documentation secured as part of an FPIC process (also see sub-criterion 3.C below).
- The project engages rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, in project governance (also see sub-criterion 2.A above).
- The project designs the GRM to receive, address, and resolve complaints related to the security of land, territory, and resource rights, ensuring accessible and culturally appropriate processes for IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups (also see sub-criterion 2.C above).

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project undertakes activities and/or supports processes that strengthen the security of IPs and LCs' (including women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups), rights to lands, territories, and resources, including through land titling and formal legal recognition.
- The project supports rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to take on leadership positions within the project governance structure (also see sub-criterion 2.A above).
- The project supports activities tailored to uphold the security of rights holders and stakeholders in one or more specific vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, such as women, the elderly or the economically disadvantaged.
- The project sets up an active platform or local institution with the ability to resolve tenurial conflict and incorporates it in the project's Grievance Redress Mechanism (also see sub-criterion 2.C above).

## QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project assesses risks related to land tenure disputes, resource use conflicts, or threats to the security of IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, and re-assesses these risks at least every 5 years.
- The project incorporates biodiversity integrity considerations into rights assessments and the design of the GRM, ensuring concerns related to biodiversity impacts are addressed through accessible and culturally appropriate processes (also see sub-criterion 2.C above).

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts assessments and regular re-assessments of the challenges or barriers to increase the security of rights for IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, at least every two years.
- The project assesses and regularly updates its risk mitigation plan to identify and address potential displacement or exacerbation of existing land, territory, or resource-related conflicts, in collaboration with IPs and LCs and other stakeholders, ensuring early warning and response measures are in place.

## QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project monitors levels of participation in the design of the project land use plan across rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups at least every 5 years and updates the project land use plan accordingly.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project monitors levels of participation in the design and the implementation of the project land use plan across rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, at least every two years and updates the project land use plan accordingly.
- The project monitoring plan uses an increasing number of indicators to assess levels of participation in the design and implementation of the land use plan across a more diverse set of rights holder and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, minority ethnic groups and/or otherwise socially excluded).
- The project monitoring plan includes indicators to assess security of tenure and/or use rights among rights holders and project stakeholders in the project zone, including vulnerable and/or marginalized groups including women.



## Criterion 3.B.

### The project safeguards cultural heritage and respects traditional knowledge.

This sub-criterion highlights the importance of recognizing, respecting, and safeguarding cultural heritage and traditional knowledge held by IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. It emphasizes that these cultural assets are not only vital to community identity and well-being but also contribute valuable insights and practices for sustainable resource management. Through inclusive

consultation and community-led governance, projects ensure that cultural heritage and knowledge are protected, appropriately managed, and integrated into project activities. This approach fosters respect, prevents harm, and strengthens the capacity of communities to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their cultural and intellectual legacy.

#### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project consults with community members, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to identify, understand and document cultural heritage and traditional knowledge relevant to the project area, including any concerns or priorities raised.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project supports IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups in leading the governance and documentation of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge within project areas. This includes establishing or strengthening inclusive community-based governance structures (e.g., cultural heritage committees or councils of elders), and developing community protocols that define access, use, and consent related to heritage and knowledge.

#### QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies the pre-existing statutory, customary and use rights, and traditional knowledge of IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, related to lands, territories, and resources in the project zone.
- The project identifies locally and internationally recognized heritage of rights holders and project stakeholders through a participatory mapping process.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project co-develops with IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, a community-led cultural heritage and traditional knowledge baseline that not only identifies and maps sites, practices, and knowledge systems, but also documents their current condition, threats, and intergenerational transmission.

#### SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- Project activities, including sustainable development activities (also see sub-criterion 4.C below) such as green enterprises, respect and, where appropriate, incorporate, traditional knowledge (with appropriate recognition of IP rights).

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project develops a platform or strengthens existing local institutions to facilitate cultural heritage and traditional knowledge conflict resolution and incorporates it in the project's Grievance Redress mechanism (also see sub-criterion 2.C above).
- Where relevant, the project facilitates the negotiation of co-management or custodianship agreements with project implementers or authorities for sacred and/or culturally significant sites.

#### QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies potential risks to cultural heritage and traditional knowledge through consultation with IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups and incorporates measures to avoid harm or inappropriate use within project planning and implementation.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project develops a cultural heritage management plan in collaboration with IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. The plan is informed by a comprehensive impact and risk assessment and includes specific measures to identify, mitigate, and monitor potential risks to cultural heritage and traditional knowledge.
- The project appoints a third-party expert to support the development of the cultural heritage management plan.

#### QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- Monitoring methods and indicators leverage traditional knowledge where relevant.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project monitoring plan includes indicators to assess the protection of cultural heritage in the project zone.
- The project conducts frequent perception reviews with IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups and other relevant stakeholders to evaluate how the project is perceived in terms of respecting and safeguarding cultural values and traditional knowledge.

## Criterion 3.C.

**The project works in partnership with IPs and LCs and resource users that have rights to and/or rely on the project zone to conduct a properly resourced FPIC process informed by best practice.**

Ensuring FPIC is given at key moments throughout the project lifetime is fundamental to respecting the rights and self-determination of IPs and LCs. It recognizes their authority over decisions that affect their lands, territories, resources, and cultural heritage. This sub-criterion highlights the importance of transparent, culturally appropriate, and inclusive processes that allow IPs and LCs to engage meaningfully and exercise their

rights without coercion or discrimination. Projects aligned with this sub-criterion foster respectful relationships and support empowerment by embedding consent and dialogue at the core of project design and implementation. These are projects that uphold the dignity, governance structures, and customs of IPs and LCs while promoting equitable participation and shared decision-making.

### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY	ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project facilitates the meaningful participation and representation of rights holders, especially IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, throughout the FPIC process, as reflected in the frequency of meetings, attendance records, and inclusive engagement that reflects local practices.</li> <li>The project tailors communication tools to literacy levels, language(s), and communication preferences of rights holders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups as part of its FPIC process (also see sub-criterion 2.B above).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project ensures that all rights holders and project stakeholders, with representation across an increasingly diverse set of rights holder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, minority ethnic groups and/or otherwise socially excluded) are represented and participate in decisions impacting FPIC.</li> <li>The project tailors communication tools according to literacy rates, language(s), and communication preferences of an increasingly diverse set of rights holder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded) as part of its FPIC process (also see sub-criterion 2.B above).</li> <li>The project has documented evidence that consultations are inclusive and representative of all rights holders and project stakeholders including other community sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, minority ethnic groups and/or otherwise socially excluded).</li> <li>The project schedules consultations at times, locations, and in formats agreed with IP and LC rights holders and project stakeholders to maximize inclusion, and provides enabling measures for women, youth, and caregivers (e.g., childcare, women-only or youth-focused sessions, accessible venues, safe transport).</li> </ul>

### QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY	ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project identifies the statutory or customary rights of rights holders and project stakeholders, including through consultations, especially with those most at risk of being marginalized.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project conducts a comprehensive, participatory baseline assessment that maps decision-making processes, local governance dynamics, and historical contexts affecting consent. This assessment integrates qualitative and quantitative data gathered through culturally appropriate methods (e.g., community dialogues, focus groups, interviews) to inform a tailored FPIC process that respects local customs and governance structures.</li> </ul>

### SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY	ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project identifies and respects IP and LC customs and protocols, including decision-making processes in the FPIC process and in project documents.</li> <li>The project clearly documents outcomes of the FPIC process and shares these widely with IPs and LCs and community leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project conducts a capacity development needs assessment for self-governance, natural resource management and IPs and LCs ability to effectively participate in the FPIC process, taking into consideration existing local governance structures and norms in the project zone (also see sub-criterion 2.A above).</li> <li>The project implements capacity strengthening activities to fill any identified gaps.</li> </ul>

### QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY	ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project identifies potential risks to the integrity of the FPIC process, such as political pressure, inadequate representation, misinformation, or lack of translation, and outlines measures in the risk management plan to prevent, address, and monitor them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project includes FPIC-related risks in its risk and mitigation framework, with participation of rights holders and project stakeholders in identifying and prioritizing risks. It regularly updates mitigation strategies based on lessons learned and community feedback, ensuring the ongoing integrity of the FPIC process throughout the project lifecycle.</li> <li>The project appoints an independent advisor representing IPs and LCs during the FPIC process.</li> </ul>

### QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY	ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project develops and implements a monitoring system to track the inclusiveness, participation levels, and representativeness of the FPIC process, using disaggregated data (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, disability).</li> <li>The project regularly reviews and documents whether the FPIC process continues to reflect community consent, especially when project activities are revised or expanded.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring tools (e.g., community scorecards, participatory evaluations) are adapted for local literacy and language contexts and implemented with community participation.</li> <li>Feedback from rights holders and stakeholders on the FPIC process is regularly collected (e.g., through surveys, focus groups, community reporting), and informs adaptive management.</li> <li>The project publishes periodic FPIC monitoring reports, validated by IP and LC representatives or advisory groups, and uses the findings to strengthen and update the FPIC protocol.</li> </ul>

## 5.4. Criterion 4.

### The NbS carbon project secures and improves sustainable development outcomes.

NbS carbon projects can offer a pathway for securing and enhancing sustainable development outcomes<sup>4</sup>, particularly for IPs, LCs and vulnerable and/or marginalized community members, including women, in the project area. The three core pillars of sustainable development (i.e. economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection) can be achieved by distributing financial proceeds from the commercialization of the project (e.g., commercial revenue from carbon credits) and implementing activities that support outcomes which are aligned with the aspirations of local communities such as access to healthcare, education, or alternative livelihoods.

This Criterion, along with its sub-criteria (4.A., 4.B., and 4.C.), builds upon the

requirements of the CCB Standards (Version 3.1), specifically the Community Standards (CM1 to CM4) and the Exceptional Community Benefits Standard (GL2). These standards provide guidelines for projects to identify and address potential impacts on local communities, ensure their participation and consent, and promote equitable distribution of benefits.

Moreover, it is essential to ensure that these activities are nature-positive and are simultaneously supporting sustainable biodiversity and resource utilization, as aligned with the Criterion for Nature (Criterion 1). With a holistic approach that integrates these elements, the NbS carbon project can help deliver economic, social, and environmental benefits for current and future generations.

### Criterion 4.A.

#### The project recognizes and fulfils sustainable development aspirations for IPs and LCs that have rights to and/or rely on the project area, including women and traditionally excluded community members.

Recognizing and supporting the sustainable development aspirations of IPs and LCs, including women and other traditionally excluded groups, is essential for equitable and inclusive project outcomes. This sub-criterion emphasizes the importance of projects that actively engage with diverse community members to understand their needs, priorities, and capacities. It encourages projects to align their activities with the social,

economic, and cultural goals of rights holders and stakeholders, promoting empowerment, gender equity, and social inclusion. Projects following this sub-criterion contribute to strengthening local governance and capacity, helping communities realize their vision for sustainable development in ways that are respectful, conflict-sensitive, and tailored to local contexts.

#### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies community needs and priorities through a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).
- Communication methods (timing, location, frequency, content, format) are tailored to language, literacy levels and communication preferences of holders and stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.
- The project reflects the sustainable development aspirations of rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, in the origination, design and implementation of project activities.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- Communication methods are tailored to the needs and preferences of an increasingly diverse set of rights holder and stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded).
- The project proactively seeks inputs from an increasingly diverse set of rights holders and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded).

#### QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project assesses and identifies gender differences and relevance of gender roles and power dynamics in the project zone through a Gender Analysis and/or a Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion (GDSI) analysis.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project undertakes a comprehensive participatory socio-economic baseline assessment, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises led by or co-facilitated with community members, to document development priorities, capacities, and the barriers faced by IPs and LCs, including women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. Findings are used to guide targeted, context-specific project interventions and are revisited periodically to inform adaptive management.

#### SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts a capacity needs assessment to understand any capacity gaps for IPs and LCs, including women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups to fulfil their sustainable development aspirations.
- The project includes activities designed to deliver improved sustainable development outcomes for rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups and associated indicators.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts a situation analysis of pathways to sustainable, equitable self-governance for IPs and LCs in the project zone.
- The project conducts capacity-strengthening activities that address capacity needs identified, such as building the confidence of women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups in public speaking and resource management.
- The project implements a greater number of activities to deliver improved sustainable development outcomes for rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

## QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies key social risks related to gender, social dynamics, IPs and LCs, and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups through initial consultations and document reviews to inform project design and risk awareness, and ensure participants are not endangered.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts a targeted assessment to identify additional potential risks (e.g., social backlash, exclusion, tension) arising from efforts to support IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. For example, this assessment can consider local power dynamics, cultural sensitivities, and intra-community inequalities to ensure sustainable development activities are conflict-sensitive and do not endanger participants.

## QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project monitors key socio-economic indicators linked to well-being (e.g., income, employment, access to services) in areas where sustainable development activities are implemented, using disaggregated data (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, disability).

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies and monitors indicators to capture changes in power and political, social and economic status for vulnerable groups.
- The project identifies and monitors indicators for a larger set of sustainable development outcomes.
- The project identifies an increasingly diverse set of rights holders and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded) if relevant, and ensures that participatory monitoring approaches are tailored to meaningfully engage these groups and reflect their perspectives.



# Criterion 4.B.

**The benefit-sharing mechanism (BSM) considers the principles of efficiency, efficacy and equity in the distribution of monetary and non-monetary benefits, in particular recognizing IPs and LCs, women and traditionally excluded community members.**

Effective and equitable benefit-sharing is a cornerstone of sustainable projects that respect the rights and contributions of all stakeholders, especially IPs and LCs, women, and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. This sub-criterion focuses on the fair design and governance of mechanisms that distribute project benefits transparently and inclusively, ensuring that both monetary and non-monetary gains are accessible

to those most affected and involved. Projects that meet this sub-criterion work towards establishing governance structures and processes that promote participation, accountability, and ongoing adaptation to changing social and economic contexts. By recognizing power imbalances and including diverse beneficiaries, these projects can help to foster social justice and strengthen community well-being.

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## QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

**MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project co-develops the BSM through a transparent, participatory process with all rights holders and project stakeholders, ensuring inclusive and representative engagement of IPs and LCs, including women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, with the process and outcomes evidenced through documentation (also see sub-criterion 2.A above).
- The project reflects the sustainable development aspirations of IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups and resource users in the BSM origination, design and governance structure (also see sub-criterion 4.A above).
- The project tailors communications about the structure and rules/protocols of the BSM to language, literacy levels and communication preferences of rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups through appropriate dissemination methods.

**ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project identifies, intentionally includes and tailors communications to an increasingly diverse set of rights holders and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded) in consultation processes to co-develop the BSM. The project uses targeted outreach, small-group discussions, and safe, trusted spaces to ensure the voices of underrepresented groups are not overshadowed by dominant actors.

## QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

**MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project identifies project beneficiaries and assesses the baseline distribution of income and economic opportunity across project beneficiaries in the absence of the project, disaggregating by gender at minimum.

**ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project collects disaggregated baseline data on the distribution of ecosystem service use, access to natural resources, and socio-economic conditions across project beneficiaries, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, within the project zone. This data is used to model how benefits and burdens would likely evolve under a business-as-usual scenario (i.e. without the project), to support the design of a BSM that is responsive to existing disparities and projected changes.

## SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

**MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project governance structure includes a process and platform for decisions impacting the design and implementation of the BSM which ensures representation and participation from rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.
- The project assesses the capacity needs to support the participation of IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups in the implementation of the BSM.

**ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project delivers capacity development and provides opportunities for rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to participate in and shape the implementation of the BSM on an ongoing basis.
- The project designs the BSM to deliver benefits over short-, medium-, and long-term timeframes, ensuring immediate needs are addressed while also securing sustained development outcomes for IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

## QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

**MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project ensures that the BSM includes protocols for clearly identifying project beneficiaries and defining what an equitable distribution of benefits means in the project context, both at the community level (e.g., the proportion of value accruing to the community) and at the intra-community level (how community benefits are allocated among individuals/households/groups), with clear, transparent rules that do not reinforce existing biases or inequalities.

**ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project conducts a structured risk assessment to identify potential risks and unintended consequences of inequitable benefit distribution (e.g., elite capture, gender bias, exclusion of marginalized groups) linked to the proposed BSM.
- The project incorporates an analysis of opportunity and implementation costs into the design of the BSM, identifying potential trade-offs between project activities and existing community livelihoods, food security, ecosystem services, recreational, and cultural practices, and biodiversity.

## QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

**MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project monitors the output of the BSM on a yearly basis, disaggregated by gender at minimum, shares results transparently with the relevant rights holders and project stakeholders and updates the BSM design accordingly.

**ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY**

- The project further disaggregates monitoring of the distribution of income across project beneficiaries throughout the project lifetime.
- The project establishes an adaptive management framework for the BSM, including participatory monitoring with IP and LC rights holders and project stakeholders, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups to periodically review and adjust benefit-sharing arrangements based on changing socio-economic, environmental, or governance contexts.

## Criterion 4.C.

### The project prioritizes investments in sustainable development activities that are nature-positive.

Sustainable development activities that are nature-positive play a vital role in ensuring long-term environmental integrity alongside social and economic progress. This sub-criterion underscores the need for projects to prioritize interventions that not only enhance livelihoods but also conserve and restore biodiversity, prevent habitat loss, and support ecosystem resilience. Projects guided by this principle integrate community knowledge and scientific

assessments to co-design solutions that avoid trade-offs harmful to nature while delivering tangible social benefits. These projects contribute to a future where economic development and ecological health reinforce each other, supporting resilient landscapes and communities that can sustainably thrive together.

#### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women, and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, and conducts inclusive consultations to gather input on their development needs, priorities, and existing knowledge and use of ecosystem services (also see sub-criterion 4.A above).
- The project works with IPs and LCs to co-identify and prioritize sustainable development activities that deliver both livelihood benefits and positive outcomes for nature using participatory methods, where communities assess the long-term ecological and economic value of different options.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- Communication methods are tailored to the needs and preferences of an increasingly diverse set of rights holders and stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded).
- The project proactively seeks inputs from an increasingly diverse set of rights holders and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded).

#### QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project carries out a participatory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to inform the design of sustainable development activities that minimize harm to biodiversity and ecosystem services.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project develops a spatially and temporally explicit baseline projection of how current development trajectories may impact biodiversity and ecosystem services, using scenario modelling, trend analysis, and multi-stakeholder input to inform long-term nature-positive investment strategies.

#### SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies capacity needs among rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to support the integration of nature-positive measures into sustainable development activities.
- The project supports the transition of existing livelihood activities within or dependent on the project zone toward more sustainable alternatives (e.g., agroforestry, ecotourism, NTFPs). This is achieved through participatory planning, technical assistance, and preliminary biodiversity risk screening to minimize negative impacts on biodiversity and ecological integrity.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project sets aside high biodiversity areas (i.e. HCVs, HCSA, KBAs) for protection (also see sub-criterion 1.B above).
- The project works with local organizations to raise awareness and deliver skills training to IPs and LCs, including women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, to support the implementation of measures to enhance biodiversity within the project zone and reduce negative impacts of sustainable development activities on biodiversity in the surrounding landscape where the project/program is located.
- The project supports activities that conserve, enhance, and/or restore species and their habitat by enabling sustainable livelihoods, developed in consultation with rights holders and stakeholders, that transition existing practices to biodiversity-positive alternatives, and generate equal or greater economic value on degraded lands.

#### QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies key environmental risks associated with planned sustainable development activities through a basic risk screening process and incorporates initial mitigation measures to avoid or reduce negative impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- The project avoids trade-offs that may lead to habitat simplification, monocultures, or net biodiversity loss by integrating biodiversity safeguards into the planning and implementation of sustainable development activities (also see Criterion 1 above).
- In areas where sustainable development activities overlap with or are adjacent to critical biodiversity zones, the project applies a mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, restore) and designs activities to achieve no net loss of biodiversity.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project proactively identifies and assesses environmental risks linked to sustainable development activities, including unintended consequences such as habitat degradation, overextraction of natural resources, or biodiversity loss. The risk plan is updated at least biennially and integrates mitigation strategies based on likelihood and severity of impact.

## QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project defines indicators covering both ecological and socio-economic dimensions and establishes a plan for periodic data collection using accessible and locally appropriate methods.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project monitors a greater set of indicators relating to ecological health, abundance, diversity and/or resilience (also see Criterion 1 above).
- The project monitors the economic value to rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, of sustainable livelihoods introduced on degraded lands in the project zone.
- The project monitors the extent to which sustainable development activities maintain or enhance biodiversity integrity in parallel with social outcomes (e.g., improved livelihoods, income, or education).
- The project designs biodiversity monitoring activities with the intention of strengthening capacity for community-led resource management.

To aid project developers put the “Criteria for People” into practice, the SCeNe Coalition has put forward some examples of indicators that can be used by projects to report on the impacts of their activities on people. This list is non-exhaustive, and can be complemented by other resources such as Guidance from the Darwin Initiative (including the [Biodiversity Challenge Funds Standard Indicator Library](#)), or the UN Sustainable Development Goals Indicators.



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### These indicators include:

- Amount of benefits received by project beneficiaries (e.g., income earned [\$], costs reduced [\$], labor saved [hrs]).
- Proportion of beneficiaries who are women and/or belong to other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.
- Percentage increase in income for women and other vulnerable/marginalized groups.
- Number of IPs and LCs with improved management or governance skills, disaggregated by gender at a minimum.
- Percentage increase in household income levels.
- Number of grievances addressed within the established time frame.
- Number of people with increased security of rights to lands, territories, and resources, evidenced by legal or formal documentation, disaggregated by gender at a minimum.
- Total area (ha) of land mapped and included in participatory land use plans.
- Number of people participating in implementation of land use or natural resource management plans, disaggregated by gender at a minimum.
- Number of people with their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge documented and endorsed by local leaders and vulnerable groups, as per CHMP, disaggregated by gender at a minimum.



# 6.0 Criteria for Climate

## 6.1. Overview of the Criteria for Climate

NbS carbon projects can deliver a third of the short-term climate mitigation required to maintain a 1.5oC pathway (Griscom et al., 2017). To ensure alignment with this goal, it is therefore of paramount importance to assure the accuracy and integrity of NbS carbon projects' emission reductions or removals quantification. The climatic quantification, in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e), is also the primary unit used to unlock finance for NbS carbon projects when used by buyers to either make contributions or offset claims. The accuracy of the climatic contribution is therefore also necessary to ensure buyer confidence and sustained investment into NbS carbon.

Use of carbon credits for offsetting should follow the mitigation hierarchy, with priority given to avoiding and reducing emissions first and credits used only for offsetting residual emissions. Buyers should align claims and procurement with recognized guidance such as the Science Based Targets initiative and related initiatives. In line with the United Nations Environment Assembly definition of nature-based solutions, offsets should complement rather than substitute rapid decarbonization.

There is relative consensus on the basic tenets around carbon quantification; these form the basis of the requirements listed below. It is the rigor with which these are integrated into a carbon standard or greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting methodology that determines the quality of carbon credits of an NbS carbon project. The quality of a project's climatic impact is thus directly linked to the robustness

of the standard and methodology employed, rather than the unique qualities of the project. The SCeNe Coalition does not specifically endorse any carbon standard, but examples that are commonly considered to satisfy the basic tenets include the VCS and CCB Standards, Gold Standard, American Carbon Registry (ACR), and Climate Action Reserve (CAR).

However, each standard varies in its carbon quantification requirements leading to gaps and weaknesses across the industry. To promote comparability and quality, we reference the [ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles \(CCPs\)](#) and associated Assessment Framework as the primary benchmark for carbon credit integrity. The SCeNe Coalition is aligned with ICVCM and, accordingly, does not provide additional carbon-accounting guidance in this document.

In parallel with the goal of delivering credible climate mitigation, NbS carbon projects must also respond to the escalating impacts of climate change on ecosystems and communities. This requires taking proactive steps to reduce vulnerability, build ecological and social resilience, and support recovery. NbS projects, when designed and implemented effectively, can deliver powerful climate adaptation outcomes alongside mitigation. This includes protecting and restoring ecosystems that buffer against climate extremes, supporting climate-resilient livelihoods, and ensuring that IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable groups are

equipped to anticipate, manage, and recover from climate-related hazards and risks. Adaptation is therefore a core pillar of climate impact for high-integrity NbS carbon projects, reinforcing their long-term sustainability and relevance in a rapidly changing world.

The following sections introduce the Climate criteria (Criteria 5 and 6) and their associated sub-criteria. In this section, minimum and enhanced activities organized along progression arcs are not provided for each sub-criterion under Criterion 5. For more detailed practical guidance, we refer readers instead to the ICVCM's CCP and its Assessment Framework. Only the sub-criterion under Criterion 6 is accompanied by a table outlining minimum project activities, as well as enhanced activities organized along progression arcs. These arcs represent key dimensions of project quality, as described in section 3. The tables aim to guide projects to scale their climate impact while reinforcing climate resilience.

### Overview of the Criteria for Climate

#### Criterion 5. The NbS carbon project generates real, additional and verified emission reductions and/or removals.

- a. The project's climatic impact is additional;
- b. The project ensures the permanence of its emission reductions and/or removals;
- c. The project manages and accounts for leakage;
- d. The project employs robust GHG accounting approaches;
- e. There is no double counting of the project's emission reductions or removals; and
- f. There is independent, third-party validation and verification of the project's climatic impact.

#### Criterion 6. The NbS carbon project supports communities and biodiversity to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

- a. The project identifies expected climate change impacts on biodiversity and communities and implements measures to build resiliency, reduce hardship and support recovery

## 6.2 Criterion 5.

### The NbS carbon project generates real, additional and verified emission reductions and/or removals.

To ensure high-integrity outcomes, NbS carbon projects must adhere to fundamental principles that guarantee the credibility and environmental integrity of the climate benefits they claim. Criterion 5 highlights the fundamental principles that an NbS carbon project must adhere to in order to generate real, additional, and verified emission reductions and/or removals, while minimizing and addressing the risk of non-permanence. When reversals occur, projects should have systems in place to address them in full.

This criterion complements and builds upon internationally recognized best practices and integrity principles for carbon markets, such as those outlined by the ICVCM. The ICVCM provides an evolving set of guidelines and

assessment tools for identifying high-integrity carbon crediting programs and methodologies. These can serve as valuable references for project developers and verifiers seeking to align their projects with robust standards.

NbS projects may be certified under a range of carbon standards, and must ensure that the methodologies used are appropriate, conservative, and scientifically sound. Criterion 5 encourages project developers to go beyond minimum compliance by strengthening the quality of their baseline scenarios, improving the precision of their monitoring systems, and developing credible strategies to manage non-permanence and leakage risks.

### Below are key project requirements, or the sub-criteria, that satisfy Criterion 5:

- 5.A. The project's climatic impact is additional;
  - 5.B. The project ensures the permanence of its emission reductions and/or removals<sup>5</sup>;
  - 5.C. The project manages and accounts for leakage;
  - 5.D. The project employs robust GHG accounting approaches, in accordance with the principles of conservativeness, accuracy, and the use of credible, verifiable data sources
  - 5.E. There is no double counting<sup>6</sup> of the project's emission reductions and/or removals; and
  - 5.F. There is independent, third-party validation and verification of the project's climatic impact.
- The progression arcs associated with this criterion are B. the quality of the baseline projection, which can be achieved by frequently updating the baseline as better data and tools become available, and using conservative assumptions where possible; E. the quality of the risk and mitigation plan, including the frequency and scope of non-permanence risk assessments and lastly, F. the quality of the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan (e.g., prioritizing site-specific data over proxy indicators, incorporating remote sensing and emerging technologies).

<sup>5</sup> An example of a tool that can be used to assess non-permanence is the VCS' AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool. In assessing non-permanence, project developers should also evaluate the potential impacts of future climate change on carbon stocks.

<sup>6</sup> According to the ICVCM, double counting occurs when a single GHG emission reduction or removal is counted more than once towards achieving mitigation targets or goals. Double counting can occur through double issuance, double use, and double claiming.

## 6.3. Criterion 6.

### The NbS carbon project supports communities and biodiversity to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

NbS carbon projects can strengthen the resilience of both human and ecological systems by helping them to prepare for, absorb, and adapt to climate change impacts. Through interventions such as restoring degraded ecosystems, protecting water sources, promoting climate-resilient agriculture, or diversifying livelihoods, these projects create the conditions for locally relevant adaptation solutions that are grounded in nature.

By addressing the specific vulnerabilities of communities and ecosystems within the project area, NbS projects contribute meaningfully to climate adaptation goals. These efforts support key global commitments, including SDG 13: Climate Action, which promotes resilience and adaptive capacity, and SDG 1: No Poverty, by reducing climate-related risks that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable.

This criterion and its associated sub-criterion (6.A) are informed by the Climate, Community & Biodiversity (CCB) Standards (Version 3.1), particularly

elements relating to climate change adaptation benefits (e.g., GL1). In line with CCB, projects are expected to identify and respond to the projected impacts of climate change on both communities and biodiversity through targeted, evidence-based adaptation strategies. This includes using available climate scenarios and models to assess potential shifts in land use, ecosystem services, and species ranges and engaging communities in participatory evaluations of climate risks. Adaptation strategies should be clearly linked to expected outcomes, monitored over time, and supported by feedback mechanisms to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness.

The progression arcs provide a roadmap for NbS projects to evolve from basic climate risk awareness to robust, ecosystem-based adaptation approaches. This enables projects to incrementally improve their capacity to manage uncertainty, reduce exposure to climate hazards, and enhance the resilience of both communities and biodiversity.

## Criterion 6.A.

### The project identifies expected climate change impacts on biodiversity and communities and implements measures to build resiliency, reduce hardship and support recovery.

This sub-criterion promotes the implementation of ecosystem-based adaptation measures that enhance resilience, reduce vulnerability, and support recovery from climate-related shocks and stresses. By involving IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups and other stakeholders in identifying priority climate risks and designing appropriate responses, projects ensure that adaptation actions are locally

grounded and socially equitable. Integrating robust scientific methods with traditional knowledge enables more effective climate risk assessments and targeted interventions. Through ongoing monitoring and adaptive management, projects can respond dynamically to changing conditions, ultimately fostering ecosystems and communities that are better prepared to withstand and recover from climate challenges.

#### QUALITY OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

##### MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project engages rights holders and project stakeholders, including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, in the identification of priority climate risks.
- The project conducts a climate vulnerability assessment to identify capacity gaps and measures aimed at reducing climate risks for people and/or biodiversity within the project zone.
- The project tailors communication tools to literacy levels, language(s), and communication preferences of rights holders, including IPs and LCs, women and other vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

##### ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project facilitates inclusive, participatory processes that enable increasingly diverse rights holder and project stakeholder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded), in the identification of climate risks to biodiversity and community well-being and planned resilience measures.
- The project supports community institutions in assessing climate risk and co-designing locally appropriate resilience measures (e.g., agroforestry, ecosystem-based adaptation), including training to strengthen capacity for climate modelling, disaster preparedness planning and adaptive management.
- The project prioritizes integration of traditional ecological knowledge in climate modelling, with appropriate recognition of IP rights.
- The project tailors communication tools according to literacy rates, preferred language(s), and communication methods preferences of an increasingly diverse set of rights holder sub-groups (e.g., youth/elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged and/or otherwise socially excluded)

## QUALITY OF BASELINE PROJECTION

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project defines a static baseline or projected trend for biodiversity and community conditions in relation to identified climate hazards within the project zone. Projections are conducted before the onset of project interventions.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project evaluates multiple counterfactual scenarios, with and without interventions, to assess climate impacts on biodiversity and communities, informing project design.
- The project assesses climate risks and their projected impacts across the broader landscape (e.g., regional or sub-national scale).
- The project uses standard protocols and integrates high-resolution tools (e.g., LiDAR, satellite imagery) alongside traditional ecological knowledge, with appropriate recognition of IP rights, to generate baseline projections.

## SCOPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies and implements a prioritized set of activities aimed at reducing climate risks for rights holders and project stakeholders (including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups) and biodiversity within the project zone.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project adopts a broader and more integrated scope of activities designed to further reduce climate risks for people and/or biodiversity. These activities lead to a measurable reduction in the severity of specific climate risks (e.g., fire, soil erosion, storm impacts).
- The project implements activities that align with national or regional adaptation priorities.
- The project provides capacity strengthening on climate-smart agriculture, disaster preparedness and financial capacity to reduce sensitivity to hazards and conducts awareness campaigns.
- The project designs activities that promote ecosystem-based adaptation, climate-resilient species, genetic diversity and invasive species control.
- The project installs community-based early warning and monitoring systems to enable timely responses to climate-related threats.
- The project supports implementation of climate adaptation strategies led by community institutions and/or in collaboration with other local organizations, IP and LC rights holders and stakeholders.

## GEOGRAPHIC SCALE OF THE PROJECT

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project identifies expected climate change impacts on for rights holders and project stakeholders (including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups) and biodiversity and implements adaptation measures within the project zone.
- Project activities, including baselining, monitoring and interventions (e.g., adaptation measures) are implemented within the project zone.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project expands baselining, monitoring and interventions to identify and address climate risks to priority species, habitats, ecosystem services and rights holders and project stakeholders (including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups) in the surrounding landscape, inclusive of the project zone, to achieve broader and more impactful outcomes.
- The project contributes to broader recovery systems (e.g., early warning networks, regional disaster preparedness) to benefit rights holders and project stakeholders (including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups) beyond just the project zone.

## QUALITY OF RISK AND MITIGATION PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project conducts a climate risk assessment, covering hazards, exposure, and vulnerability, over the project period to identify and prioritize the biggest climate risks for both biodiversity and to rights holders and project stakeholders (including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups). The risk assessment informs the project's management plan.
- The project revisits and updates the risk assessment every five years, to support adaptive management.

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project updates its climate change risk assessments for biodiversity, rights holders and project stakeholders every two years, or more frequently as new science and modelling datasets emerge, including the evaluation of relevant climate model projections. Updates are incorporated into the strategies and monitoring plans adopted.
- The project's climate risk assessment goes beyond assessing the magnitude and scale of climate risks, by assessing the likelihood and severity of each risk, quantifying the economic, social, and ecological losses and impacts. The project creates a tiered mitigation plan, prioritizing actions based on the highest potential impact.

## QUALITY OF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

## MINIMUM PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The project develops and implements a robust MEL strategy with clear relevant metrics (i.e. indicators and indices) to evaluate outcomes and guide implementation. Key project outcomes are listed below this table as well as examples of indicators and indices.
- The project regularly monitors impacts from the planned climate risk reduction and mitigation activities to biodiversity and rights holders and project stakeholders (including IPs and LCs, women and vulnerable and/or marginalized groups).

## ENHANCED PROJECT ACTIVITY

- Monitoring efforts are strengthened by improving the quality, number, and relevance of indicators and indices used to evaluate reductions in climate risks for rights holders and project stakeholders and biodiversity.
- The frequency and/or spatial coverage of sampling are/is increased.
- The project incorporates validated proxies where direct data collection is not feasible.
- The project sets up regular engagement sessions based on the scale and impact of project activities to review the effectiveness of the resilience measures and adapt strategies with stakeholder input.



1.0

Background

2.0

Introduction to Criteria

3.0

Progression Arcs

Criteria For Nature

Criteria For People

Criteria For Climate

7.0

Conclusion

To support project developers in applying the **Criteria for Climate**, the SCeNe Coalition offers examples of indicators that can help report on the climate impacts and adaptation benefits of NbS carbon projects. This list is non-exhaustive and can be supplemented by other resources such as the IC-VCM Core Carbon Principles, and the Darwin Initiative (including the [Biodiversity Challenge Funds Standard Indicator Library](#)).

### These indicators include:

- Verified, real, additional, and permanent emission reductions or removals quantified in tonnes of CO equivalent (tCOe).
- Quantifiable reduction of climate change impacts on biodiversity within area.
- Number of people experiencing reduced climate change risk (resulting from project activities), disaggregated by gender at a minimum.
- Implementation of targeted, ecosystem-based adaptation measures that reduce vulnerability and build resilience for ecosystems and/or local communities.
- Demonstrated improvements in adaptive management through regular updates to risk assessments and project activities in response to new climate science and local feedback.
- Number of people with increased capacity in adaptation planning and /or disaster preparedness, disaggregated by gender at a minimum.

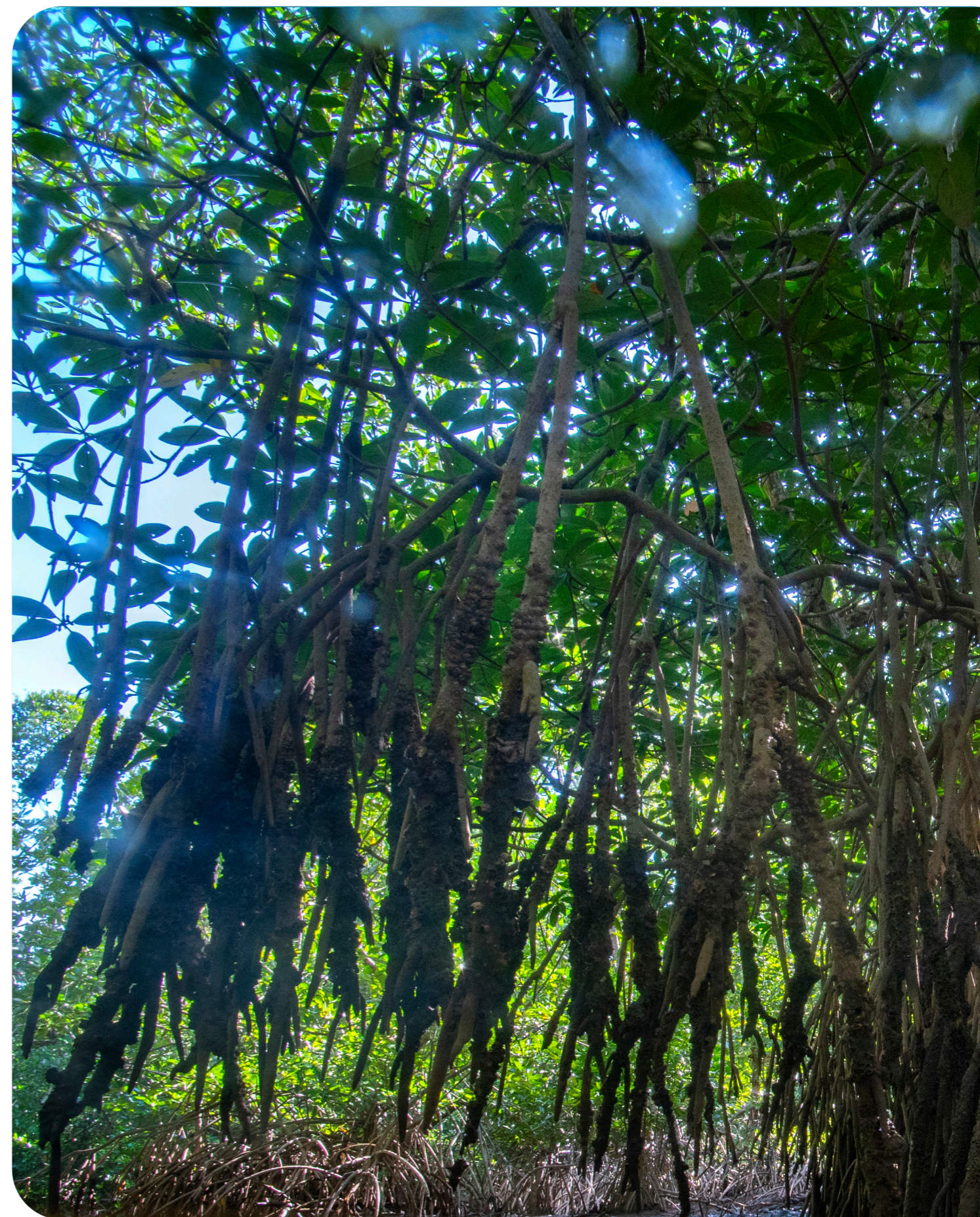


Image © Justin Grubb/ Yayasan Planet Indonesia



# 7.0 Conclusion

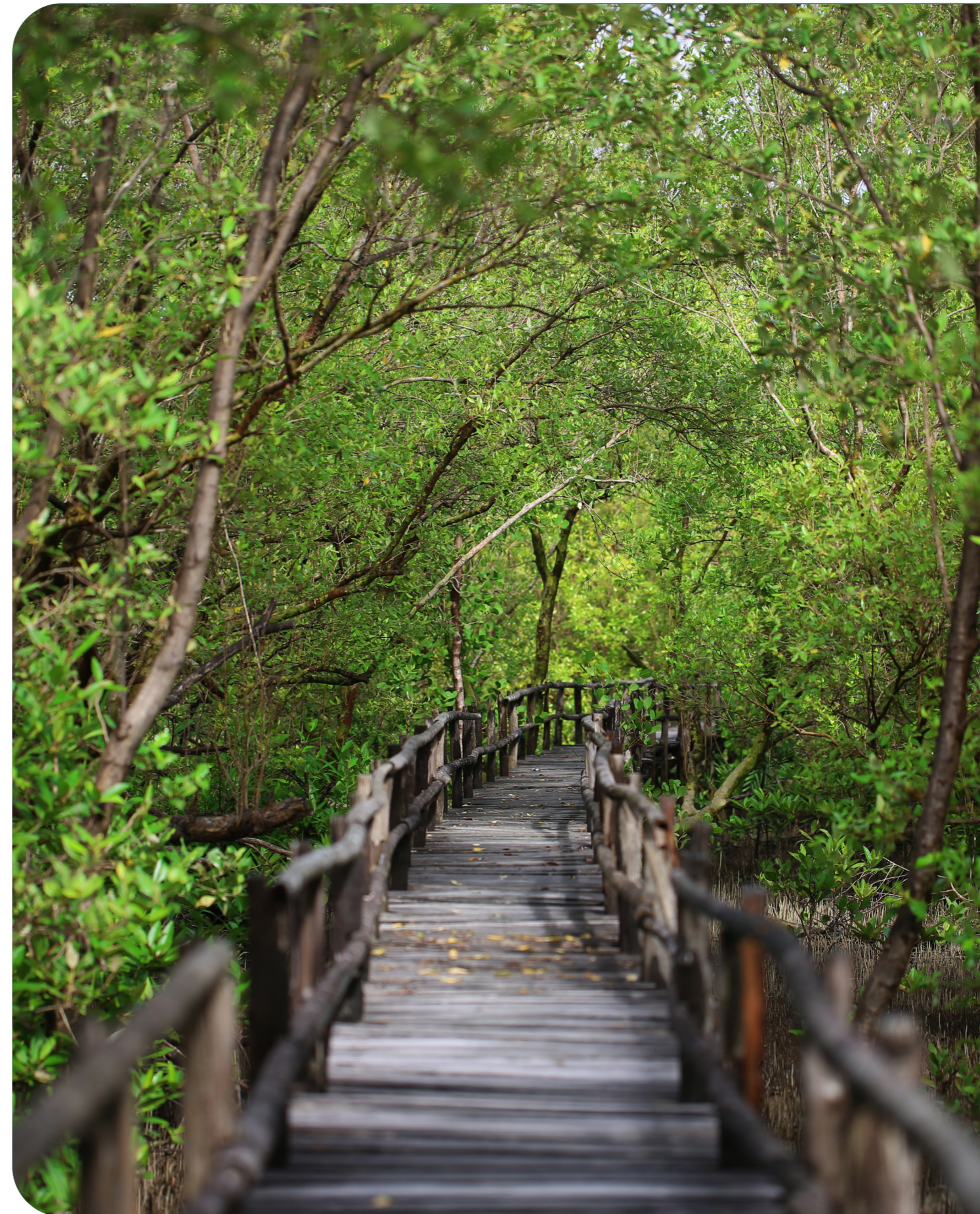
The Criteria provide a comprehensive framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating carbon projects that deliver meaningful climate, biodiversity, and social benefits. By aligning with widely adopted principles and best practices from the Conservation Measures Partnership, these criteria offer a structured approach to continuous improvement throughout the project lifecycle.

The progression arcs outlined in the Criteria provide a roadmap for project developers, implementers, and investors to incrementally elevate quality across multiple fronts: stakeholder participation processes, baseline projections, scope of activities, geographic scale, risk mitigation strategies and monitoring and evaluation plans.

The Criteria cater to diverse stakeholders, including project-level implementers, such as carbon project developers, local NGOs, and frontline organizations, as well as buyers and investors in nature-based carbon projects, including financial institutions, governments, funds, and corporate buyers of carbon credits. By providing a flexible resource that allows readers to focus on the most relevant sections, the Criteria aim to facilitate informed decision-making and investment strategies, ensuring that resources are directed toward high-quality projects that can assure the effectiveness and durability of their outcomes.

To enable the long-term transformative, triple-benefit potential, nature-based solution interventions must be aligned with high-quality standards for design and implementation, which is precisely the purpose of these criteria. Ultimately, the Criteria represent a crucial step toward mainstreaming nature-based solutions as a viable and impactful approach to addressing the intertwined challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequalities. By embracing these criteria, stakeholders can collectively contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

Finally, the Coalition recognizes that delivering enhanced practice carries real costs and often requires longer timelines. Achieving the highest quality entails deeper engagement with rights holders, robust safeguards and grievance routes, a range of complementary project activities, and strong monitoring, evaluation and learning, supported by capable teams and governance. These demands increase both implementation and assurance costs. To make this quality viable and scalable, buyers and investors should align pricing and financing with the full value and cost of verified climate, biodiversity and community outcomes. Fair pricing that recognizes the multiple benefits brought about by project and long-term stewardship will be essential in realizing the potential of NbS.



# Annexes

## Annex 1. Core list of guidance which have informed the criteria.

### Initiatives setting standards and guidance for high social and environmental integrity in carbon projects

- **IUCN's** Global Standard for NbS in 2022, a self-assessment for projects that consists of eight criteria and associate indicators to address sustainable development in the design and implementation of carbon projects.
- **Integrity Council for Voluntary Carbon Markets (ICVCM)'s** Core Carbon Principles and Assessment Framework and Assessment Procedure, which sets new standards for carbon credits that deliver “net positive sustainable development impacts”.
- **International Labor Organization (ILO)'s** Decent Work in NbS in 2022 to advocate for a just transition to a green economy.
- **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)'s** Integrity Principles for Benefit Sharing in Forest NbS publication.
- **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)'s** Balancing Bankability and Integrity: fostering investment-ready nature-based solutions report.
- **Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance (ORRAA)'s** High Quality Blue Carbon Practitioners Guide
- **The Nature Conservancy's** Bar of Excellence, Practice Principles for Supply-Side Quality and Integrity in Carbon Market

### Human rights, gender & safeguards frameworks

- **UNEP's** Core Human Rights Principles for Private Conservation Organizations and Funders.
- **United Nations**, Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs): Implementing the “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework. Grievance and remedy mechanisms (GRM) should align with the UNGPs.
- **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)'s** Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework, to implement a robust safeguard process.
- **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)'s** Human Rights Guide, for developing and implementing MEL together with rights holders.
- **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)'s** Guidance for Integrating Gender Equity in Conservation, which provides recommendations on gender equitable carbon projects.

### Initiatives supporting companies in identifying high-quality carbon credits

- **Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative (VCMI)'s** Claims Code of Practice to guide companies on credible use of high-quality carbon credits.
- **Tropical Forest Credit Integrity (TFCI)** Guide for companies to purchase carbon credits with high social and environmental integrity.
- **Natural Climate Solutions Alliance (NCSA)'s** Buyers Guide to High Quality Credits.

### Other technical guidance or relevant voluntary carbon standards

- **The Conservation Measures Partnership's** Conservation Standards for effective and impactful outcomes in conservation projects.
- **Accountability Framework Initiative's** Operational Guidance on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and other relevant FPIC guidance by credible organizations.
- **Voluntary carbon standards** like the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS), Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) standard, Gold Standard, Plan Vivo Standard, and the WOCAN W+ Standard.
- **The Conservation Measures Partnership**, Conservation Standards for effective and impactful conservation outcomes.
- **UNFCCC** Article 6.4, Sustainable Development Tool (A6.4-TOOL-AC-001).



## Annex 2. The development process for the Criteria.

The Criteria were developed through a multi-phased approach to capture the technical expertise and priorities of each member organization of the SCoNe Coalition. This process consisted of the following Phases.

### Phase 1. Development of the preliminary draft of the criteria.

**As a first step, we identified a lack of clarity on how to achieve and assess biodiversity and social outcomes as an important gap in existing and emerging guidance on high-quality carbon credits.**

This was primarily carried out through a rapid desktop review of:

1. The existing non-carbon criteria in international carbon standards include the Verra VCS, Verra CCB Standards, Gold Standard, and Plan Vivo; and
2. A selection of literature and technical guidance published by respected organizations and industry experts to advocate for improved co-benefits in the voluntary carbon market. For example, this included closely aligning with the IUCN's [Global Standard of Nature-based Solutions](#) (2020), the ICVCM's [Core Carbon Principles and Assessment Framework and Assessment Procedure](#) (2022) and the Natural Climate Solutions Alliance (NCSA)'s [Buyers Guide to High Quality Credits](#) (2023) (refer to Annex 1 for the full list).

The findings of the initial desktop review were discussed and further refined in a virtual workshop conducted with key carbon project and/or conservation experts from each member organization of the SCoNe Coalition. Through this workshop, we gathered institutional perspectives from each member on the issue of high-quality, high-integrity NbS carbon projects and in what ways the Coalition could influence and add value to the broader voluntary carbon market.

As a next step, we prepared the preliminary draft of the criteria and conducted external consultations with key experts in the voluntary carbon market. To capture a balanced perspective on the preliminary draft, we identified key experts across the voluntary carbon market value chain, from buyers (e.g., international sustainable business associations), intermediaries (e.g., carbon rating agencies and marketplaces), suppliers (e.g., carbon project developers), and conservation practitioners with expertise in mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion in conservation projects. We presented the preliminary draft, to capture industry feedback and further assess the feasibility of implementing these criteria in NbS carbon projects.

### Phase 2. Co-development of the criteria and implementation tiers.

**Following Phase 1, the criteria were further co-developed with members of the Coalition's Portfolio Workstream.** This co-development process involved representatives from members of the Coalition who each provided their knowledge and technical expertise in conservation, nature-based carbon projects and engagement with Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Local Communities (LCs) in Southeast Asia (SEA). Furthermore, as a multi-stakeholder platform, this active engagement ensured that the criteria were aligned with each member's aspirations for conservation and nature-based carbon projects.

The co-development process included weekly discussions on each criterion, an in-person two-day workshop, peer-review sessions on each criterion and implementation tier and a final review of the Criteria by each member organization. This Phase produced the second and third drafts of the Criteria.

### Phase 3. Further development of the criteria.

**The Criteria were amended through further consultations with key stakeholders of each member organization.** To confirm the applicability of the criteria in carbon projects on the ground, particularly in the region, the criteria were applied to two selected REDD+ projects in Cambodia led by Conservation International (CI) and BirdLife International (BLI) / NatureLife Cambodia (NLC). These projects were identified as suitable testbeds having been or are in the process of being validated and verified against the CCB Standard. Each project conducted a high-level self-assessment against the draft criteria to examine the ambition of the Criteria and realistic prospects for implementation and provided feedback to improve the Criteria.

In addition, the criteria were further socialized with key experts within the member organizations of the Coalition through two webinar sessions. Additional internal consultations were also carried out by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to gather feedback from experts in people-centered conservation in Asia Pacific. Feedback obtained from the consultations was subsequently integrated into the criteria to produce the final version.

### Phase 4. Final refinement and validation of the Criteria and progression arcs.

**The final phase of the development process focused on refining the Criteria and their associated progression arcs through an iterative, consultative process.** This phase was led by the Coalition's Working Group with the support of an external consultant and included a series of weekly meetings to review and revise each criterion and Progression Arc.

During this phase, key refinements were made to ensure that the Criteria went beyond the requirements of the CCB Standards, offering a more ambitious, comprehensive, and practical framework for guiding the implementation of high-integrity NbS carbon projects. The sub-criteria were revised to improve clarity, completeness, and alignment with best practice.

To strengthen the logic and usability of the progression arcs, each Minimum Project Activity was explicitly linked to a corresponding Enhanced Project Activity within a clearly defined arc. This clarified the pathway from minimum to more ambitious implementation for each criterion. The arcs themselves were streamlined to distinguish more clearly between minimum and enhanced expectations, and summary tables were developed for each arc to support ease of use by project developers and reviewers.

All refinements were consolidated into a revised draft of the White Paper, which was then circulated to SCoNe Coalition member organizations for review and validation. Feedback from this final round of consultation was integrated into the document to produce the final version, ready for publication.

### Annex 3. Glossary of definitions

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Adaptive management	A systematic process of continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of existing programs.	IUCN NbS Glossary	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf</a>
Assessment	The analysis and review of information derived from research for the purpose of helping someone in a position of responsibility to evaluate possible actions or think about a problem. Assessment means assembling, summarizing, organizing, interpreting, and possibly reconciling pieces of existing knowledge and communicating them so that they are relevant and helpful to an intelligent but inexperienced decisionmaker.	Glossary of ecosystem services mapping and assessment terminology	<a href="https://oneecosystem.pensoft.net/articles.php?id=27110">https://oneecosystem.pensoft.net/articles.php?id=27110</a>
Baseline	Reference for measurable quantities from which an alternative outcome can be measured, e.g., a nonintervention scenario used as a reference in the analysis of intervention scenarios.	IPCC	<a href="https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_appendix.pdf">https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_appendix.pdf</a>
Biodiversity	Biodiversity—short for biological diversity—means the diversity of life in all its forms—the diversity of species, of genetic variations within one species, and of ecosystems. The importance of biological diversity to human society is hard to overstate. An estimated 40 per cent of the global economy is based on biological products and processes. Poor people, especially those living in areas of low agricultural productivity, depend especially heavily on the genetic diversity of the environment.	CBD Toolkit Glossary	<a href="https://www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/doc/CBD-Toolkit-Glossaries.pdf">https://www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/doc/CBD-Toolkit-Glossaries.pdf</a>
Communities	All groups of people—including Indigenous Peoples, mobile peoples and other local communities—who derive income, livelihood or cultural values and other contributions to well-being from the project area at the start of the project and/or under the with-project scenario. In cases where numerous small communities can be shown to have homogeneous patterns of social organization, political structure and livelihoods, these communities may be identified and listed as a community. In identification of communities, it is permitted to consider significance of user populations and of their level of use such that distant or intermittent user groups who have very	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Community characteristics	limited dependence on the site need not be defined as communities.  Community characteristics may include shared language, mythology, history, culture, livelihood systems, traditional authority structures, institutions, practices, values, relationships with specific sites of historical, cultural or spiritual significance, relationships with natural resources, or the customary institutions and rules governing the use of resources and sites.	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>
Community groups	Sub-groups of communities whose members derive similar income, livelihood and/or cultural values and other contributions to well-being from the project area and whose values are different from those of other groups; such as Indigenous Peoples, women, youth or other social, cultural and economic groups. The number of appropriate groups will depend on the size and complexity of the community. 'Indigenous Peoples' are defined as distinct social and cultural groups whose members identify themselves as belonging to an indigenous cultural group.	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>
Community groups that are marginalized and/or vulnerable	'Marginalized' people or groups are those that have little or no influence over decision-making processes. Marginalization may be related to a range of factors including age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and religion. 'Vulnerable' people or groups are those who lack secure access to the assets on which secure livelihoods are built (socio-political, cultural, human, financial, natural and physical) and with high exposure to external stresses and shocks (including climate change). Therefore they have high sensitivity and low adaptive capacity to adjust in response to actual or expected changes. Forest dependency may be an important factor affecting vulnerability particularly where the project itself may change access to forest resources. In many situations marginalization exacerbates vulnerability (e.g., marginalization by gender).	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Community property	Including collective rights, both customary and statutory, to lands, territories and resources that communities have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired whether or not such ownership has been formally recorded.	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN	<a href="https://www.fao.org/3/i2801e/i2801e.pdf">https://www.fao.org/3/i2801e/i2801e.pdf</a>
Conflict	An incompatibility between opinions, principles, etc. Conflict is not necessarily bad, abnormal or dysfunctional, but rather an inherent element of human interaction. When thinking about the directions taken by society, the governance processes by which we deal with conflict are what really matter. Where there is conflict, parties may be less inclined or able to participate fully or constructively in negotiations until the conflict is adequately acknowledged.	IUCN Environmental Law Glossary	<a href="https://www.iucn.org/theme/environmental-law/our-work/water/water-lawand-governance-supportplatform/learning-resources/glossary#PStext">https://www.iucn.org/theme/environmental-law/our-work/water/water-lawand-governance-supportplatform/learning-resources/glossary#PStext</a>
Connectivity	External exchanges – the 2-way flows that occur between ecological units within the landscape or aquatic environment including flows of energy, water, fire, genetic material, animals and seeds. Exchanges are facilitated by habitat linkages.	International standards for the practice of ecological restoration – including principles and key concepts	<a href="http://seraustalasia.com/wheel/image/SER_International_Standards.pdf">http://seraustalasia.com/wheel/image/SER_International_Standards.pdf</a>
Conservation	The protection, care, management and maintenance of ecosystems, habitats, wildlife species and populations, within or outside of their natural environments, in order to safeguard the natural conditions for their long-term permanence. Conservation ex situ. The conservation of the components of the biological diversity outside of their natural habitats. Conservation in situ. The conservation of the ecosystems and natural habitats and maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural environments and, in the case of tame and cultivated species, in the environments where they have developed their specific characteristics.	IUCN NbS Glossary	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf</a>
Consultation	Consultation is a two-way process of dialogue between the project company and its stakeholders. Stakeholder consultation is really about initiating and sustaining constructive external relationships over time. Companies that start the process early and take a	International Finance Corporation	<a href="https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/partone-ijstakeholderconsultation.pdf">https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/partone-ijstakeholderconsultation.pdf</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Cultural	long-term, strategic view are, in essence, developing their local "social license to operate."  "Cultural" refers to spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, tradition and beliefs.	UNESCO	<a href="https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/ptf0000127162">https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/ptf0000127162</a>
Cultural diversity	Variety or multiformity of human social structures, belief systems, and strategies for adapting to situations in different parts of the world. Language is a good indicator of cultural diversity, with over 6,000 languages currently being spoken.	CBD Toolkit Glossary	<a href="https://www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/doc/CBD-Toolkit-Glossaries.pdf">https://www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/doc/CBD-Toolkit-Glossaries.pdf</a>
Customary rights	'Customary rights' to lands, territories and resources refer to patterns of long-standing community lands, territories and resource usage in accordance with Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' customary laws, values, customs and traditions, including seasonal or cyclical use, rather than formal legal title to lands, territories and resources issued by the State.	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>
Ecosystem	Ecosystem. According to the Agreement on Biological Diversity, an ecosystem is understood as a dynamic complex of vegetable, animal and microorganism communities and their nonliving environment that interact as a functional unit. Ecosystems may be small and simple, like an isolated pond, or large and complex, like a specific tropical rainforest or a coral reef in tropical seas.	IUCN NbS Glossary	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf</a>
Ecosystem services	The benefits people obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food and water; regulating services such as flood and disease control; cultural services such as spiritual, recreational, and cultural benefits; and supporting services such as nutrient cycling that maintain the conditions for life on Earth. The concept "ecosystem goods and services" is synonymous with ecosystem services.	Millennium Ecosystem Services - MEA	<a href="http://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.776.aspx.pdf">www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.776.aspx.pdf</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Endemic species	Species for which the entire global range is restricted to the site, the region or the country (the level of endemism must be defined).	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>
Engage	Attract or involve someone's interest or attention. Engage in/with: participate or become involved in.	IUCN Environmental Law Glossary	<a href="https://www.iucn.org/theme/environmental-law/our-work/water-law-lawand-governance-supportplatform/learning-resources/glossary#PStext">https://www.iucn.org/theme/environmental-law/our-work/water-law-lawand-governance-supportplatform/learning-resources/glossary#PStext</a>
Equitable benefits	It refers to the ultimate impact of development efforts on both genders. It implies that the results should be equally accessed and utilized by men and women. Equality of opportunities does not, necessarily, imply that both genders enjoy the same benefits.	IUCN NbS Glossary	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf</a>
Equity	It seeks people's access to equal opportunities and the development of basic capacities; this means that the barriers hindering economic and political opportunities, as well as the access to education and basic services, should be eliminated, so that the people (women and men of all ages, conditions and positions) may be able to enjoy such opportunities and benefit from them. It means justice; that is, giving each one what is rightfully theirs, recognizing the specific conditions or characteristics of each person or human group (sex, gender, class, religion, age); it is the recognition of diversity, without giving reason to discrimination.	IUCN NbS Glossary	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf</a>
Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)	Free, prior and informed consent is the decision made by a community following a consultation. A project team must receive affirmative consent from relevant property rights holders prior to commencing with project activities.	UN General Assembly	<a href="https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UN-DRIP_E_web.pdf">https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UN-DRIP_E_web.pdf</a>
Full and effective participation	Full and effective participation means meaningful influence of all relevant rights holder and stakeholder groups who want to be involved throughout the process, and includes access to information, consultation, participation in decision-making and implementation and free, prior and informed consent.	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Gender	Roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures. Gender roles and expectations are learned. They can change over time and they vary within and between cultures. Systems of social differentiation such as political status, class, ethnicity, physical and mental disability, age and more, modify gender roles. The concept of gender is vital because, applied to social analysis; it reveals how women's subordination (or men's domination) is socially constructed. As such, the subordination can be changed or ended. It is not biologically predetermined nor is it fixed for ever.	UNESCO	<a href="https://databrows-er.uis.unesco.org/resources/glossary/2031?search=gender">https://databrows-er.uis.unesco.org/resources/glossary/2031?search=gender</a>
Governance	The action or manner of governing; the system of controlling, directing, or regulating influence. It involves four aspects: social, political, economic and legal. More than government, governance refers to the complex of processes and institutions by which society contests, makes and manages decisions.	IUCN Environmental Law Glossary	<a href="https://www.iucn.org/theme/environmental-law/our-work/water-law-lawand-governance-supportplatform/learning-resources/glossary#PStext">https://www.iucn.org/theme/environmental-law/our-work/water-law-lawand-governance-supportplatform/learning-resources/glossary#PStext</a>
Grievance mechanism	Grievance mechanism system consisting of procedures, roles and rules for receiving complaints and providing remedy Note: Effective grievance mechanisms are expected to be legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable, transparent, rights compatible, and a source of continuous learning. For operational-level mechanisms to be effective, they are expected to be based on engagement and dialogue. For a description of each of these criteria, see Guiding Principle 31 in the United Nations (UN).	Global Reporting Institute Glossary	<a href="https://www.globalreporting.org/standards/media/1913/gri-standards-glossary.pdf">https://www.globalreporting.org/standards/media/1913/gri-standards-glossary.pdf</a>
High Conservation values (HCVs)	HCV criteria are based on those defined by the High Conservation Value (HCV) Resource Network. Practical help is available for using HCVs in each region, including generic guidance documents (Toolkits) and Country Pages.	HCV Network	<a href="http://hcvnetwork.org/">http://hcvnetwork.org/</a>
Human well-being	"Human well-being is assumed to have multiple constituents, including the basic material for a good life, such as secure and adequate livelihoods, enough food at all times, shelter, clothing, and access to goods; health, including feeling well and having a healthy physical	Millennium Ecosystem Services - MEA	<a href="https://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.776.aspx.pdf">https://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.776.aspx.pdf</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Impacts	environment, such as clean air and access to clean water; good social relations, including social cohesion, mutual respect, and the ability to help others and provide for children; security, including secure access to natural and other resources, personal safety, and security from natural and human-made disasters; and freedom of choice and action, including the opportunity to achieve what an individual values doing and being."  'Impacts' includes benefits, costs and risks, including those that are direct and indirect and including those related to social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects and to human rights and rights to lands territories and resources. Costs include those related to responsibilities and also opportunity costs. Note that the term 'benefits' refers to positive impacts and the phrase 'costs and risks' equates with negative impacts.	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf</a>
Indicator	Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement of outcomes, to reflect the changes connected to a standards system, or to help assess the performance of an organization.	ISEAL Glossary of terms - adapted from OECD Glossary, 2002.	<a href="https://www.sustainability-change.info/filesagri/ISEAL%20Glossary%20of%20Terms%20v1%20-%2016%20Jan%202015.pdf">https://www.sustainability-change.info/filesagri/ISEAL%20Glossary%20of%20Terms%20v1%20-%2016%20Jan%202015.pdf</a>
Indigenous Peoples	The existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and, by conquest, settlement, or other means reduced them to a nondominant or colonial situation; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form a part, under State structure which incorporates mainly the national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant.	IUCN NbS Glossary	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf</a>
Invasive species	Non-native species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species in the Project Zone as identified in the Global Invasive Species Database (see: <a href="http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/">http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/</a> ), from scientific literature and from local knowledge.	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Key Biodiversity Area (KBA)	A site of global significance for biodiversity conservation that satisfies criteria based on a framework of vulnerability and irreplaceability defined in terms of species and population threat levels.	IUCN	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/pag-015.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/pag-015.pdf</a>
Mitigation	Measures that allow an activity with a negative impact on biodiversity, but reduce the impact on site by considering changes to the scale, design, location, process, sequencing, management and/or monitoring of the proposed activity. It requires a joint effort of planners, engineers, ecologists, other experts and often local stakeholders to arrive at the best practical environmental option. An example is the unacceptable impact on biodiversity of the construction of a certain road, that is mitigated by the construction of a wildlife viaduct.	CBD Toolkit Glossary	<a href="https://www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/doc/CBD-Toolkit-Glossaries.pdf">https://www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/doc/CBD-Toolkit-Glossaries.pdf</a>
Monitoring and Evaluation	An ongoing process through which an organization draws conclusions about its contribution to intended outcomes and impacts. A monitoring and evaluation system consists of a set of interconnected functions, processes and activities, including systematic collection of monitoring data on specified indicators and the implementation of outcome and impact evaluations.	ISEAL Glossary of terms - adapted from OECD Glossary, 2002.	<a href="https://www.sustainabilityxchange.info/filesagri/ISEAL%20Glossary%20of%20Terms%20v1%20-%2016%20Jan%202015.pdf">https://www.sustainabilityxchange.info/filesagri/ISEAL%20Glossary%20of%20Terms%20v1%20-%2016%20Jan%202015.pdf</a>
Native species	Species that are part of the composition of a natural representative ecosystem of the area where the project site is located.	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf</a>
Participatory rural appraisal (PRA)	PRA is an assessment method by many project planners for preparing village development plan, assessment of problem or projects, and utilization of local resources. PRA focuses on the stimulation of participation by local people. Specific techniques are used to encourage greater involvement among people and to enable them to take the leading role in appraising conditions and identifying solutions. The role of the PRA team is to make itself unnecessary as quickly as possible.	FAO	<a href="https://www.fao.org/3/w2352e/W2352E06.htm">https://www.fao.org/3/w2352e/W2352E06.htm</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Project area	The 'project area' is defined as the land area in which project activities aim to generate net climate benefits.	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>
Project zone	'Project zone' is defined as the area encompassing the project area in which project activities that directly affect land and associated resources, including activities such as those related to provision of alternative livelihoods and community development, are implemented. For grouped projects, the project zone also includes all potential project areas (i.e., all potential new land areas in which project activities that aim to generate net climate benefits may be implemented in the future after the initial validation).	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>
Property rights holders	Property rights' are defined as statutory and customary tenure/use/access/management rights to lands, territories and resources and 'property rights holders' are the entities that have individual or collective property rights.	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>
Protected area	IUCN defines a protected area as: "A clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values" (Dudley, 2008). Effective protection can also take place elsewhere and IUCN leads a process to define "other effective area-based conservation mechanisms" in recognition of this (Jonas et al., 2014).	IUCN Protected Area	<a href="https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about">https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about</a>
Restoration	Recovery of the structure, function and processes of the original ecosystem.	IUCN NbS Glossary	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-021-En.pdf</a>
Species at risk of extinction	Species at risk of extinction, specifically those that qualify for the IUCN Red List threat categories of Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) and Vulnerable (VU) (see: <a href="http://www.iucnredlist.org">www.iucnredlist.org</a> and the CCB Program document CCB Program Definitions for more information), species classified by IUCN as Vulnerable	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1-ENG.pdf</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
	(VU), Endangered (EN) and Critically Endangered (CR) at a global or regional level, or whose trade is regulated under international agreements (e.g., CITES), as well as nationally protected species. IUCN Red Listing remains incomplete and many threatened species have not yet been assessed by the IUCN Species Survival Commission. In some countries, especially those lacking national IUCN red lists or nationally protected species lists, expert consultation is needed to learn if any such species might be present.		
Species recovery plan	A species recovery plan is a strategic plan that identifies the actions required to improve the conservation status of a species, reduce threats, and enable its long-term survival in the wild.	IUCN Guidelines for Species Conservation Planning	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2017-065.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2017-065.pdf</a>
Stakeholder	Stakeholders are persons or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by a project, as well as those who may have interests in a project and/or the ability to influence its outcome, positively or negatively. Stakeholders may include locally affected communities or individuals and their formal and informal representatives, national or local government authorities, politicians, religious leaders, civil society organizations and groups with special interests, the academic community, or other businesses. The "stake" that each of these different individuals or groups has in a project or investment will vary.	International Finance Corporation	<a href="https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/par-tone-stakeholder-consultation.pdf">https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/par-tone-stakeholder-consultation.pdf</a>
Stakeholder engagement	Stakeholder engagement is an umbrella term encompassing a range of activities and interactions over the life of a project.	International Finance Corporation	<a href="https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/par-tone-stakeholder-consultation.pdf">https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/par-tone-stakeholder-consultation.pdf</a>
Surrounding landscapes	Adjacent areas of occurrence of biodiversity present in the project area.	IUCN	

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCE	LINKS
Traditional knowledge	Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is an oral intergenerationally transmitted knowledge–practice belief complex (Berkes, 2008), capturing a strong cultural environmental memory and sensitivity to change, and is dependent on the survival of living cultures in their aboriginal homelands. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is complementary to Western science and resource management in protected areas, particularly in this age of rapid environmental change. This is acknowledged by ecologists in the Ecological Society of America (ESA)'s Journal Frontiers in Ecology: 'Spatially explicit local knowledge is particularly important for identification of thresholds or tipping points...native peoples have intimate knowledge of spatial and temporal variabilities as observable indicators, which when combined with a scientific understanding...can be used to develop reliable descriptions of reference conditions for [environmental] assessments...' (Herrick et al., 2010). Traditional cultural practices have, for the most part, been ecologically sustainable. Parks Canada and the Canadian Parks Council (2008) recognize 'longstanding, tested, ecologically appropriate practices as ecological values to be restored or maintained.	Ecological Restoration for Protected Areas	<a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/PAG-018.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/PAG-018.pdf</a>
Well-being	'Well-being' is defined as people's experience of the quality of their lives and may include environmental, social, economic, psychological, spiritual and medical dimensions. The improvement of well-being may include providing opportunity, ensuring and enhancing security and empowerment	CCB Standards v3.1	<a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf</a>

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