



SOFF OPERATIONAL MANUAL

Systematic Observations
Financing Facility



Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF)

Operational Manual

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Islands States
COP26	26th session of the Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC)
CREWS	Climate Risk and Early Warnings Initiative
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FCS	Fragile and Conflict-affected States
GBON	Global Basic Observing Network
GCF	Green Climate Fund
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEs	Implementing Entities
INFCOM	WMO Commission for Observation, Infrastructure and Information Systems
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
LDC Group	Least Developed Countries Group on Climate Change
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NMHS	National Meteorological and Hydrological Services
NWP	Numerical Weather Prediction
ODA	Overseas Development Aid
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAA	Standard Administrative Agreement
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SOFF	Systematic Observations Financing Facility
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNMPTF	United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
WDQMS	WIGOS Data Quality Monitoring System
WFP	World Food Programme
WIGOS	WMO Integrated Global Observing System
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

Introduction

In 2021, WMO, UNDP and UNEP co-created the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) at the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26). SOFF is a United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNMPTF) administered by the UNMPTF Office as Trustee and supported by a Secretariat hosted by WMO in Geneva, Switzerland.

SOFF supports the sustained collection and international exchange of essential surface-based weather and climate observations according to the internationally agreed Global Basic Observing Network (GBON) regulations.¹ The implementation of GBON will significantly strengthen the provision of high-quality weather forecasts, early warning systems, and climate services at global, regional, and national levels. GBON data are essential for effective, resilient development and climate adaptation action that results in saved lives, improved livelihoods, and protected property.

The support provided by SOFF systematically addresses the persistent problems that cause missing observations through the combination of four key features: (i) deployment of a global approach with sustained high-quality international data exchange as a measure of success; (ii) provision of innovative, long-term finance for sustainable progress towards GBON compliance (iii) enhancement of technical competencies through peer to peer advisory support; and (iv) leverage of partners' resources.

Support to countries is provided in three phases implemented through a close collaboration between beneficiary countries, Implementing Entities (IEs) and peer advisors (advanced national meteorological services). During the Readiness phase, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and other Overseas Development Aid (ODA)-eligible countries² can access technical assistance provided by SOFF peer advisors to undertake a GBON National Gap Analysis and develop a GBON National Contribution Plan. During the Investment phase, SIDS and LDCs can receive grants and advisory support to establish their GBON stations and strengthen the human and institutional capacity needed to implement the GBON National Contribution Plan. During the Compliance phase, the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) in SIDS and LDCs receive results-based finance and on-demand peer advisory to support the operation and maintenance of internationally sharing data stations.

SOFF is a partnership among its co-creators, SOFF funding partners, beneficiary countries, IEs, and peer advisors. The development of SOFF has benefited from the contributions of many partners and stakeholders, including beneficiary countries, funding partners, the Alliance for Hydromet Development,³ and several other international organizations.

1 Manual on the WMO Integrated Global Observing System (WMO-No. 1160): Annex VIII to the WMO Technical Regulations (WMO-No. 1160). Accessible at: https://library.wmo.int/?lvl=notice_display&id=19223#.YnzrtOhBxnJ

2 As defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

3 See more information about the Alliance for Hydromet Development at: <https://alliancehydromet.org/about/>

1.

Purpose of this Manual

This Manual contains the operational and governance policies, rules and procedures of the SOFF UNMPTF and builds on and complements the SOFF Terms of Reference, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the creation of the SOFF UNMPTF, the legal agreements between the SOFF UNMPTF and the IEs, the umbrella Letter of Agreement between WMO and the SOFF peer advisors, and the Standard Administrative Agreements (SAA) with funding partners.

The Steering Committee adopts the Operational Manual and decides on changes or amendments according to the decision-making procedures stated in this document. This Manual is a public document, and the SOFF Secretariat is responsible for making it available on the SOFF website and for notifying SOFF partners and stakeholders of updates.

This Manual is complemented by an Operational Guidance Handbook. The Handbook provides the most relevant technical and operational guidelines for IEs, peer advisors, and beneficiary countries. The SOFF Secretariat coordinates the Handbook's development and its regular updates. The guidance in the Handbook includes contributions from the WMO Technical Authority, UNDP and UNEP as co-creators of SOFF, the peer advisors, IEs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the private sector. The SOFF Secretariat informs the Steering Committee about updates to the Operational Guidance Handbook and is responsible for making it publicly available on the SOFF website.

2.

SOFF objective and
scope

Objective. The objective of SOFF is to support SIDS and LDCs by providing grant financing and technical assistance for the sustained collection and international exchange of surface-based weather and climate observations according to the GBON regulations. SOFF also provides Readiness phase support to all OECD ODA-eligible countries.⁴

Scope. SOFF funding and technical assistance cover activities related to establishing, operating, and maintaining national observing networks to meet the requirements of the GBON regulations.

⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm>

3.

Governance

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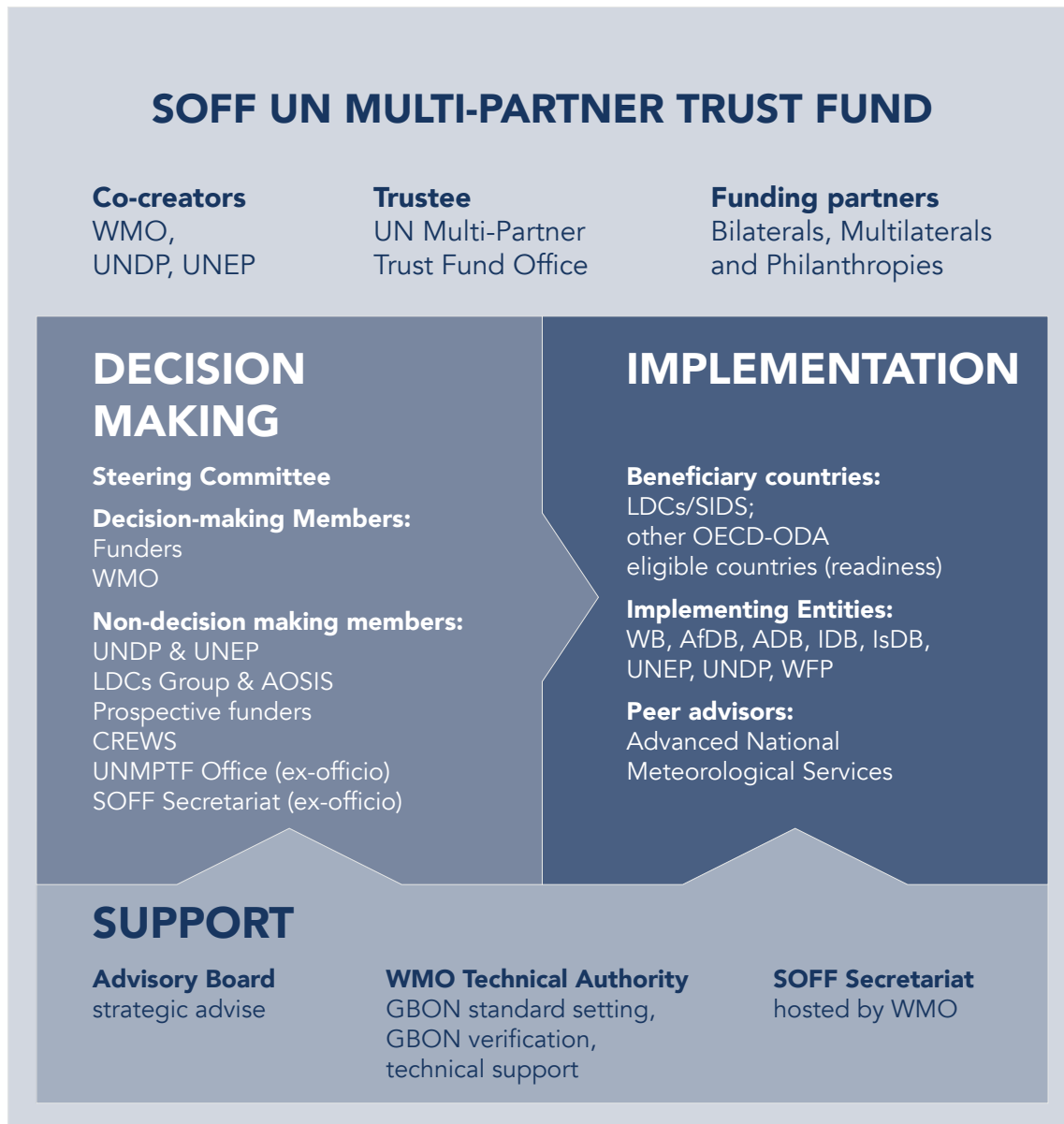


Figure 1. SOFF Governance and operational partners

3.1 SOFF Funders

To become a contributor to the SOFF UNMPTF, the bilateral or multilateral partner enters into an SAA for contributions with the UNMPTF Office, which acts as the SOFF Trustee. Other types of entities, such as philanthropic foundations, can contribute to the SOFF UNMPTF upon agreement by the Steering Committee and with the consent of the Trustee.

3.2 SOFF co-creators

SOFF is a „UN coalition fund.“ WMO, UNDP and UNEP are the SOFF co-creators. The three entities serve different roles in the SOFF governance and operations and provide overall championship.

3.3 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the decision-making body of SOFF. Its main functions are described below, and the detailed terms of reference are provided in Annex I.

- **Strategic direction:** Provide strategic direction that is consistent with the objective and scope of SOFF, taking into account the recommendations from the Advisory Board, and review and endorse strategic documents
- **Operations and programming:** Review and adopt the SOFF Operational Manual and the SOFF work programme, approve funding requests and the budget for the operation of the SOFF Secretariat
- **Oversight:** Review and endorse financial and programmatic monitoring reports from the SOFF Secretariat and the Trustee and commission independent external evaluations.

3.3.1 Membership

The Steering Committee has three categories of members:

- **Decision-making Members:** This category includes funders with contributions made to the SOFF UNMPTF and funders with a firm pledge (publicly announced political commitment to contribute a specific stated amount to the SOFF UNMPTF). Funders with a firm pledge are expected to transfer the funds to the Trustee within one year after the announcement of the pledge through a signed SAA. WMO is also a decision-making Member representing the SOFF co-creators.

WMO coordinates the SOFF co-creators representation in the Steering Committee. Ahead of each Steering Committee meeting, representatives from the three organizations meet to coordinate their position on the issues to be discussed.

- **Non-decision-making Members with voice:** These Members do not participate in decision-making but participate in the discussions and deliberations. These Members are beneficiary countries, represented by one delegate from the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and one delegate from the Least Developed Countries Group on Climate Change (LDC Group); Prospective Funders; UNDP and UNEP as co-creators; the Climate Risk and Early Warnings Initiative (CREWS); the SOFF Secretariat (ex-officio); and the Trustee (ex-officio).

Prospective funders are those that are considering a firm pledge and have notified the SOFF Secretariat accordingly. A prospective funder can be a non-decision-making Member of the Steering Committee for one year from its first participation in a Steering Committee meeting. The funder has to materialize the pledge to become a decision-making Member within that year or request the Steering Committee extend the consideration period.

- **Other non-decision-making ad-hoc participants:** The Co-Chairs (see 3.3.3) may invite other participants to the Steering Committee meetings at their discretion and taking into account Steering Committee Members' views. The ad-hoc participants may be asked to intervene in specific sessions. Peer advisors and SOFF IEs (see 4.4) with funding requests under review or implementation may also be asked to participate in particular sessions to present or respond to questions from the Members.

Steering Committee Members are requested to nominate a principal representative and an alternate and to communicate any changes to the SOFF Secretariat.

Table 1. Composition of the Steering Committee

Decision-making members	Non decision-making members with voice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funders (including those with a firm pledge) • WMO in representation of the SOFF co-creators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP and UNEP • Chair of the LDC Group • Chair of AOSIS • CREWS • Prospective Funders • SOFF Secretariat (ex-officio) • UNMPTF Office (ex-officio) 	<p>Other non-decision-making ad-hoc participants</p>

3.3.2 Steering Committee meetings

The Steering Committee meets as often as needed, at least twice a year, aiming to have one annual physical meeting. In consultation with the Steering Committee Co-Chairs, the SOFF Secretariat prepares the provisional agenda and documents and makes them available at least two weeks before the meeting. The SOFF Secretariat, in consultation with the Co-Chairs, invites the Members and the selected non-decision-making ad-hoc participants for each meeting.

In addition to the meetings, the Steering Committee may decide to apply an inter-sessional decision-making process handled by the SOFF Secretariat via email for specific topics (see 3.3.5).

3.3.3 Steering Committee Co-Chairs

The meetings are co-chaired by WMO and one representative of the funders. The Steering Committee's decision-making Members nominate the funder Co-Chair by consensus on a rotating basis.

3.3.4 Decision-making and quorum

The minimum number of Steering Committee decision-making Members required to be present (in person or virtually) to conduct the meeting and make decisions (quorum) is two-thirds. The SOFF Secretariat verifies the quorum at the beginning of each meeting.

The Steering Committee aims at consensual decision-making taking into consideration the views of the non-decision-making Members and recommendations of the Advisory Board. If consensual decisions are not possible, decisions are made by at least a two-thirds majority of the decision-making funders plus WMO.

The Co-Chairs participate in the consensus decision-making of the Steering Committee and articulate the decisions taken. The SOFF Secretariat prepares the meeting minutes, which reflect the decisions taken, and then circulates the minutes to each Member. The Steering Committee's decisions are for public disclosure and posting on the SOFF website by the SOFF Secretariat.

After their adoption, the Co-Chairs sign the Steering Committee's decisions to allocate funds.

3.3.5 Inter-sessional decision-making by non-objection

The Steering Committee may decide, on a case-by-case basis, to make decisions between meetings by email on a non-objection basis, including on approval of funding requests. No-objection decision requests are distributed to each decision-making Member and copied to the non-decision-making Members with voice. Standard non-objection review periods are expected to last fourteen calendar days. If a decision-making Member objects, the proposal is postponed, modified for a subsequent decision, or withdrawn.

3.3.6 Conflict of Interest

Prior to the consideration by the Steering Committee of funding requests, if any Steering Committee Member or its affiliate or employee is engaging in direct support to the preparation and/or implementation of the funding request which is under consideration by the Steering Committee, the Member shall disclose such involvement to the SOFF Secretariat through an email. The SOFF Secretariat will accordingly inform other Steering Committee Members.

If the Steering Committee Member fails to disclose the relevant involvement, the Steering Committee will determine appropriate action. The Steering Committee determines whether the involvement of the Steering Committee Members referred to above is such that it should recuse itself from the deliberation, discussion and/or decision with respect to the funding request concerned and will advise them accordingly.

Before each Steering Committee meeting, the SOFF Secretariat circulates a form to all Members to clarify their potential conflict of interest.

3.4 Advisory Board

The Advisory Board brings together relevant stakeholders across the meteorological value chain to provide recommendations to the Steering Committee. Its main functions are presented below, and its detailed terms of reference are provided in Annex II.

- **Strategic direction:** Provide recommendations to the SOFF Steering Committee on SOFF strategic direction
- **Operations and programming:** Provide strategic advice on programming and the portfolio of operations and contribute to assessing and maximizing the results of SOFF
- **Synergies:** Facilitate dialogue and consultations to maximize synergies between SOFF and the Advisory Board Members' and other relevant stakeholders' activities across the meteorological value chain
- **Learning and innovation:** Provide insights and foster learning and innovation.

3.4.1 Advisory Board membership

The Steering Committee endorses the composition of the Advisory Board and reviews it regularly, taking into account the recommendations of the Advisory Board. The role, composition, and effectiveness of the Advisory Board are reviewed as part of the SOFF evaluations.

Each organization communicates to the SOFF Secretariat the principal representative and an alternate. The SOFF Secretariat makes available the composition of the Advisory Board on the SOFF website.

3.4.2 Advisory Board Co-Chairs

As SOFF co-creators, UNDP and UNEP serve as the Advisory Board Co-Chairs. Any changes related to the Co-Chair arrangements require a decision by the Advisory Board and adoption by the Steering Committee.

3.4.3 Advisory Board meetings

The Co-Chairs of the Advisory Board convene a virtual meeting at least three weeks ahead of each Steering Committee meeting to prepare recommendations. At the end of the meetings, the Co-Chairs present a summary of the discussion, including the recommendations to the Steering Committee.

3.4.4 Decision-making

The Advisory Board Co-Chairs facilitate and manage the meetings using a general consensual approach to make common recommendations. In addition to these common recommendations, Advisory Board Members may provide individual recommendations related to their area of expertise.

After each Advisory Board meeting, the SOFF Secretariat prepares the minutes and circulates them to each Member. The Secretariat distributes the recommendations to the Steering Committee Members two weeks ahead of their meetings. The Advisory Board recommendations are for public disclosure and posting on the SOFF website.

3.5 SOFF Secretariat

The SOFF Secretariat is hosted by WMO and follows WMO financial and staff regulations and rules with respect to all administrative policies and procedures. It comprises a team of professional and administrative staff and operates under the overall guidance of the Steering Committee and is accountable to it. The SOFF Secretariat administratively reports to the Director of the Infrastructure Department of WMO.

As co-creators, UNEP and UNDP may each second one staff member to the SOFF Secretariat to be funded by the SOFF UNMPTF. The Steering Committee approves the budget of the SOFF Secretariat (staff costs and operational costs). The approved budget of the SOFF Secretariat is funded prior to the beginning of the period to which it relates as a direct cost to the SOFF UNMPTF.

The main functions of the SOFF Secretariat are described below, and its detailed terms of reference are provided in Annex III.

- **Governance:** Serve the SOFF Steering Committee and the SOFF Advisory Board in performing their functions
- **Operations and programming:** Coordinate SOFF operations, including programming and appraisal processes, and facilitate coordination and collaboration between beneficiary countries, IEs, peer advisors and WMO Technical Authority (see Section 4.4)
- **Financing:** Liaise with the Trustee to ensure the Steering Committee is informed about the SOFF UNMPTF administration and fiduciary oversight and collaborate with the Trustee to ensure it has the required information to perform its duties
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Monitor the SOFF portfolio and its performance based on information provided by peer advisors, the IEs, beneficiary countries and the Trustee, and per the SOFF results framework
- **Communication:** Engage SOFF stakeholders and facilitate information sharing and learning, transparent communication and outreach
- **Resource mobilization and outreach:** Coordinate SOFF resource mobilization and outreach activities in close collaboration with the Steering Committee.

3.6 Trustee

The UNMPTF Office performs the Administrative Agent (Trustee) function of SOFF. The Trustee's main functions are described below, and the detailed terms of reference are provided in Annex IV.

- **SOFF administration:** Receive, administer, and release funds to IEs, WMO and other parties in accordance with decisions from the Steering Committee, prepare the consolidated financial reports and coordinate the necessary audits
- **SOFF governance and operations:** Support the financial aspects of SOFF programming and operations and provide advice on operational and strategic documents

The costs for the UNMPTF Office Trustee function correspond to an administrative fee of one percent of the contribution by funders.

4.

Operational framework

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4.1 Concessionality and country allocations

SOFF provides grant-only finance and technical assistance to beneficiary countries. All eligible countries have equal access to SOFF resources following the SOFF programming criteria. Country allocation is country-specific and depends on the national activities required for each of the phases of SOFF support (see 4.5).

4.2 Beneficiary countries' access

Any SOFF-eligible country may request SOFF support at any time through the head of the NMHS. NMHSs are requested to inform the national focal points for climate and environment funds and mechanisms, and relevant stakeholders about SOFF support to ensure coordination at the country level. Based on the support requests received, the SOFF programming criteria (see 4.3), and the SOFF work programme approved by the Steering Committee, the SOFF Secretariat prepares a recommendation on the funding requests prioritization for consideration and decision of the Steering Committee.

4.3 Programming criteria

SOFF defines its programming based on technical and operational criteria. Based on the criteria presented below and on information provided by beneficiary countries, WMO Technical Authority, peer advisors, and IEs, the SOFF Secretariat prepares a proposal for prioritization of beneficiary countries' requests for Steering Committee consideration and decision (see 4.5.1).

- **Close the most significant data gaps:** Emphasis on those geographic areas that currently have the poorest observational coverage, where strengthening the observing network would yield the largest results regarding the quality of the numerical weather prediction products
- **Target "easy fixes":** Countries where through relatively small interventions, stations and related infrastructure could be fixed to start quickly delivering the data into the global system per GBON regulations
- **Maximize delivery capacity:** Countries where IEs and peer advisors can operate and deliver SOFF support efficiently and effectively
- **Create leverage:** Opportunities for complementarity of SOFF with larger operations under implementation or preparation by the IEs and other funds, including by the Advisory Board Members

- **Sub-regional gains:** Opportunities to create economies of scale and optimize the design of the observing networks through multi-country/sub-regional implementation
- **Ensure country balance:** Balanced support among SIDS and LDCs and across regions, including Fragile and Conflict-affected States (FCS).

4.4 Operational partners

4.4.1 Beneficiary countries

Eligibility. SOFF prioritizes support to SIDS and LDCs. All other OECD ODA-eligible developing countries can access SOFF support under the Readiness phase only. The Steering Committee may adjust the group of beneficiary countries. SOFF eligible beneficiary countries are:

- › **Readiness, Investment and Compliance phase support.** LDCs and SIDS per United Nations classification⁵
- › **Readiness phase support only.** Other ODA recipient countries from the DAC list of ODA recipients for reporting on the effective calendar year⁶

The SOFF Secretariat provides and updates the list of eligible countries according to the eligibility criteria stated in this Manual, taking into account the eventual graduation of countries from the DAC and UN classifications lists. The SOFF Secretariat makes the updated list of eligible countries available on the SOFF website.

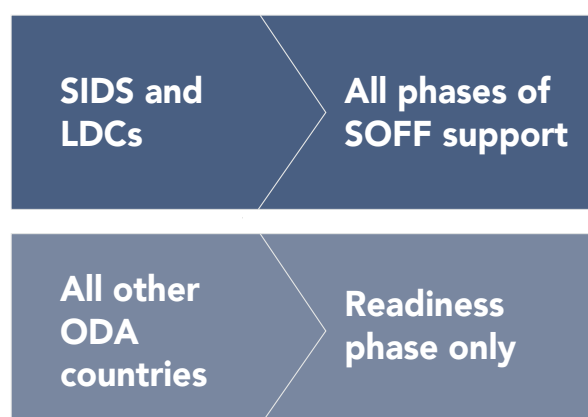


Figure 2. SOFF eligible beneficiary countries for SOFF phases

⁵ See details at: <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/list-sids>

⁶ See DAC list of ODA recipients for more details: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm>

Beneficiary country focal point. NMHSs from the SOFF beneficiary countries are the focal points for SOFF support. During the Compliance phase, the beneficiary country NMHS, or the respective selected national institution, directly receives results-based financing from the SOFF UNMPTF. To receive funds, the beneficiary country NMHS enters into a Legal Agreement with UNMPTF Office as the Trustee or a UN organization delegated by the UNMPTF Office. Upon effectiveness of the Legal Agreement, the beneficiary country can start receiving the related annual payments according to the Compliance phase conditions (see 4.5.3).

Roles and responsibilities. With the support from the peer advisor and the IE, the beneficiary country is responsible for implementing the activities of each phase of SOFF support according to the provisions stated in this Manual, SOFF Terms of Reference, and the funding requests.

4.4.2 Implementing Entities (IEs)

Eligibility. Major multilateral development partners that play an important role in supporting countries' hydromet development are eligible to serve as SOFF IEs. These include Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), initially: Asian Development Bank (ADB), African Development Bank (AfDB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the World Bank; and UN organizations: initially, UNDP, UNEP, World Food Programme (WFP). All SOFF IEs are expected to be members of the Alliance for Hydromet Development. Additional multilateral development partners may be eligible to serve as IEs. The Steering Committee reviews requests to become a SOFF IE and, on a non-objection basis, approves them subject to the consent of the Trustee.

Access to resources. To become an IE for SOFF and receive funds from the SOFF UNMPTF, the entity must enter into a Legal Agreement with the UNMPTF Office as the Trustee.

Roles and responsibilities. The IE is expected to collaborate with the beneficiary country and the peer advisor in the Readiness phase to ensure that the outputs of this phase address the technical needs for the design and implementation of the Investment phase. The IE is responsible for preparing and managing the implementation of the Investment phase grant within the specified terms as approved in the funding request and in collaboration with relevant national partners, including CSOs.

Implementation fee. IEs receive a maximum implementation fee of 7% of the total of the Investment Phase funding request to cover indirect costs.

4.4.3 Peer Advisors

Eligibility. NMHSs that are members of WMO⁷ are eligible to become peer advisors for SOFF. NMHSs interested in serving as SOFF peer advisors must demonstrate (i) substantial expertise in the areas of advisory services required for SOFF; (ii) a track record in partnering and supporting other NMHSs; and (iii) a commitment to making available adequate human resources. WMO issues regular calls for expression of interest, reviews the list of interested NMHSs, and suggests to the SOFF Secretariat which interested NMHSs meet the criteria above. The SOFF Secretariat reviews the list and informs the Steering Committee accordingly. The Steering Committee endorses the list of SOFF peer advisors.

Access to resources. To receive funds from the SOFF UNMPTF, the peer advisor enters into an umbrella Legal Agreement with WMO that operates a pass-through mechanism. Each beneficiary country assignment requires a specific assignment agreement that includes country-tailored terms of reference for the advisory services.

Roles and responsibilities. Peer advisors provide advice and analysis to support beneficiary countries and IEs in designing and implementing activities related to the Readiness, Investment, and Compliance phases (see 4.5). The peer advisor is responsible for the quality and timely delivery of the advisory services assignments and corresponding substantive and financial reporting per the assignment agreement and its terms of reference.

SOFF encourages collaboration among peers to deliver advisory services. The peer advisor can subcontract other partners, including other SOFF peer advisors, to contribute to the delivery of the assignment outputs, as per the umbrella Agreement between WMO and the peer advisors. However, to ensure adequate accountability and reduce transaction costs, a lead peer advisor remains solely responsible for the quality and timely delivery of the outputs.

Cost recovery. Peer advisors' services are reimbursed on a cost-recovery basis, based on a financial proposal as part of the funding request approved by the Steering Committee.

4.4.4 World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

4.4.4.1 WMO as SOFF Technical Authority

Roles and responsibilities. The World Meteorological Congress is responsible for setting and approving the GBON regulations and updating them. The Commission for Observation, Infrastructure, and Information Systems (INFCOM) is in charge of overseeing and coordinating the development of technical guidelines, processes and procedures for the implementation and compliance monitoring of GBON. WMO,

⁷ See list of WMO Membership at: <https://public.wmo.int/en/about-us/members>

provides basic technical support to the peer advisors, IEs and beneficiary countries on GBON regulations. WMO is responsible for the technical screening of the GBON National Gap Analysis and the GBON National Contribution Plan (see 4.5.1) against the GBON regulations and for the independent verification of the status of beneficiary countries' stations against the GBON regulations.

WMO contribution: WMO covers the costs associated with its Technical Authority role through its own resources.

4.4.4.2 WMO as host of the SOFF Secretariat

Roles and responsibilities. The SOFF Secretariat is hosted by WMO and embedded in its Infrastructure Department. WMO is responsible for providing administrative support for the operation of the SOFF Secretariat per its administrative rules and procedures. SOFF Secretariat staff are appointed and administratively managed as WMO employees and according to WMO human resources policies.

Access to resources. WMO receives funds for SOFF Secretariat operations from the Trustee upon approval of the SOFF Secretariat work plan and budget by the Steering Committee.

Administration fee. WMO charges a management fee of 7% for the administration of the SOFF Secretariat.

4.4.4.3 WMO pass-through mechanism for the contracting of peer advisors

Roles and responsibilities. WMO is responsible for establishing and administering a pass-through mechanism for contracting, funding and receiving reimbursement of unspent funds related to technical assistance provided by the SOFF peer advisors. WMO establishes standardized contractual arrangements, issues contracts, and makes payments to peer advisors based on Steering Committee decisions and upon request from the SOFF Secretariat and per WMO administrative rules and procedures. WMO informs the SOFF Secretariat and the Trustee every six months about the status of contracts and payments.

Access to resources. WMO receives funds from the Trustee upon approval of funding requests for SOFF peer advisors' services by the Steering Committee.

Administration fee. WMO charges a management fee of 7% of the total costs of the peer advisors' assignments for administering the SOFF peer advisors' pass-through mechanism.

4.5 Phases of support

SOFF support is delivered in three phases: Readiness, Investment, and Compliance. This section describes each phase’s scope, procedures, and partners’ roles.

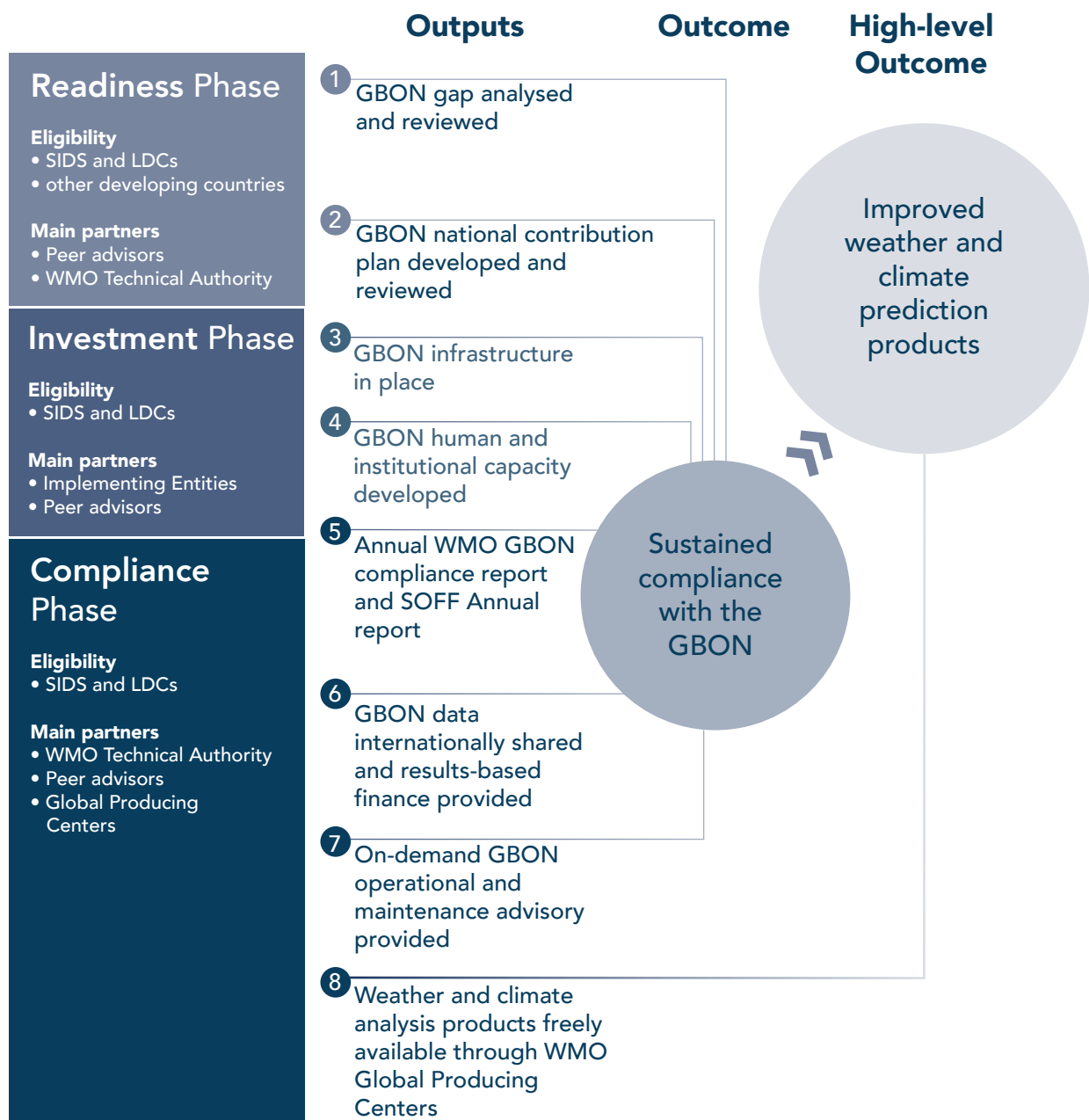


Figure 3. SOFF phases, partners, outputs, and outcomes

4.5.1 Readiness phase

In the Readiness phase, peer advisors provide technical assistance to beneficiary countries to complete the mandatory outputs of this phase (GBON Gap Analysis,⁸ GBON National Contribution Plan,⁹ and the on-demand Country Hydromet Diagnostic). The outputs of the Readiness phase and the responsible partners for each output are presented in Table 2.

The GBON Gap Analysis and the GBON National Contribution Plan constitute the technical basis for the Investment phase funding request (see 4.5.2), complemented by the Country Hydromet Diagnostics.¹⁰ To ensure a common understanding of these outputs and their use for the Investment phase, the collaboration between peer advisors, beneficiary countries, the IEs, and WMO Technical Authority starts during the Readiness phase.

Process for the Readiness phase funding request

- The beneficiary country expresses its interest in receiving SOFF support through a communication to the SOFF Secretariat
- The SOFF Secretariat regularly updates the list of interested countries and based on the SOFF programming criteria, recommends a programming prioritization to the Steering Committee for its decision (see section 4.3)
- Upon the Steering Committee decision, the SOFF Secretariat informs the beneficiary countries and all peer advisors and IEs about the beneficiary countries that were included in the next round of programming and requests expression of interest from the peer advisors and IEs
- The SOFF Secretariat informs each beneficiary country about the IEs and peer advisors that expressed interest in supporting the country
- The beneficiary country informs the SOFF Secretariat about its selected peer advisor and IE. In collaboration with them, the beneficiary country prepares the assignment Terms of Reference (ToR) based on the standard ToR provided by the SOFF Secretariat. The ToR are co-signed by the beneficiary country, the peer advisor, and the IE. The SOFF Secretariat reviews the ToR to ensure that they are consistent with SOFF scope, rules, and procedures

8 The GBON Gap Analysis defines the gap between the mandatory requirements of the GBON regulations and the existing country surface and upper-air networks. In other words, it serves as the basis for identifying the number of observing stations that need to be installed or rehabilitated to comply with the mandatory requirements of the GBON regulations.

9 GBON National Contribution Plan identifies the infrastructure, human and institutional capacity needed to achieve a progressive target toward GBON compliance, including the sustained operation and maintenance of the national observing network.

10 The Country Hydromet Diagnostics is offered on a demand basis (not mandatory) to beneficiary countries and IE.

- The beneficiary country submits a funding request for SOFF Readiness support using a standardized template. The funding request includes the ToR, the budget prepared by the peer advisor, and the timeline for delivery
- The SOFF Secretariat reviews the funding request to ensure compliance with the information requirements in the template and provides feedback as needed
- The SOFF Secretariat transmits the funding request to the Steering Committee for its decision either through non-objection decision-making (see 3.3.5) or at a Steering Committee meeting.

The SOFF Secretariat submits a summary of approved Readiness funding requests and their implementation status for each Steering Committee meeting.

Readiness phase implementation

- Upon approval of the funding request by the Steering Committee, WMO prepares an assignment agreement that includes the ToR prepared for the funding request. The peer advisor and WMO sign the agreement
- In collaboration with the beneficiary country and the IE, the peer advisor delivers the outputs within the funding indicated in the assignment agreement and approved by the Steering Committee.

Readiness phase reporting and completion

- For assignments for which the delivery of advisory services takes more than six months from the signing of the respective Assignment Agreement, the SOFF peer advisor shall submit semi-annual progress reports to the SOFF Secretariat
- The peer advisor submits the draft reports with the Readiness phase outputs to the WMO Technical Authority
- WMO screens the GBON National Gap Analysis and the GBON National Contribution Plan to ensure consistency with the GBON regulations and provides feedback for revisions as needed
- The peer advisor submits the final reports with the Readiness phase outputs
- The SOFF Secretariat confirms the satisfactory receipt by the beneficiary country and the IE and authorizes WMO to proceed with the release of the final payment as stated in the assignment agreement
- WMO makes final payments to the peer advisor according to the provisions stated in the assignment agreement.

Allocation. The Readiness phase does not include direct funds transfer to beneficiary countries. It allocates support provided through peer advisors. This support includes technical assistance, national consultations, and other activities that the peer advisor and the beneficiary country NMHS need to conduct for the peer advisor to deliver the expected outputs. A decision by the Steering Committee to approve a Readiness phase funding request triggers an allocation of funds from the Trustee to the peer advisor through WMO. Funding is approved based on and is to be administered per the umbrella Legal Agreement between WMO and the peer advisor and the terms of reference of the specific assignment agreement. The allocated funds are transferred to, used by, and reported upon by the peer advisor.

WMO Technical Authority support. WMO provides standardized support to the peer advisors in accessing and applying GBON regulations and technical guidance. The SOFF Secretariat facilitates communication between the peer advisors, beneficiary countries, and WMO.

Role of the Implementing Entity during the Readiness phase. The IE participates in the Readiness phase activities led by the peer advisor to ensure a common understanding of the outputs of this phase. The IE contributes to the definition of the peer advisor's ToR and provides feedback on the outputs delivered by the peer advisor.

Role of the beneficiary country NMHS during the Readiness phase. The beneficiary country is responsible for collaborating with the peer advisor to provide all the necessary information and participate in and facilitate the several national activities the peer advisor needs to conduct to develop the Readiness phase outputs. The detailed beneficiary country obligations are outlined in the assignment agreement signed between WMO and the peer advisor.

Table 2. Readiness phase outputs and responsible partners

Output	Partner
GBON gap analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiary country NMHS • Peer advisor • WMO Technical Authority • Implementing Entity
GBON National Contribution plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiary country NMHS • Peer advisor • WMO Technical Authority • Implementing Entity
On-demand Country Hydromet Diagnostic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiary country NMHS • Peer advisor • Implementing Entity

4.5.2 Investment phase

The Investment phase provides funding for the observing network infrastructure and developing the human and institutional capacity needed to implement the GBON National Contribution Plan. Table 3 describes the outputs and responsible partners in this phase.

During the Investment phase, the beneficiary country NHMS supported by the IE proceeds to procure the equipment, install or rehabilitate existing stations according to the technical specifications for GBON, and develop the activities to strengthen the human and institutional capacity. Other procurement options, including multi-country procurement and direct procurement by the IE, can be considered by the Steering Committee, depending on the country's circumstances.

SOFF uses a phased approach that allows for flexible progress toward GBON compliance. The flexible approach includes establishing progressive national targets toward GBON compliance in the National Contribution Plan and an initial focus on GBON standard density networks.¹¹

11 The GBON regulations establish that Members shall maintain the continuous operation of a set of surface land observing stations/platforms at a resolution of 200 km or higher (standard density) and should operate surface land observing networks/platforms at horizontal resolutions of 100 km or higher (high density). SOFF focuses initially on achieving the 200 km standard density.

SOFF investments are intended to be coherent with - or complemented by - an existing or planned hydromet or climate resilience and adaptation project. In cases where a multi-country approach is an option, a group of IEs and peer advisors may come together to support the implementation of GBON National Contribution Plans of several countries under a regional/multi-country programme.

The IEs can partner with national or international organizations to implement the Investment phase, including bilateral cooperation agencies and national or regional institutions accredited to climate funds (e.g., GCF direct access entities).

Table 3. Investment phase outputs and responsible partners

Output	Partner
GBON infrastructure installed and operating and maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiary country NMHS • Implementing Entity
GBON human and institutional capacity developed	
On-demand GBON advisory provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiary country NMHS • Peer adviser

The SOFF Investment phase serves as “pump-priming” finance. It allows supported countries to ensure the operation and maintenance of the GBON stations during the first year after the GBON infrastructure has been installed and internationally exchanges data. Therefore, the Investment phase funding request includes the budget for the operation and maintenance of the observing network during the first year after the investments have been made. This also ensures that the IE can support the country in the transition to the Compliance phase.

Process for the Investment phase funding request

SOFF uses a flexible approach to deliver the Investment Phase, building on the experiences of output-based aid and programming by results.

- The Investment phase begins with the submission of the funding request by the beneficiary country and the IE based on a standardized template. This request must be based on the outputs of the Readiness phase. The funding level depends on each country's specific needs to implement the GBON National Contribution Plan
- The SOFF Secretariat reviews the request to ensure compliance with the information requirements in the template and provides feedback as needed
- The SOFF Secretariat transmits the funding request to the Steering Committee for decision-making.

Investment phase implementation

- After approval of the Investment phase funding request by the Steering Committee, the IE receives an allocation from the Trustee in accordance with the applicable policies and procedures in the Legal Agreement and this Operational Manual
- The IE, jointly with the beneficiary country, designs the detailed activities required to implement the GBON National Contribution Plan
- The beneficiary country supported by the IE implements the activities according to the provisions in the funding request
- The IE is expected to inform the Steering Committee through the SOFF Secretariat of significant circumstances that could materially impede the implementation of the Investment phase or any considerable deviation in the conditions of the funding request to achieve its objectives. The Steering Committee decides whether such deviations are acceptable.

Investment phase reporting and completion

- The IE provides progress reports in accordance with the standardized progress report template and the provisions stipulated in the Legal Agreement with the Trustee
- The SOFF Secretariat tracks and compiles regular progress reports based on information received from the IE and the Trustee for the Steering Committee. The reports are expected to include a discussion of bottlenecks and issues impeding the progress of the Investment phase, if there are any

- The observation network is expected to be fully operational at the end of the Investment phase, with strengthened institutional capacity in the country and the NMHS and collecting and internationally exchanging data according to the provisions in the funding request
- The beneficiary country and the IE inform the SOFF Secretariat about the completion of all activities in the Investment phase
- The IE prepares an Investment phase completion report in collaboration with the beneficiary country. In addition to results and lessons learned, the completion report is expected to describe the institutional arrangements to secure sustained operation and maintenance of the investments made.

Allocation. A decision by the Steering Committee to approve a funding request constitutes allocation of funds to the IE from the Trustee. Funding is approved based on and is to be administered in accordance with the applicable policies and procedures under the Legal Agreement established between the IE and the Trustee. Allocated funds are transferred to, used by and reported upon by the IE. Additional financing may be requested as needed. The Steering Committee decides on these requests. In cases where the GBON stations are affected by particular national circumstances (e.g., extreme events), the country can request additional Investment support.

Peer advisory support during Investment phase implementation. The beneficiary country and the IE can draw on technical assistance from the SOFF peer advisors during the Investment phase to support the implementation of the GBON National Contribution Plan. The Steering Committee approval constitutes the allocation of funds to WMO as the pass-through mechanism to contract the services of the peer when requested by the country and the IE. The peer advisor is authorized to spend up to the defined amount and then bills for the actual expenses.

Unspent balances and return of funds. The provisions stated in the Legal Agreement between the IEs and the Trustee apply.

4.5.3 Compliance phase

The Compliance phase provides results-based finance and peer advisors' technical assistance to beneficiary countries to operate and maintain the surface-based observation network and the international sharing of data based on the principle of additionality.¹² Table 4 describes the outputs and responsible partners in this phase.

Table 4. Compliance phase outputs and responsible partners

Outputs	Partner
WMO annual GBON compliance report issued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMO Technical Authority
GBON data shared internationally and results-based finance provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiary country NMHS • WMO Technical Authority • Trustee
On-demand GBON operational and maintenance advisory provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiary country NMHS • Peer adviser
Weather and climate analysis products freely available through WMO Global Producing Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating Global Producing Centres

Results-based payment request. On an annual basis, the SOFF Secretariat prepares on behalf of and in coordination with the beneficiary country results-based payments requests for the Steering Committee based on WMO Technical Authority verification through the WMO annual GBON Compliance report.

Legal arrangements. Compliance phase payments require a Legal Agreement between the SOFF Trustee and the beneficiary country NMHS specifying the requirements and expectations for receiving annual results-based finance for stations collecting and internationally exchanging GBON data. In cases where the beneficiary country's legal framework or other national requirements do not allow the beneficiary country NMHS to receive funds directly, an alternative arrangement will be agreed upon for a different agency, such as the Ministry of Finance. It is expected that the selected agency will transfer an equivalent amount to the NMHS to ensure sustainable finance of the operations and maintenance of the network at GBON requirements.

¹² The term additionality is applied here as used e.g. in REDD+ funding mechanisms and as quoted in the 2020 Evaluation Cooperation Group Report on MDBs additionality: "An intervention may be described as additional if it results in something that would not otherwise have occurred." The GBON National Contribution Plan from the SOFF Readiness Phase includes a risk assessment which examines the likelihood that reporting stations will cease reporting if SOFF were not to provide Compliance phase support.

Allocation. The WMO Technical Authority prepares quarterly and annual reports with the status of progress toward GBON compliance for each beneficiary country. Compliance is assessed based on publicly available data from the WIGOS Data Quality Monitoring System (WDQMS) monitoring tool¹³ and a transparent methodology defined by WMO to assess the reporting status of each station. Upon the Steering Committee's approval of the results-based finance funding request, the Trustee transfers the results-based payments to the NMHS, or other entity as applicable, calculated based on a standardized rate per station.

In rare situations where there is a difference of opinion between the beneficiary country NMHS and the WMO report, the SOFF Secretariat facilitates dialogue between WMO and the NMHS. The peer advisors will be invited to help resolve the discrepancies if needed.

Peer advisory support during the Compliance phase. Peer advisors provide on-demand GBON operational and maintenance advisory support, including at the early stages of the Compliance phase. A peer advisory costs cap is included in the funding request for the Compliance phase. The Steering Committee approval constitutes the allocation of funds to WMO as the pass-through mechanism to contract the services of the peer advisor. The peer advisor is authorized to spend up to the defined amount and then bills for the actual expenses depending on specific requests.

The peer advisors will have access to quarterly GBON compliance monitoring reports produced by WMO Technical Authority in collaboration with the Global Producing Centres.¹⁴ As part of the technical assistance, the peer advisor reviews these reports and supports the country in troubleshooting identified problems with stations that are not meeting the GBON requirements and provides recommendations to the NMHS for remediation.

WMO Technical Authority support during Compliance phase implementation. WMO provides standardized support to the peer advisors in accessing and applying GBON regulations and related standards and technical guidance. The SOFF Secretariat facilitates communication between the peer advisors, countries, and WMO.

Compliance phase reporting and completion. The Compliance phase results-based funding is provided annually on an open-ended basis. The SOFF Secretariat provides an annual overview to the Steering Committee on SOFF results-based finance payments.

13 Available at: https://wdqms.wmo.int/nwp/land_upper-air/six_hour/availability/all/2022-04-26/12

14 See more details on the role of the Global Producing Centers at <https://community.wmo.int/global-producing-centres-long-range-forecasts>

4.6 Private sector

All SOFF investments aim at maximizing the benefits of public-private partnerships, provided that the WMO Unified Data Policy¹⁵ principle of „free and unrestricted access“ is ensured.

During the Readiness phase, the beneficiary country, with the support of the peer advisor and the IE, explores options for a partnership with the private sector to achieve cost-effective and efficient implementation of the GBON National Contribution Plan. Four basic business models, from full public ownership to full private ownership, can be deployed with variations, depending on the specific country context.

- **Fully public:** Fully State/NMHS owned and operated GBON infrastructure
- **Public-Private:** State/NMHS owned and Private Partner operated
- **Public-Private:** State/NMHS and Private Partner owned
- **Fully Private:** owned and operated by a private partner with a direct contract with the State/NMHS

SOFF does not prescribe a specific solution, but peer advisors recommend particular models tailored to country circumstances. The beneficiary country identifies the best model, including exploring innovative options with the involvement of the private sector to ensure GBON compliance. The peer advisors' recommendations will be based on the assessment of specific technical, political, and legal preconditions that need to be met to ensure a model is suitable for the specific country.

Regardless of the selected model, emphasis will be put on ensuring that the NMHS maintains basic capacity related to the generation and exchange of observations. This includes strengthening regulatory capacity and the ability to supervise the contracts as needed.

The selection of the private partner is made according to the beneficiary country's and the IE's procedures for private sector engagement.

If the observation network is fully owned and operated by the state, the SOFF funds flow to the beneficiary country NMHS, which is accountable for the delivery of data and operation and maintenance.

15 <https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/what-we-do/observations/Unified-WMO-Data-Policy-Resolution>

When the observation network is operated by a private partner, SOFF funding is transferred by the IE to the private partner. The beneficiary country and the IE can decide to contract the partner for the Investment phase only (e.g., to install the infrastructure). After the end of this contract, the NMHS can decide to sign a contract with the private partner (the same or a different partner, depending on contractual arrangements) to cover operation and maintenance, or the NMHS can take over that responsibility.

The private partner reports to the IE in the Investment phase, and the IE is accountable for installing the observing network. In the Compliance phase, if a private partner is contracted, the partner reports to the NMHS, and the NMHS is accountable for the data sharing per the GBON regulations.

4.7 Collaboration with development and climate finance organizations

4.7.1 Complementarity

SOFF is the dedicated single-purpose global fund to support GBON implementation in SOFF beneficiary countries. The SOFF business model is designed to provide specialized long-term technical and financial support for GBON observations that other funds and mechanisms cannot offer. Therefore, multilateral and bilateral partners are encouraged to focus on activities that complement but do not duplicate those which SOFF supports, namely

- GBON investments in non-LDC/SIDS developing countries
- Strengthening observations beyond GBON regulations
- Investments in other aspects of the meteorological value chain, including downstream activities

For multilateral partners that invest in GBON in non-LDC/SIDS countries, SOFF will offer Readiness phase peer advisory support to analyze the GBON national gap and develop the GBON National Contribution Plan.

4.7.2 Financial collaboration

All multilateral and bilateral partners are invited to contribute to the SOFF UNMPTF financially. SOFF IEs are encouraged to integrate SOFF support into larger operations and to blend SOFF resources with their resources or other finance mobilized from multilateral climate and environment funds.

4.7.3 Institutional collaboration

Major multilateral development and climate finance organizations, funds and mechanisms are represented in the SOFF Advisory Board or serve as SOFF IEs. Bilateral partners contributing to the SOFF UNMPTF are decision-making members of the SOFF Steering Committee. This institutional level collaboration creates synergies and leverage, linking SOFF investments and results with broader investments of these multilateral and bilateral partners.

4.8 Gender Action Plan and CSO engagement

4.8.1 Gender Action Plan

The SOFF gender action plan (see Annex V) ensures that gender considerations are systematically applied in all SOFF activities. It focuses on ensuring adequate gender representation in the SOFF governance and promoting women's empowerment through SOFF operations. To monitor the action plan, the SOFF Secretariat also draws on IEs information on gender-disaggregated information related to SOFF investments.

The Gender Action Plan is an element of SOFF monitoring and evaluation. As part of the annual reporting, the SOFF Secretariat monitors the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, reports on progress, and flags any problems to the Steering Committee. See the Gender Action Plan in Annex V.

4.8.2 CSO engagement

Beneficiary countries, IEs and peer advisors are expected to foster adequate participation and contributions from the CSOs in SOFF implementation and to promote the creation of benefits for them. In addition, CSO's engagement in SOFF is promoted through two areas of action:

- **Governance:** The Advisory Board includes a seat for a civil society umbrella organization. This ensures that CSO perspectives are voiced at the highest level of governance and that CSOs contribute to SOFF monitoring and evaluation, including facilitating the organization of stakeholder consultations at the country-level.
- **Programming and operations:** At the operational level, CSOs are expected to participate in and contribute to the Readiness phase, including the identification of stakeholders of relevance for GBON implementation. CSO can also contribute to the operation and maintenance of SOFF-funded stations and support the beneficiary countries' NMHSs in awareness-raising activities. SOFF relies on the application of IEs' policies on CSO engagement and the Investment Phase funding request is expected to state the potential role of CSOs during this phase.

4.9 Social and environmental standards

During the Investment phase, the IEs' social and environmental standards, guidelines, and procedures, including environmental and social risks mitigation measures, gender policy, institutional arrangements, and other requirements, apply. The existing IE grievance and control mechanisms apply.

5.

Risk Management and quality assurance

The SOFF Secretariat, in collaboration with SOFF partners, develops a Risk Management Framework for the adoption of the Steering Committee and regular review.

The SOFF Secretariat monitors the risk management framework and implementation of risk mitigation and quality assurance activities, including the following:

During the Readiness phase, the quality assurance and risk management for the provision of peer advisory services will take place at three levels:

- **Technical guidance and support to peer advisors** through the SOFF Operational Guidance Handbook and, as needed, technical support from WMO Technical Authority
- **Client evaluation** from both the beneficiary country and the IE on the quality of support received by peer advisor
- **Continuous monitoring, evaluation and learning** related to the provision of peer advisory services facilitated by the SOFF Secretariat

During the Investment phase, the quality assurance and risk mitigation procedures of the IEs will be relied upon for SOFF implementation.

For the Compliance phase, the peer advisory support offered on a demand basis is expected to support beneficiary countries in mitigating risks for the operation and maintenance of the observing network and addressing potential data quality issues. Client evaluations from the beneficiary country on the quality of support received by the peer advisor will be required.

6.

Monitoring and evaluation

6.1 Monitoring

37

6.2 Evaluation

37

SOFF monitoring and evaluation is done in accordance with the provisions stipulated in this Operational Manual, the SOFF Terms of Reference,¹⁶ the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the creation of the SOFF UNMPTF, the legal agreements between the SOFF UNMPTF and the Implementing Entities, the umbrella Legal Agreements signed between WMO and the SOFF peer advisors, and the Standard Administrative Agreements (SAA) with funding partners.

SOFF country programming decisions and a SOFF country database are publicly accessible on the SOFF website.

6.1 Monitoring

The SOFF results framework (see Annex VI) focuses on the achievement of results in terms of progress toward compliance with the GBON regulations in the beneficiary countries.

The Steering Committee reviews and adopts the SOFF results framework targets and baselines on an annual basis. See Annex VI. Country-based monitoring follows the SOFF results framework. Country-specific targets and baselines are specified in the GBON National Contribution Plan and the Investment phase funding requests.

Based on the SOFF results framework, the SOFF Secretariat coordinates the monitoring of SOFF against the SOFF results framework, gender action plan, and the risk management framework. It draws on information from the beneficiary countries, the peer advisors, the IEs, and the WMO Technical Authority. As part of its tasks (see Annex II), the Advisory Board is expected to contribute to SOFF monitoring and evaluation, particularly of „last-mile impact.“

6.2 Evaluation

SOFF applies a systematic learning and internal and external evaluation approach in dialogue with beneficiary countries, IEs, peer advisors and WMO Technical Authority and coordinated by the SOFF Secretariat.

Through the SOFF Annual reports, the SOFF Secretariat drawing from information from SOFF operational partners, the Advisory Board and other stakeholders, collects lessons learned to review SOFF progress.

An independent external evaluation is expected to take place in the third year of SOFF operation. The evaluation is expected to include specific country cases. The Steering Committee can decide to commission specific country-level evaluations.

The SOFF Secretariat supports the SOFF Steering Committee in commissioning independent external evaluations and as stated in the Advisory Board Terms of Reference, the Advisory Board members are expected to play an active role in SOFF monitoring and evaluation.

16 <https://alliancehydromet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SOFF-Terms-of-Reference.pdf>

7. Reporting

SOFF reporting is done in accordance with the provisions stipulated in this Operational Manual, the SOFF Terms of Reference,¹⁷ the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the creation of the SOFF UNMPTF, the legal agreements between the SOFF UNMPTF and the Implementing Entities, the umbrella Legal Agreements signed between WMO and the SOFF peer advisors, and the Standard Administrative Agreements (SAA) with funding partners.

The SOFF Secretariat coordinates the production of the SOFF Annual Report. It is expected that the Annual Reports are launched at the UNFCCC COPs.

The SOFF Annual Report contains:

- **A consolidated financial report** prepared by the Trustee for the UNMPTF fiscal year (1 January to 31 December as per UNMPTF Office standard procedures). The report provides the overarching status of utilization of fund resources. Ahead of the publication of the SOFF Annual report, the UNMPTF provides the financial report no later than by 31 May of the following year.;
- **A consolidated programming report** (1 July to 30 June), reporting main activities on the progress of the SOFF results framework indicators and lessons learned.
- **A summary of the WMO GBON Compliance report** (30 June cutoff).
- **An analysis of the impact of observations** (30 June cutoff), expected to be prepared by WMO in collaboration with selected WMO Global Producing Centers.

The Steering Committee can request the inclusion of additional topics in the annual reports responding to recommendations of the Advisory Board.

17 <https://alliancehydromet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SOFF-Terms-of-Reference.pdf>

8.

Complaints management and conflict resolution mechanism

Any person negatively affected or impacted by any investment funded by SOFF may file a complaint. Each IE is responsible for addressing the complaint according to its complaint management mechanism. SOFF requires that each IE has in place a complaint management mechanism to respond to complaints from people affected by SOFF investments. Such mechanisms need to have the authority to independently review and investigate complaints. They also provide other avenues to resolve disputes, such as through dialogue and mediation. Information on these mechanisms and how to submit a complaint relating to SOFF investments can be found on the respective SOFF IEs websites.

In the case of complaints outside the IEs' scope of involvement in SOFF, the SOFF Secretariat informs the Steering Committee and proposes a course of action for the Steering Committee's decision.

If an official complaint is filed to a SOFF IE, the following process applies.

Complaints reception

- The IE informs the SOFF Secretariat about the complaint and the response process
- The SOFF Secretariat acknowledges receipt and, within three working days, informs the Steering Committee
- The Steering Committee reviews the complaint and response process and suggests any additional action as needed.

Complaints response updates

- If the response to the complaint takes more than 6 months from the receipt of the complaint, the IEs reports every 6 months to the SOFF Secretariat about the status of the complaint and its response
- The SOFF Secretariat acknowledges receipt and, within three working days, informs the Steering Committee
- The Steering Committee reviews the report and takes any action as needed.

Complaints closure

- The IE informs the SOFF Secretariat once the dispute is resolved, according to the IE policies and procedures

- The SOFF Secretariat acknowledges receipt and, within three working days, informs the Steering Committee
- The Steering Committee reviews the report and takes any action as needed.

Disclosure and confidentiality

SOFF will not disclose information that would or would be likely to compromise the security, safety or health of compliant related parties. Information provided to the SOFF Secretariat or the Steering Committee under a request of confidentiality agreement or non-disclosure agreement will not be disclosed without the explicit authorization of the provider of such information.

9.

Fraud and corruption

SOFF applies and relies on the fraud and corruption provisions contained in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the creation of the SOFF UNMPTF, the legal agreements between the SOFF UNMPTF and the Implementing Entities, the umbrella Legal Agreements signed between WMO and the SOFF peer advisors, the Standard Administrative Agreements (SAA) with funding partners, and the UNDP Policy against Fraud and other Corrupt Practices,¹⁸ which applies to all UNMPTFs.

18 Accessible at: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/about/transparencydocs/UNDP_Anti-fraud_Policy_English_FINAL.pdf

Glossary

Alliance for Hydromet Development: Coalition of 13 climate and development finance institutions. Its goal is to scale up and unite efforts to achieve the common goal of closing the hydromet capacity gap on weather, climate, hydrological, and related environmental services by 2030.

Country Hydromet Diagnostics (CHD): A standardized, integrated and operational tool and approach for diagnosing National Meteorological Services, their operating environment, and their contribution to high-quality weather, climate, hydrological and environmental information services and warnings.

GBON Gap Analysis: Defines the gap between the mandatory requirements of the GBON regulations and the existing country surface and upper-air networks. In other words, it serves as the basis for identifying the number of observing stations that need to be installed or rehabilitated to become compliant with the mandatory requirements of the GBON regulations.

GBON National Contribution Plan: Detailed plan that specifies the required investments to close the GBON gap, including infrastructure (stations), telecommunications specifications, installation and operation standards, institutional and human capacity, and training. The GBON plan constitutes the technical basis for the SOFF funding proposal in the SOFF Investment phase or other sources of funding. It is technically reviewed by the SOFF Technical Authority.

Global Basic Observing Network (GBON): Internationally agreed standard specifying obligations of WMO Members to acquire and internationally exchange certain observations: which parameters to measure, how often, at what horizontal and vertical resolution, when and how to exchange them, and which measurement techniques are appropriate to use.

Implementing Entities: Entities that serve as SOFF Implementing Entities for the investment phase – these include the major multilateral development partners that play a role in hydromet project implementation. All Implementing Entities must be members of the Alliance for Hydromet Development.

National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS): NMHS own and operate most of the infrastructure that is needed for providing the weather, climate, hydrological and related environmental services for the protection of life and property, economic planning and development, and for the sustainable exploitation and management of natural resources. The NMHSs from the SOFF beneficiary countries are the focal points for SOFF support.

Peer advisors: NMHSs that are members of WMO⁽¹⁾ are eligible to serve as peer advisors

for SOFF. NMHSs interested in becoming SOFF peer advisors must demonstrate (i) substantial expertise in the areas of advisory services required for SOFF, (ii) a track record in partnering with and supporting other NMHSs, and (iii) a commitment to make available adequate human resources.

SOFF Advisory Board: SOFF is advised by a multi-stakeholder Advisory Board. Its main functions are to provide strategic advice on programming and operations, contribute to assessing and maximizing SOFF results, ensure that SOFF maximize synergies between SOFF and the Advisory Board Members' and other relevant stakeholders' activities across the meteorological value chain, and to provide insights and foster learning and innovation.

SOFF beneficiary countries: In its initial three-year implementation period, SOFF will prioritize support to SIDS and LDCs for all phases of support. All other OECD ODA-eligible developing countries will be eligible for SOFF support under the Readiness phase only.

SOFF Funders: those partners that made a firm pledge: a publicly announced political commitment to contribute a specific amount to the SOFF UNMPTF. Funders are expected to transfer the funds to the Trustee within one year after the announcement of the firm pledge.

SOFF Prospective funders: those partners that are considering a firm pledge and have notified the SOFF Secretariat accordingly.

SOFF Secretariat: The Secretariat coordinates is responsible for the administration, reporting, monitoring and evaluation, communications, and resource mobilization of the SOFF UNMPTF. The SOFF Secretariat is accountable to the Steering Committee and supports its functioning as well as the functioning of the Advisory Board. It is administratively hosted by WMO in Geneva, Switzerland, and follows WMO administrative policies and procedures.

SOFF Steering Committee: The Steering Committee provides strategic direction to SOFF. It endorses SOFF strategic documents, adopts the Operational Manual, taking into account recommendations of the SOFF Advisory Board and approves the programming priorities, funding requests, and the budget for the operation of the SOFF Secretariat. The Steering Committee endorses financial and programmatic monitoring and evaluation reports from the SOFF Secretariat and the Trustee and commissions regular independent external evaluations.

SOFF Technical authority: WMO serves as SOFF Technical Authority and provides basic technical support to the peer advisors, IEs and beneficiary countries on GBON regulations. WMO is also responsible for the technical screening of the GBON Gap Analysis and the National Contribution Plan against the GBON regulations and the independent verification of the status of beneficiary countries' stations against the GBON regulations.

SOFF Trustee: The United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office serves as SOFF Trustee and will provide fiduciary oversight and other support services in accordance with legal frameworks established between the United Nations, the co-creators and the SOFF funding partners.

United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UN MPTF): The UN mechanism for the administration of pooled financing instruments. SOFF has been established by the WMO, UNEP and UNDP as a UN MPTF that pools contributions from SOFF funders.

WMO Global Producing Centres: Nominated NWP centers that provide WMO Members with a range of freely available forecast products based on their global prediction models.

Annex I – Steering Committee Terms of Reference

The roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee are:

- Guide and oversee the SOFF strategic direction and operations
- Adopt SOFF governance and operations documents, including the SOFF Operational Manual
- Adopt SOFF work and financial programme
- Approve SOFF funding requests and the work plan and budget of the SOFF Secretariat
- Endorse SOFF strategic and supporting operational documents, including the SOFF Operational Guidance Handbook and the resource mobilization and outreach strategy
- Review financial and programmatic reports from the Trustee and the SOFF Secretariat and indicate necessary actions as needed
- Commission SOFF evaluations
- Endorse Advisory Board composition and review Advisory Board recommendations and take actions as needed to maximize synergies across the whole meteorological value chain and to ensure last-mile impact
- Exercise such other functions as it may deem appropriate to fulfill the purposes of SOFF

Annex II – Advisory Board Terms of Reference

Functions

- **Provide recommendations on SOFF direction** and contribute to assessing SOFF's expected results
- **Provide strategic advice** related to SOFF portfolio of operations
- **Facilitate dialogue and consultations** among SOFF stakeholders to maximize synergies between SOFF results and the activities of the Advisory Board members and other partners and organizations working across the meteorological value chain
- **Provide insights and foster learning** and innovation

Supported by the SOFF Secretariat, the SOFF Advisory Board will perform the tasks outlined below.

Tasks

- **Provide overall advice on SOFF strategic direction**, including SOFF long-term objectives, results framework, and scope
- **Review and provide recommendations on SOFF operational elements**, including SOFF Operational Manual
- **Review SOFF programming priorities** and provide recommendations including on opportunities for synergies with Advisory Board members' own country/regional activities and those of their peers and partners
- **Provide recommendations on SOFF monitoring and evaluation** and contribute to SOFF evaluations

Annex III – SOFF Secretariat Terms of Reference

Service SOFF governing bodies

- Liaise with SOFF Steering Committee co-chairs and members, organize meetings and prepare all relevant documentation
- Liaise with SOFF Advisory Board co-chairs and members, organize meetings and prepare all relevant documentation
- Support the SOFF co-creators – WMO, UNEP, UNDP – in the implementation of their different roles.

Coordinate SOFF operations and programming

- Coordinate the preparation of the SOFF Operational Manual and SOFF Operational Guidance Handbook and, as needed, their updates
- Coordinate and support the operational work between beneficiary countries, SOFF IEs, SOFF peer advisors and WMO Technical Authority
- Coordinate the preparation of the SOFF work programme
- Facilitate the preparation of funding requests and review them for completeness
- Keep portfolio overview
- Facilitate the provision of SOFF peer advisory services
- Liaise with the WMO Technical Authority to ensure streamlined delivery of the WMO Technical Authority functions.

Finance

- Liaise with the UNMPTF Office as SOFF Trustee to ensure the Steering Committee is informed about the SOFF UNMPTF administration and fiduciary oversight
- Support the Trustee activities, including the disbursement of funds to and legal arrangements with SOFF IEs, peer advisors, and countries
- Collaborate with the Trustee to ensure that the Trustee has all the information necessary to carry out its responsibilities, including notification to the Trustee of allocations approved by the Steering Committee.

Monitor, report and learn

In collaboration and coordination with the SOFF Advisory Board, IEs, SOFF peer advisors and WMO Technical Authority:

- Develop and monitor the SOFF results framework based on progress reports from the IEs, peer advisors and WMO for submission to and review by the Steering Committee
- Coordinate the development and monitor the implementation of the gender action plan
- Hold consultations with SOFF stakeholders to capture lessons learned, good practices and innovative solutions, including those related to the private sector and civil society engagement in SOFF implementation
- Coordinate preparation of SOFF annual reports to be publicly disseminated, in collaboration with the WMO Technical Authority and the Trustee
- Commission evaluations as decided by the Steering Committee.

Manage communications and knowledge sharing

- Develop a SOFF communication strategy and monitor its implementation
- Liaise with relevant stakeholders, including SOFF Advisory Board Members, SOFF IEs, funders, civil society and private sector organizations, to promote knowledge and information sharing and identify opportunities to strengthen SOFF visibility and reach
- Keep track of all relevant documentation and manage SOFF public communication, including SOFF website.

Mobilize partnerships and resources

- Manage SOFF relationships with beneficiary countries, potential multilateral and bilateral funders and other relevant stakeholders, including preparation of meetings, briefings, and the mobilization of political support for SOFF
- Develop a resource mobilization and outreach strategy and monitor its implementation.

Annex IV – Trustee Terms of Reference

The Trustee is responsible for the following functions:

Support to SOFF governance and operations

- Provide regularly updated information to the Steering Committee regarding the resource availability
- Ensure consolidation of statements and reports, based on submissions provided by each Implementing Entity, and provide these to each funding partner that has contributed to the SOFF UNMPTF account and to the Steering Committee
- Provide final reporting, including notification that the SOFF UNMPTF has been operationally closed;
- Provide tools for SOFF UNMPTF management and ensure transparency and accountability
- Provide support to SOFF design

Support to SOFF administration

- Sign Standard Agreements with donors and receive contributions from funding partners that wish to provide financial support to the SOFF UNMPTF
- Administer such funds received in accordance with its regulations, policies and procedures, as well as the relevant MOU and Fund Terms of Reference and SAA, including the provisions relating to winding up the Fund account and related matters
- Subject to availability of funds, disburse such funds to Implementing Entities and other Parties in accordance with decisions from the Steering Committee, taking into account the budget set out in the approved documents
- Release funds as direct costs, including for the operation of the SOFF Secretariat, based on the Steering Committee's decisions
- Release funds for additional expenses that the Steering Committee decides to allocate; and
- Disburse funds to any Implementing Entities and other Parties for any additional costs of the task that the Steering Committee may decide.

In addition, the UN MPTF Office, through its online portal, GATEWAY (<http://mptf.undp.org>), provides real-time financial data generated directly from its accounting system, giving partners and the general public the ability to track contributions, transfers, and expenditures. The UNMPTF Office charges a cost for performing SOFFAdministrative Agent functions in line with UNSDG policies and contribution agreements.

Annex V – Gender Action Plan

The SOFF Gender Action Plan builds on the principles of the WMO Gender Action Plan 2020 – 2023.¹⁹ SOFF respects gender equality and strives to value women’s unique contribution through its operations. Given the scope of SOFF activities is limited to the initial part of the meteorological value chain, the focus of this Plan is on ensuring adequate gender representations in the SOFF constituent bodies; and promoting women’s empowerment in collaboration with the SOFF peer advisors, the SOFF implementing entities, the CSOs and the beneficiary countries.

The targets for women representation are to be approved by the Steering Committee.

Priority area	Priority actions	Indicators	Sources	
Governance	Define a target of women’s representation in SOFF Steering Committee, Advisory Board and Secretariat	% of women’s representation in the SOFF governance	SOFF Secretariat	
Operations	Readiness phase Include gender equality and empowerment considerations in the GBON National Contribution Plan	# of GBON National Contribution Plans that include gender considerations	SOFF Secretariat	
	Readiness phase Develop guidance on gender equality and empowerment for SOFF operations	SOFF Operational Guidance Handbook provides guidance on gender considerations (Y/N)	SOFF Secretariat	
	Investment phase	Ensure application of IE’s gender policies	# of IE implementing their gender policies in SOFF operations	IEs
		Promote women’s participation in the capacity-building activities conducted to implement the National Contribution Plan	% of women participating in the capacity-building activities implemented	IEs
Monitoring and Evaluation	Promote women’s participation in SOFF consultations with CSOs and the private sector	% of women participating in SOFF consultations with CSOs and the private sector	SOFF Secretariat	
	Include a gender component in SOFF Annual Reports	Gender component included in SOFF Annual Reports (Y/N)	SOFF Secretariat	
	Include a gender component in SOFF evaluations	Gender component included in SOFF evaluations (Y/N)	SOFF Secretariat	

19 Accessible at: https://ane4bf-datap1.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wmocms/s3fs-public/ckeditor/files/Gender-Action-Plan_2020-2023.pdf?88gPxymercU1nHy2gliu.ffCX.YggqPr9

Annex VI – SOFF Results Framework

Goal	Indicator		Source
Strengthen climate adaption and resilient development through improved weather forecasts, early warning systems and climate information services	Global Goal on Adaptation		UNFCCC
High-level outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Source
Improved weather and climate prediction products	Improvement in NWP standard measure of skills	NWP standard measure of skill baseline (30 June cutoff)	Global Producing Centres
Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Source
Sustained compliance with GBON	Countries progress against the GBON gap analysis baseline	WMO GBON Gap report (30 June cutoff)	WMO
Outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Source
Readiness phase	1. GBON gap established and reviewed	# of GBON gap reports produced and reviewed	Countries status (30 June cutoff) SOFF Secretariat
	2. GBON national contribution plan developed	# of GBON national contribution plan developed	Countries status (30 June cutoff) SOFF Secretariat
Investment phase	3. GBON infrastructure in place	# of GBON-compliant stations installed and operating and internationally sharing data	Country baseline as stated in the GBON National Contribution plan SOFF Secretariat WMO Technical Authority
	4. GBON human and institutional capacity in place	# of GBON national contribution plans implemented	- SOFF Secretariat Implementing Entities

Compliance phase	5. Annual GBON compliance report and SOFF annual reports produced	Annual reports produced	-	WMO Technical Authority SOFF Secretariat
	6. GBON data internationally shared and results-based finance provided	Total # of stations internationally sharing GBON data	WMO GBON Gap report (30 June cutoff)	WMO Technical Authority SOFF Secretariat
	7. On-demand GBON operational and maintenance advisory provided	# of satisfactory advisory services delivered	-	SOFF Secretariat
	8. Weather and climate analysis products freely available through WMO Global Producing Centres	# of Global Producing Centres that provide free and open access to data # of products that have free and open access	-	Participating Global Producing Centers WMO Technical Authority SOFF Secretariat



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Systematic Observations Financing Facility

Weather
and climate
data for
resilience

soffsecretariat@wmo.int