

Terms of Reference: Endline evaluation of ClientEarth's 'Building legal foundations for sustainable forests & livelihoods' programme

1. Introduction to the programme

ClientEarth's 'Building legal foundations for sustainable forests and livelihoods' five-year project (2021-2026) sought to combat deforestation on supply-side forest governance reform and demand-side forest commodity supply chain reform. The first objective was to improve and promote community forestry as a tool to enhance forest management and governance, reduce deforestation, conserve biodiversity and generate sustainable development, focussing on Liberia (Outcome 1), Republic of Congo (Outcome 2) and Gabon (Outcome 3). The second objective was to promote, and shape import commodity regulations focusing on two of the largest importing markets, the EU (Outcome 4) and China (Outcome 5). Our target groups are local communities in Liberia, Republic of Congo and Gabon, and government decision-makers in the EU and China.

ClientEarth's activities focussed on legal analysis, training, advocacy and support on legal concepts. All activities under this programme have been implemented in partnership with in-country partners with established track records in forest governance and community engagement. ClientEarth's role has been to provide strategic, legal, and technical support through and alongside our partners, ensuring that interventions remain locally owned, contextually relevant, and rooted in existing relationships with key national and community stakeholders. This partnership model is central to the programme's approach and will be reflected in the scope and methodology of the endline evaluation.

The programme was funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) under Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI). NICFI's overall goal is to contribute to the reduction and reversal of tropical forest loss to enable a stable climate, preserved biodiversity and sustainable development.

2. Objectives of the evaluation

ClientEarth's NICFI-funded activities run from 1 May 2021 to 31 March 2026. As the programme period is coming to an end, we are commissioning an endline evaluation to assess overall performance, effectiveness, and progress against the outcomes and goals set out in the original proposal.

The endline evaluation is a critical opportunity to determine the impact and extent to which the programme has achieved its intended results, understand the context that shaped implementation, assess the relevance and efficiency of our approach and identify recommendations that can improve ClientEarth's work in the region, in terms of both substantive content and its way of working. It will also explore

how ClientEarth's partnerships, methodologies, and delivery mechanisms contributed to, or constrained, programme outcomes.

Findings from this evaluation will inform ClientEarth's organisational learning, future programme design, and strategic programmes within our work in Africa.

3. Evaluation scope

The endline evaluation will focus on Liberia, Gabon and the EU. The focus on these geographies is due to the greater level of resources invested in these areas since the beginning of the project.

Liberia

In Liberia the endline evaluation will focus on assessing community-level outputs (Outcome 1), with specific focus on the methods used to support communities in Community Right Law (CRL), forest-related laws, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and other legal instruments (including community-level by-laws and constitutions, and community commercial use contracts). Additionally, the evaluation will also examine how effectively the consortium of partners functioned as a collective, including coordination, complementarity of roles, communication, and the overall efficiency of joint delivery. Understanding ClientEarth's role within the consortium - particularly in relation to the value add of ClientEarth's technical expertise, whilst also considering organisational constraints – will also be considered.

Gabon

In Gabon, the endline evaluation will focus on assessing community-level outputs (Outcome 3), with particular attention to the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of these interventions, as well as ClientEarth's added value in delivering legal and strategic support alongside national partners.

European Union

In the European Union, the endline evaluation will focus on ClientEarth's peer NGO partners and relevant policy stakeholders to assess our contribution to advocacy efforts under Outcome 4, specifically in relation to the EU Regulation on deforestation-free products (the EU Deforestation Regulation), which aims to minimise the risk of deforestation associated with products placed on the EU market.

Key transversal approaches

In addition to broader community level outputs in Liberia and Gabon, the evaluation will also assess the degree of gender transformation achieved through the programme, using a

recognised continuum (e.g., gender-blind → gender-aware → gender-responsive → gender-transformative). The consultant should examine not only whether gender considerations were integrated into activities, but how far the programme has shifted norms, power dynamics, and decision-making opportunities for women and girls within community forest governance structures.

This includes assessing:

- Whether activities moved beyond participation toward meaningful influence and leadership for women;
- The extent to which structural barriers (e.g., illiteracy, limited access to leadership pathways) were addressed or remain unchanged;
- Whether women's involvement is institutionalised, sustainable, and supported by community governance structures;
- Any unintended gendered impacts, both positive and negative.

The gender analysis should be grounded in concrete programme evidence and assess changes at the level of activities, governance structures, and decision-making processes, rather than general community conditions. The analysis should clearly distinguish where the programme has been gender-responsive (addressing immediate needs) versus gender-transformative (shifting underlying norms and power relations), and identify enabling and limiting factors, to finally provide clear recommendations for future programme design.

The endline evaluation should include an assessment of value for money and cost-efficiency, examining whether programme resources were used in an economical and timely manner, and whether alternative approaches may have delivered equal or greater value. This includes reviewing delivery models and the cost-effectiveness of interventions.

Also, the evaluation will assess the programme's alignment with sustainability and decolonial principles. This includes examining:

- Ownership by local actors and the extent to which decision-making power and implementation were led or co-led by in-country stakeholders;
- How programme approaches supported locally-defined priorities and strengthened community sovereignty over forest governance;
- Ways the programme challenged, reproduced, or mitigated unequal power dynamics;

- The institutionalisation of practices introduced throughout the programme.

The consultant should provide a balanced analysis that identifies strengths, gaps, and opportunities to strengthen locally led, equity-driven, and contextually grounded approaches in future programme design.

Overall, the endline evaluation will include a focused review of ClientEarth's outputs, including strategic coordination, technical input, legal outputs, and partnership management. This will allow for an assessment of how ClientEarth's technical assistance, coordination, and strategic inputs contributed to overall programme outcomes. The evaluation should therefore analyse both partner-led results and CE-specific outputs to provide a full picture of programme performance and added value.

Through this, the endline evaluation will measure progress against the Baseline Evaluation analyse the extent to which the Mid-Term Review (MTR) recommendations were addressed and operationalised during the remainder of the programme period (2023–2026). This includes assessing the degree of progress made on capacity strengthening, gender and youth inclusion, coherence and stakeholder engagement, responsiveness to emerging issues (e.g., carbon markets, mining, biodiversity processes), EUDR advocacy, MEL improvements, and sustainability/exit planning.

4. Methodology

The evaluation will use a qualitative, mixed-methods approach, including document review, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and limited field observation. Data collection methods will be split across sources to ensure robustness of findings. The consultant is expected to ensure that each outcome assessed is supported by evidence from at least two different data sources.

Subject to logistical considerations, community visits in Liberia and Gabon may be undertaken. These visits would involve engagement with a small, purposive sample of communities. The consultant will work closely with in-country partners to design and implement context-appropriate data collection methods.

5. Key outputs

The key elements of the consultancy are:

- Document analysis of proposal, baseline evaluation, mid-term evaluation, annual donor reports, as well as activity reports from partners, if needed.
- Remotely supporting in-country partners with data collection in Liberia and Gabon (English and French fluency required).

- Interviews with in-country key stakeholders (approx. 5-10 per country)
- Online survey and interviews with key stakeholders in Europe (approx. 5-10 survey respondents and 2-3 interviews).
- Analysis of data from Liberia, Gabon and the EU.
- Report with findings and recommendations, split per country.

6. Deliverables

The primary deliverable is a report with findings and recommendations. It should not exceed 30 pages (excluding Annexes) and consist of an executive summary and a main body that covers background of the project, the purpose and objectives of the review, methodology used, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The report shall also respond to the evaluation guidance questions provided by Norad, structured as follows:

a. Effectiveness – Progress Towards Outcomes

Assess the extent to which the agreement has achieved its intended results, with a focus on Outcomes 1, 3, and 4.

b. Coherence – Synergies and Coordination

- Internal coherence: Assess how the grant recipient coordinates with or complements other NICFI-funded initiatives, including key learning points.
- External coherence: For each outcome assessed, examine how the grant recipient builds alliances and fosters synergies with civil society organisations and other national or international partners to ensure harmonised interventions.

c. Contribution to NICFI Outcomes

Outcome 1: Assess how the agreement contributes to the protection of tropical forests and other carbon-sequestering ecosystems through regulation, legislation, and area-based management.

Outcome 3: Assess how the agreement contributes to:

- Protecting forest and land rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), including through:
- Participation in relevant decision-making processes
- Reporting to international legal mechanisms and instruments

- Application of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)
(Provide concrete examples.)
- Integrating sustainable forest use by IPLCs into legal frameworks, area plans, and development strategies (with examples).
- Strengthening IPLC capacities for sustainable forest management and livelihood activities (with examples where applicable).

Outcome 4: Assess how the agreement contributes to the adoption or implementation of legal frameworks, regulations, or other initiatives influencing raw material or commodity markets, with the aim of reducing deforestation. Provide concrete examples of market impacts.

d. Contribution to NICFI Areas of Strategic Interest

- Assess how the agreement promotes or applies innovative approaches, such as new working methods, context analyses, or partnership models
- Analyse the agreement's positive and negative impacts on women and gender equality, including lessons learned.

The consultant will present preliminary findings to ClientEarth for factual validation prior to finalisation of the report.

7. Tentative timeline

- Consultancy to begin 15 February 2026
- Preliminary findings presented by 15 March 2026
- Initial draft evaluation report by 20 March 2026
- Final endline evaluation report with findings and recommendations sent to ClientEarth by 31 March 2026

8. Required qualifications

- Proven experience in producing evaluations and reviews in a development/human rights contexts.
- Ability to work sensitively with vulnerable or marginalised communities.
- Strong knowledge of monitoring and evaluation methodologies, particularly qualitative approaches.
- Strong writing, narrative development, and analytical skills.

- Ability to work independently in challenging environments.
- Fluency in English and French.
- Understanding of gender equality, disability, and social inclusion principles.

9. Remuneration

There is a maximum budget of £30,000 (inc. VAT and all applicable taxes), in addition to travel costs. Payment can be made on receipt of deliverables and/or invoices.

10. Application procedure

Please send a cover letter, detailing your relevant experience and proposed methodology and budget for the consultancy, and a CV to: Catherine Lalonde at clalonde@clientearth.org by 28 January 2026. Please note that applications will be reviewed as soon as they are received.

Applications will be assessed against predetermined evaluation criteria, including relevant experience, proposed methodology and approach, timeline and ability to meet deadlines, as well as cost-effectiveness and value for money.