The Accountability Framework initiative
Steering Group Terms of Reference

Approved March 2017; last updated April 2017

This document defines the Terms of Reference for the Steering Group established to lead the implementation of and decision-making for the Accountability Framework initiative (AFI). The objectives, strategy, and structure of the AFI are summarized in the Program Document appended as Annex 1. These Terms of Reference have been developed and agreed by the Steering Group members in accordance with good practice for establishing multi-stakeholder decision bodies to guide the development of norms for sustainability and accountability.¹ This Terms of Reference takes precedence over any other AFI governing documents, in the event of any apparent inconsistency or ambiguity.

1. Mandate and Scope of the Steering Group

1.1 Steering Group Mandate and Responsibilities

The role of the Steering Group is to provide overall strategic leadership and decision-making on substantive matters related to the AFI. As such, the Steering Group is charged with:

- Developing and approving the initiative’s overall theory of change and strategy;
- Developing and approving subsidiary strategies for corporate engagement, stakeholder engagement, communications, and other key aspects of the initiative;
- Directing the development of the AFI to ensure that it is technically sound, practical and actionable; perceived as legitimate based on an open and transparent development process; and rooted in consensus and the support of a broad coalition, to the extent possible;
- Commissioning – and providing oversight and strategic guidance to – working groups and potentially other formal or ad-hoc bodies to develop specific aspects of the Accountability Framework or lead other components of the initiative;
- Approving Accountability Framework elements in their final form;
- Helping to develop, review, approve, and support fundraising related to the AFI’s work plans;
- Guiding the work of the “backbone team,”² consistent with the division of responsibilities indicated in Section 1.2;
- Otherwise advancing and supporting the initiative through the collective action of its individual members carrying out their respective roles and responsibilities, as defined in Section 3; and
- Carrying out any other roles related to the AFI that are not delegated to the backbone team, working groups, or other subsidiary bodies.

1.2 Complementary Roles of the Steering Group and Other Entities

The Steering Group will liaise closely with the backbone team and the working groups (and other bodies that the Steering Group may choose to commission, if applicable) to ensure timely and well-coordinated progress.


² The backbone team is initially co-hosted by Rainforest Alliance and the Meridian Institute. However, the governance model affords flexibility to distribute its functions among different or additional organizations or to constitute the backbone team as an independent organization in the future.
on the initiative pursuant to the strategies that the Steering Group approves. The Governance Structure diagram in Annex 1 summarizes the overall governance structure of the initiative, while the following table further defines the complementary roles of the Steering Group, backbone team, and working groups with regard to technical work, decision-making, and other activities to advance the initiative.

### Complementary Roles of the Steering Group and Other Entities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Role of Steering Group (SG)</th>
<th>Role of Backbone Team (BT)</th>
<th>Role of Working Groups or other subsidiary bodies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting strategy for the initiative</td>
<td>Develop and approve strategies</td>
<td>Support the SG in developing strategies</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing work plans</td>
<td>Provide input into work plans; review and approve work plans</td>
<td>Develop draft work plans for SG review and approval</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing global guiding principles</td>
<td>Lead the development, vetting, and finalization of these principles</td>
<td>Support the SG in developing the principles</td>
<td>Provide technical input into the principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing other elements of the Accountability Framework</td>
<td>Commission working groups or other bodies to lead technical work; advise and oversee these bodies’ work; and approve final elements[1]</td>
<td>Provide technical, logistical, and facilitation support to help the working groups and other subsidiary bodies develop these elements</td>
<td>Lead the technical work to develop specific elements of the Accountability Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder engagement</td>
<td>Co-develop and approve stakeholder engagement strategy; contribute substantially to stakeholder engagement through members’ activities, networks and events; delegate aspects of stakeholder engagement to working groups, regional liaisons, and the BT</td>
<td>Support the SG to develop and execute the stakeholder engagement strategy; coordinate and support all stakeholder engagement to facilitate execution of this strategy</td>
<td>With support from BT, lead stakeholder engagement related to the body’s work, if and as defined as part of the body’s mandate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Co-develop and approve communications strategy; support communications through members’ activities and staff capacity</td>
<td>Support the SG to develop communications strategy; coordinate all communications work; lead the execution of key elements of the communications program, including website, media, and branding</td>
<td>Adapt, refine, and disseminate AFi communications in a manner that supports the body’s work, if and as defined as part of the body’s mandate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program management, including budget and personnel management</td>
<td>Provide high-level guidance to the BT, including through development and approval of strategies; delegate program management and implementation tasks to the BT, subject to BT capacity</td>
<td>Implement program management roles consistent with strategies approved and guidance provided by the SG; take operational decisions about budget and personnel as necessary to optimally advance strategies</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>Advise on initiative-wide fundraising strategy; each member leads fundraising for efforts where that member is best positioned to lead</td>
<td>Coordinate fundraising initiative-wide; lead fundraising efforts where BT is best positioned to lead</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[1] While the SG is responsible for commissioning, developing terms of reference for, and overseeing the activities of working groups, it is expected that the SG will generally exercise deference and restraint in substantially altering the technical products developed by the working groups, provided these groups have adhered to their mandate, including use of a consultative stakeholder processes to develop such products. The SG’s primary role with respect to the working groups is to define their scope of work, ensure that activities and products are consistent with and supportive of the overall aims and strategy of the initiative, and review and approve working group products.

2. **Membership**

The Steering Group was initially convened in December 2016 with nine founding members, but with the intention of expanding to include a full membership roster representing key organizations and groups of stakeholders, as indicated in Section 2.1. Steering Group members are individuals, who in most cases serve with the intent of representing the interests and perspectives of an organization or group of stakeholders of
which they are part (see Section 2.2). Members may be added, removed, or resign according to the procedures defined in Section 2.3.

2.1 Composition
The Steering Group intends to recruit and maintain a membership that is similar in size and composition to that defined in the following table. This table is an indicative guide, not a definitive allocation of Steering Group seats. This table will be updated and kept current as members are added, removed, or resign. If and when the Steering Group decides that the appropriate group membership composition differs significantly from that indicated in the following table, it shall adjust this indicative composition accordingly following the procedures for modifying this Terms of Reference (Section 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member represents</th>
<th>Status &amp; notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Greenpeace</td>
<td>Founding member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Imaflora</td>
<td>Founding member; one of two Latin America representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 National Wildlife Federation</td>
<td>Founding member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Proforest</td>
<td>Founding member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Rainforest Alliance</td>
<td>Founding member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Rights and Resources Institute</td>
<td>Founding member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 The Nature Conservancy</td>
<td>Founding member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 World Resources Institute</td>
<td>Founding member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 WWF (World Wildlife Fund / World Wide Fund for Nature)</td>
<td>Founding member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Additional social advocacy organizations focused on labor rights and other human rights</td>
<td>To be recruited following social inception process in May-June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Additional land rights and indigenous peoples organization</td>
<td>Forest Peoples Programme invited in April 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Additional Latin America representative</td>
<td>Presently under recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Africa representatives</td>
<td>Presently under recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Asia representatives</td>
<td>Presently under recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Additional civil society stakeholder constituencies not adequately represented by the above members</td>
<td>Steering Group may recruit one or more additional members at their discretion to round out stakeholder representation or strengthen the core coalition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Members serve as representatives
Each member serves with the intent of representing the views and interests of the specific organization or constituency that he or she has been designated to represent. All founding members represent the respective organization where they are employed. As additional members are added, the member and the Steering Group shall mutually agree and document who the member represents. This may be an organization or, particularly in the case of regional representatives, a group of stakeholders in that region.

Members shall be independently nominated by the organization or stakeholder group they represent. In the case of a member that represents an organization, the organization shall use its own independent process to nominate its chosen representative. In the case of a member whose role on the Steering Group is intended to represent a group of stakeholders, to the extent possible those stakeholders, or a reasonably large subset of them, shall select or have substantive input into their chosen representative.
For each member there shall be a designated alternate (and, if desired by the member, a designated second-alternate) who shall represent the organization or stakeholder group in the event that the member is unable to participate in any given meeting or activity. The member is responsible for ensuring coordination between himself/herself and the designated alternate(s) to maintain effective and continuous representation on the Steering Group.

2.3 Addition, removal, and resignation of members

Members may be added to the Steering Group through the following three-step process:

- Step 1: The Steering Group identifies an organization or group of stakeholders that they believe would be important to represent on the Steering Group, generally based on the indicative Steering Group composition shown above. Steering Group members, backbone team staff, or a regional liaison approach the organization or engage the group of stakeholder to invite them to nominate a representative to serve on the Steering Group.

- Step 2: The organization or stakeholder group nominates a candidate representative to serve on the Steering Group.

- Step 3: The Steering Group decides whether to approve the addition of the candidate member, following the Steering Group’s ordinary decision rules. A new member is considered formally added once the Steering Group approves the addition and once the member acknowledges and agrees to these Terms of Reference, either in writing or via verbal affirmation during a Steering Group meeting, with such affirmation being recorded in the meeting summary.

An organization or stakeholder group that is already represented on the Steering Group may change its representative at any time without the need for Steering Group approval. However, to ensure continuity in representation and Steering Group activities, entities represented on the Steering Group are asked to make such changes infrequently, if at all. A member may likewise change his or her designated alternate(s) at any time.

If an organization or stakeholder group no longer wishes to be represented on the Steering Group, the corresponding member may resign at any time without proposing a new representative to take his or her place. However, it is requested that before taking this step, the member informs the Steering Group or backbone team as to the concerns of the member or the organization or group that s/he represents and affords the opportunity for these concerns to be discussed and possibly resolved before proceeding with resignation.

The Steering Group may ask a member to resign, or may involuntarily expel a member, under either of the following two scenarios of breach of member responsibility:

- If the member behaves in a way that actively undermines the objectives, strategy, or integrity of the AFi; or
- If the member consistently fails to fulfill the set of member responsibilities as described in Section 3, including frequent absences from meetings without coverage by an alternate.

In either scenario, if appropriate, before proceeding with a request to resign or an expulsion, the Steering Group or backbone team will attempt to work with the member to amicably and effectively remedy the matter of concern. If the Steering Group proceeds with a request to resign or an expulsion, the Steering Group, at its discretion, may (but need not) seek to replace the outgoing member with a new member representing the same organization or stakeholder group. All Steering Group decisions pertaining to member addition or removal shall follow the general Steering Group decision rules (Section 4.2), except that in the
case of alleged breach of member responsibility, the member in question shall not participate in the decision-making process.

3. Member Roles and Responsibilities
The effectiveness of the Steering Group and the AFi overall depend on members participating actively and serving as effective representatives of their respective organization or stakeholder group. To this end, member roles and responsibilities include:

**Actively support and participate in development of the Accountability Framework**
- Understand and adhere to this Terms of Reference
- Lead, participate in, and/or designate colleague(s) from the member’s organization to participate in one or more work streams to help develop the Accountability Framework, for instance through involvement in a working group, regional engagement process, or specific sub-tasks within these
- Raise awareness of, interest in, and support for the AFi through formal or information engagement with various stakeholders, consistent with the initiative’s strategies for stakeholder engagement, company engagement, and communications
- Interface with staff on the backbone team periodically to optimize the role of the member and the organization or group that s/he represents in the initiative

**Serve as an effective representative**
- In Steering Group deliberations and other work streams, present views, proposals or recommendations that reflect the interests or perspectives of the organization or constituency that the member represents
- Carry out the necessary ‘inreach’ within the member’s organization or stakeholder group to create awareness of, foster constructive discussions about, and ultimately build support for the Accountability Framework as it is progressively developed over time
- For members representing an organization, seek to secure and maintain organizational-level support for and endorsement of the Accountability Framework – ideally at the level of senior staff and/or the board of directors – as well as consideration or incorporation of Accountability Framework norms in guiding the organization’s work related to supply chain accountability
- If, as a result of the above efforts, the member senses potential problems or challenges in securing broad-based support for the AFi within the organization or stakeholder group that s/he represents, bring such concerns to the attention of the Steering Group or backbone team at an early stage so that such challenges may be addressed to the extent possible
- Raise any potential concerns about the member’s Steering Group participation or the initiative overall (e.g., capacity constraints, misalignment with organizational priorities, etc.) with the backbone team at an early stage so that such issues can be discussed and potentially resolved in a constructive manner

**Foster effective and efficient meetings and decision processes**
- Participate in all in-person and virtual Steering Group meetings, or ensure that a designated alternate participates on occasions when the member is unavailable
- In the event that neither a member nor alternate is available to participate in such a meeting, notify the backbone team of the planned absence ahead of time, provide any necessary input ahead of time, and review the meeting summary afterwards to stay abreast of discussions, decisions, and next steps
• Offer timely and constructive input on ideas and draft documents being considered by the Steering Group to help accelerate the consensus-building process
• Understand and adhere to the decision-making rules (Section 4.2)

Help ensure that the Accountability Framework is viewed as legitimate
• To help foster consistent communication and messaging about the AFi, use or adapt talking points, slide decks, or other materials developed by the initiative, to the extent available and appropriate
• Disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest to the backbone team and Steering Group at the time of nomination for Steering Group membership, or, for a potential new conflict of interest arising thereafter, to the backbone team at the time that the member becomes aware of such potential conflict

4. Operation of the Steering Group
The Steering Group and its appointed subsidiary bodies shall develop and execute a program of business – including meetings, development of technical work products, and other activities – to advance the scope and mandate defined in Section 1.1. The backbone team will assist by proposing and organizing meetings, developing meeting agendas, and helping to facilitate the Steering Group’s decision processes and other contributions to the initiative. Any Steering Group member may bring forward any idea or issue for discussion related to the initiative at any time; these should be directed to the backbone team so that they may be incorporated into meeting agendas or other deliberations as appropriate.

4.1 Meetings
The Steering Group will meet regularly to conduct its business. In-person meetings are expected to take place approximately three times per year for 1-2 days per meeting, while virtual meetings will take place once every 2-3 weeks for 60-90 minutes per meeting, plus additional longer virtual work sessions periodically as necessary. Every effort will be made to hold meetings in places and at times that are convenient for the largest possible number of members. There is no quorum requirement to hold a meeting, but there is a quorum requirement to take Steering Group decisions (Section 4.2). It is the responsibility of members to ensure their regular participation at meetings and, when not available, to arrange for participation of a designated alternate.

Proceedings of Steering Group meetings will be documented in meeting summaries that include at least: 1) a list of members, backbone team staff, and any guests in attendance; 2) a list of agenda topics and any additional substantive issues discussed; and 3) outcomes of any decisions, including a summary of the reason for the decision, any dissenting opinions or abstentions that members raised or recorded, or, in instances when consensus could not be reached, identification of members that blocked unanimous assent and their stated reason. The backbone team will make meeting summaries available to Steering Group members in an accessible online location.

4.2 Decision-Making Process
Sections 1.1 and 1.2 indicate which types of decisions are to be made by the Steering Group and which are reserved for other entities. To speed decision-making, the Steering Group may choose to delegate certain decisions to the backbone team or to another subsidiary body of its own choosing and design, such as an executive committee. The decision to delegate decision-making authority shall follow the decision-making procedure outlined in this sub-section.

Steering Group decisions are taken by the slate of members comprising the Steering Group at any given time, even if this membership differs from the full indicative composition defined in Section 2.1. Decisions may be taken either during meetings or over e-mail. If a member needs to consult with colleagues in his or her
organization before providing a final vote or opinion, he or she may elect to provide provisional input, which may be confirmed or revised within one week via e-mail. Key substantive and procedural matters will generally be raised during meetings; however, e-mail may be used to confirm the final details of such decisions, to address less consequential matters, or otherwise to foster efficient and effective decision-making. The quorum for decision-making is two-thirds of current members attending the meeting where a decision is taken, or responding to an e-mail proposing a decision. In the event that any members are absent from a meeting where a decision is taken, the backbone team will attempt to confirm with such members subsequently that the decision is acceptable to them, as well.

The Steering Group will strive to make decisions by consensus. Consensus means that all members are either supportive of a proposed decision or are not fully supportive but choose not to block the group from taking a unanimous decision. In the event that one or more members are not fully supportive of a decision but choose not to block it, such member(s) may choose to have their dissent and the reason for it recorded. This is an important mechanism for identifying minority views so that they may be considered in the further development of the AFi. Members may also abstain from a pending decision, which also shall not prevent a decision from being considered to have been taken by consensus. The lack of input on a proposed decision when such input is specifically invited during a Steering Group meeting shall be construed as support for the proposed decision.

If a member disagrees with a proposed decision, s/he may choose to block the Steering Group from affirming that decision unanimously. In such an event, the decision is considered not to have been approved, and the Steering Group should continue dialogue with the aim of developing a revised proposal that will be amenable to consensus-based approval.

If, after such further deliberation, it becomes clear that consensus on a key substantive or procedural matter will not be possible, the Steering Group will take a decision about how best to move forward. This may include a decision to alter the Steering Group decision-making process to allow the possibility of majoritarian decisions in exceptional cases, provided that such decisions are taken in a manner consistent with aim of the AFi to develop a set of norms that are broadly supported by key civil society stakeholders and are widely perceived as legitimate and useful.

4.3 Subsidiary bodies

The Steering Group may commission subsidiary bodies to help develop or implement different aspects of the AFi. The Steering Group is expected to commission several working groups to lead the development of technical elements of the Accountability Framework. It is also expected to commission the work of regional liaisons, subject to funding availability, to lead stakeholder engagement processes in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. In addition, the Steering Group may convene or commission other subsidiary bodies as it deems fit, such as an executive committee to take specific designated decisions or ad-hoc task forces or groups to carry out specific tasks or stakeholder engagement efforts.

The Steering Group shall do the following (at a minimum) to commission subsidiary bodies:

- Develop and approve a written Terms of Reference for the body, outlining the body’s mandate, scope, and role in advancing the AFi. The Terms of Reference shall specify the period of time for which the body will exist as well as conditions and procedures for disbandment or for extension of the body’s service.
- Specify the initial composition of the body, which may be defined in terms of specific appointees, seats allocated to certain types of stakeholders or experts, or a combination of these.
- Specify the process by which members may be added to or removed from the body, and whether the Steering Group must approve such changes.
• Clarify the relationship between the Steering Group and the subsidiary body, particularly with regard to decision-making, bearing in mind the general parameters in Section 1.2.

5. Communication, Logos, and Brands
Communication to and among the Steering Group as a whole shall take place primarily via e-mail as well as during meetings (Section 4.1). Steering Group e-mails shall be sent to all active members with a copy to all designated alternates and backbone team members. For the sake of efficiency, and given limited time available for in-person and virtual meetings, e-mail will sometimes be used to collect member input on pending matters, or to take formal Steering Group decisions. Members are asked to review such materials and respond promptly to requests for input so that decisions taken and guidance provided over e-mail reflect the consensus of the members.

The AFi has a unique identity, logo, and associated branding elements that are distinct from those of any of the Steering Group member organizations. Nevertheless, the strategy and expected legitimacy of the initiative are associated substantially with the name-recognition and credibility of its participants. Therefore, the Steering Group or backbone team may propose to use the names, logos, or other branding elements of Steering Group member organizations in communications related to the AFi. However, such use will occur only to the extent and in the manner specified in writing by each respective Steering Group member. Steering Group members are encouraged to inform the backbone team pro-actively of any specifications or limitations regarding use of names or logos of their respective organization so that communications materials may be designed with these considerations in mind.

6. Measures to Foster Transparency and Legitimacy
The following measures will be taken to foster transparency and openness about the Steering Group and other key aspects of the AFi and its associated decision-making processes:
• This Terms of Reference (ToR) will be made publicly available on the project website.
• A current list of Steering Group members, affiliation(s), and who each member represents will be provided on the project website.
• The project website will contain a “contact us” feature by which any stakeholder or member of the public may communicate with the AFi. The backbone team will review such input and direct or synthesize it for consideration by the Steering Group or its subsidiary bodies as appropriate.

The present intent of the Steering Group is not to seek or accept financial contributions for the AFi from companies involved in producing or sourcing agricultural or forestry commodities. Financial support for the initiative may be sought and accepted from government donors, private foundations, and/or private individuals. If any Steering Group member organizations have funding stipulations or policies that may be more restrictive than those of the AFi overall, these should be brought to the attention of the backbone team so that any financial support and management of project resources is structured in a manner that adheres to such policies.

7. Term, Review of, and Revisions to this Terms of Reference
This Terms of Reference shall be reviewed and renewed by the Steering Group once every two years from the date of its initial approval unless it is agreed that an earlier review is required. Revisions to, or renewal of, this Terms of Reference shall be taken according to the regular decision-making process (Section 4.2).
ANNEX 1: Accountability Framework Program Document
**The Accountability Framework**

*to implement corporate supply chain commitments to protect ecosystems and benefit people*

**Challenge and Opportunity**

In recent years, hundreds of companies have made commitments to eliminate deforestation and human exploitation from their agriculture and forestry supply chains. These pledges are a promising development for protecting ecosystems and benefitting people. However, their fulfillment is hindered by the lack of a credible, consistent, and widely-accepted framework for implementing these commitments and for monitoring, verifying, and reporting on progress and outcomes.

To fill this need, a group of leading environmental and social NGOs has come together to develop an Accountability Framework that will support companies and others in credibly achieving and demonstrating progress toward eliminating ecosystem destruction and human exploitation in supply chains. The framework will address two fundamental gaps.

First, as the set of tools, platforms, and initiatives related to responsible supply chains proliferates, there is confusion as to how these mechanisms can be integrated to take effective action and generate credible outcomes. The framework will create guiding principles and norms to help harmonize approaches to implementation, monitoring, verification, and reporting across commodities and regions.

Second, some areas of implementation remain weak—in particular the lack of credible means to verify progress toward responsible supply chains. This gap is especially critical in the palm oil, cattle, soy, and pulp/timber sectors, where the scale of company commitments greatly exceeds participation in existing certification programs. Development of new approaches and best practices for verification that can be deployed more efficiently, at greater scale, and with stronger participation from local stakeholders, will accelerate the move from commitments to demonstrated progress.

**Project Description**

This initiative will develop an Accountability Framework to define norms and good practices for operationalizing responsible supply chain commitments, thereby filling in vital detail that is missing from high-level pledges. The framework will be put forth by a coalition of civil society groups that collectively holds the legitimacy and influence to propose and promote common norms for implementing conservation- and human rights-related commitments.

The Accountability Framework will help ensure that the wide range of efforts aimed at implementing company commitments all adhere to high standards of rigor and credibility. It will also help ensure that progress toward such commitments is assessed, reported, and communicated in generally comparable ways, thus enabling tracking and management of outcomes across entire corporate supply bases and jurisdictions, or relative to national targets. The initiative does not aim to displace or supersede existing efforts to address social and environmental risk in supply chains, but rather will support ongoing innovation by creating an umbrella of harmonized norms that can enhance the credibility and legitimacy of other initiatives. The project includes two main components:

**Establishing the framework:** The framework will be developed through a participatory process led by a core set of NGO partners with input from a much wider universe of civil society. This process will include strong engagement from groups in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to help link the experience and progress of regional efforts such as the soy moratorium in Brazil and the High Carbon Stock process in

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**Founding partners:**

[Greenpeace](https://www.greenpeace.org)
[Imflora](https://www.imflora.org)
[Rainforest Alliance](https://www.rainforestalliance.org)
[Rights Resources](https://www.rightsresources.org)
[The Nature Conservancy](https://www.nature.org)
[World Resources Institute](https://www.wri.org)
[WWF](https://www.wwf.org)
Indonesia into a globally harmonized framework. Community and indigenous groups will also be directly represented. Companies will play an important role at this stage by providing input and trialing different aspects of the framework to assess its practicality and value. The entire process will be transparently conducted and communicated, with involvement from governments welcomed.

The framework itself will include a set of commonly agreed and globally applicable definitions related to forests and other natural ecosystems, deforestation, restoration, and key aspects of human rights, land rights, and community displacement. It will also include globally applicable principles for establishing and implementing commitments as well as operational guidelines for monitoring, verifying, and reporting progress toward social and environmental responsibility within production units and supply chains. Guidelines will focus particularly on existing gaps, for instance by defining parameters for good practice for innovative yet credible verification approaches that can be applied more rapidly and flexibly, supported by new technology.

**Promoting and supporting broad adoption of the framework:** The initiative will advance broad uptake of the Accountability Framework norms through multiple channels. First, through the strength of the civil society coalition, norms will serve as a common policy platform and reference point for coalition members’ advocacy and implementation efforts related to responsible supply chains. Second, the initiative will engage a wide range of existing and incipient tools, platforms, initiatives, and service providers at global and regional level to integrate or reference framework norms and operational guidance as a “plug-in” to the basic functionality of these systems that collectively help define how supply chain commitments are implemented. For instance, parameters for defining and monitoring deforestation may underlie mapping tools and analytics available through the Global Forest Watch platform. Third, private companies will be engaged as ‘first movers’ and later as adopters of the framework through incorporation into sourcing policies, company operations, and value chains. Finally, regional processes in Africa, Latin America (Amazon, Cerrado and Grand Chaco biomes), and Indonesia will continue the process of harmonizing context-specific mechanisms with global norms, thereby linking high-level commitments more strongly to verified progress on the ground.

**RESULTS FRAMEWORK**

**Output:** An accountability framework for responsible supply chain commitments that includes definitions, principles, norms, and operational guidance to fill critical gaps in existing initiatives.

**Outcome:** Common principles and good practices for accountability and transparency are widely understood, accepted and applied by companies, service providers, government, civil society, and opinion leaders.

**Impact:** Wide application of the framework results in delivery of critical outcomes including eliminating large-scale deforestation and human exploitation. Efforts of companies and governments collectively advance broader targets and support sector transformation.

**Timing & Further Details**

The initiative will run initially for four years (2017-2020). As many companies urgently seek implementation guidance, the first year (2017) will focus on developing definitions, global guiding principles, and operational guidance for verification and other priority needs. Additional implementation elements will be built in 2018. Concurrently (late 2017 to the end of 2020), the initiative will focus on implementation, scale up, and regional adaptation.

For more information, please contact Nigel Sizer, President, Rainforest Alliance, nsizer@ra.org. Rainforest Alliance is serving as the secretariat for this initiative, with facilitation leadership from the Meridian Institute. Initial funding has been generously provided by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the SEM Charitable Trust.
ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK THEORY OF CHANGE

OUR VISION: production & trade of agriculture and forest commodities is universally responsible* and widely sustainable*. As a result, natural ecosystems are protected and the wellbeing of people & communities is improved.

OUR GOAL: Develop and mainstream a set of norms & guidelines to translate supply chain commitments into demonstrated progress on the ground by fostering effective implementation, credible monitoring and verification, and consistent reporting.

Numbers identify different aspects of the Theory of Change that are elaborated further on the next page.

SCOPE OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK INITIATIVE

1. Sustainable* production landscapes and intact natural landscapes
2. Restoration: Natural ecosystems and productive value of rural landscapes are restored at scale
3. Human rights: Rights & protections for communities, workers, and land owners/managers are respected and upheld
4. Livelihoods: Commodity production & trade supports improved livelihoods and wellbeing for local people, workers, and their families

MECHANISMS FRAMEWORK

- AF initiative communications, outreach & advocacy
- AF early adoption, pilot testing & refinement
- Complementary tools, platforms, processes & services to implement corporate SC commitments
- Complementary initiatives
- Complementary mechanisms

- Other initiatives and service providers incorporate/align with AF norms

INTEGRITY: All efforts to implement SC commitments adhere to high standards of rigor and credibility
CONSISTENCY: Progress toward commitments is assessed, reported, and communicated in clear & comparable ways

THE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

- Harmonized global norms
- Implementation guidance: - Monitoring - Verification - Reporting/disclosure - Claim/communications
- Plug-in compatibility with key implementation tools & processes such as: - Global Forest Watch suite - Company SC mgmt tools - Regional norms & guidance - Verification service providers - Disclosure/reporting platforms - Investment screening/metrics

MEANINGFUL OUTCOMES

- Responsible* management of production units, mills, and supply chains:
  - Natural ecosystems protected & managed sustainably in long term
  - Natural & productive lands restored
  - Local communities have secure land rights & livelihoods
  - Farmers & workers rights respected
  - Production systems sustainably intensified

BROADER IMPACT

- More rigorous & effective management & decision-making for responsible SCs:
  - Companies track & manage toward targets
  - Comparable metrics support jurisdictional assessment and nati & intl-target tracking
  - Comparable metrics facilitate other improvements in enabling environment (investment screening, policies, etc.)

* RESPONSIBLE commodity production & trade adheres to legal requirements and fulfills basic safeguards to protect people and ecosystems from the worst forms of harm.
* SUSTAINABLE production & trade attains a higher standard of social and environmental performance, including net benefits for livelihoods, conservation, and productive, efficient and resilient farming & forestry systems.
ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK THEORY OF CHANGE

This material explains and elaborates the Theory of Change diagram. Numbers refer to different aspects of the ToC identified on the preceding page.

1. **The initiative’s vision (ultimate aim) and concrete goal:** The Accountability Framework initiative is oriented to achieve its partners’ shared vision and aim. This aim is not about ensuring that certain supply chains are “clean” but rather about protecting forests and other natural ecosystems while safeguarding and improving the wellbeing of people and rural communities. The Theory of Change clarifies inputs, outputs, outcomes, and the ultimate broader impact advanced by the initiative. In the Theory of Change diagram, items inside the blue dotted line are within the initiative scope. Items outside this line are key contextual factors, trends, and initiatives.

2. **Context & problem statement:** Hundreds of companies have issued responsible supply chain commitments, leading to many different tools, platforms, services, and supply chain investments. However, systems to implement and track commitments are largely ad-hoc, while some aspects of implementation remain weak. Thus, the business-as-usual scenario is one of confusion, stalled progress, extensive leakage, and greenwashing. This initiative is not focused on increasing the number of commitments (this is a complementary dynamic outside the initiative scope) but rather takes as an input those supply chains ‘ripe’ for implementation because of existing commitments.

3. **Developing the Accountability Framework:** The initiative’s main outputs will be the Accountability Framework itself, as well as supporting communications, outreach and advocacy, and initial adoption, pilot testing, and refinement of the framework. These outputs are developed through broad participation and an open, transparent process guided by a clear governance model.

4. **Direct outcomes--uptake of the Accountability Framework:** The Accountability Framework will be adopted by being incorporated or referenced in company policies and practices, service provision, and other tools and initiatives focused on supply chain sustainability. Uptake will result in supply chain commitments being implemented, monitored, and verified with: 1) greater integrity, and 2) greater consistency.

5. **Intermediate outcomes--progress at field level:** When supply chain commitments are implemented with greater integrity (i.e., promises are fulfilled), positive conservation and social outcomes are delivered at the level of production units, supply chains, and sometimes landscapes – the typical purview and scale of the commitments themselves. Such outcomes strongly contribute to – although cannot by themselves fully guarantee – achievement of the ultimate aim (broader impact).

6. **Intermediate outcomes--improved management, decision-making, and enabling environment:** Increased consistency and normalization of how progress is assessed, reported, and communicated results in supply chain management and decision systems that more strongly support responsible action and increase transparency and accountability. These outcomes provide an important feedback, enabling investors and advocates to track and demand better performance, and enabling companies to integrate sustainability more proactively and efficiently into their business.

7. **Complementary initiatives and mechanisms:** The Accountability Framework will fill a critical gap by driving robust, credible and transparent implementation of corporate supply chain commitments. But to achieve the ultimate aim (vision) identified in the Theory of Change, the Accountability Framework must be complemented by parallel initiatives related to land-use planning, land tenure, rule of law, REDD+ and other incentive and finance mechanisms, and more. The Accountability Framework initiative aims to position itself to complement and mutually reinforce these other mechanisms to the fullest extent possible.
Governance Structure (1): Overview

**KEY SETS OF PARTICIPANTS**

- **Decision-makers**
  - Consists of civil society reps
  - Takes final decisions about strategy & other key substantive aspects of the initiative
  - Guides & delegates work to the backbone team
  - Commissions WGs to create AF elements

- **Co-designers**
  - Commissioned by SG to create AF elements
  - WGs include SG members, other core partner staff, and others from partners/network

- **Working groups**
  - Other orgs & individuals recruited or self-selected to contribute to design & rollout of AF:
    - Local, regional & international NGOs
    - Community/labor/smallholder reps
    - Selected national & sub-national government
    - Companies
    - Service providers / tools / platforms / initiatives

- **Additional partners / network**
  - Key groups & individuals recruited to join WGs
  - Provide input to AF development process through WG processes & other channels
  - Key groups & individuals recruited to join WGs
  - Regional WGs support adaptation & integration in different contexts
  - Thematic WGs refine AF elements, if needed

- **Broader set of stakeholders**
  - Other interested parties kept informed; can move up to partners/network or WGs as appropriate

**BACKBONE TEAM:** supports & coordinates all aspects of the initiative

**Steering group**
- Core NGO partners

**ROLE IN CREATING THE FRAMEWORK**
- Define the initiative’s strategy & workplans
- Direct AF development process to ensure that input & representation builds legitimacy and a strong coalition
- Take final decisions about AF elements

**ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING & PROMOTING THE FRAMEWORK**
- Create strategy for adoption & uptake, especially by activating partners/network
- Direct the work of backbone team and core partner colleagues to support & promote AF rollout
- Regional WGs support adaptation & integration in different contexts
- Thematic WGs refine AF elements, if needed

**Decision-makers**
- Help clarify design parameters to make AF useful & practical to companies
- Support broader company engagement

**Co-designers**
- Test & refine AF in supply chains
- Serve as first-mover adopters
- Promote wider company adoption

**Working groups**
- Provide input to AF development process through WG processes & other channels
- Key groups & individuals recruited to join WGs
- Regional WGs support adaptation & integration in different contexts
- Thematic WGs refine AF elements, if needed

**Additional partners / network**
- Provide input to regionalization process
- Provide input to AF development process through WG processes & other channels
- Key groups & individuals recruited to join WGs
- CSOs endorse the AF to expand coalition
- Companies & service providers adopt or reference the AF to expand formal uptake

**Broader set of stakeholders**
- Become aware of AF; provide broad-based support; identify opportunities to align with or integrate into other efforts
- Join partners/network or WGs as appropriate
- Remain aware of AF and recognize it as a credible set of norms
- Join partners/network as an endorser or adopter as appropriate
### Governance Structure (2): Steering Group

#### Steering Group Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reps of founding core NGOs*</th>
<th>SG members represent their organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greenpeace representative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Imaflora representative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rainforest Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rights &amp; Resources representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Wildlife Federation representative</td>
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<td>Nature Conservancy representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proforest representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Resources Institute representative</td>
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<td>WWF representative</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Initial SG membership</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reps from Asia, Africa, and LatAm (+5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG members may represent an organization or may serve in individual capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two representatives per region (Imaflora already fills one LatAm seat)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collectively these reps cover all key thematic areas related to forests, indigenous peoples, community rights, working conditions, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vacant seats, to be filled</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reps of additional core NGO partners* (tbc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG members represent their organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>In the future, SG may choose to add additional core NGO partners to round out the coalition</td>
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*Core NGO partners* play multiple roles in the initiative:

1. As decision-makers via representation on the SG
2. As the core of the civil society coalition behind the AF, using their organization’s weight to push for uptake
3. As technical content contributors via the working groups

*Not all SG or WG members will be core NGO partners*

#### Steering Group Remit

- Functions as a ‘board’ for the initiative, providing ultimate decision-making on substantive matters including:
  - The initiative’s strategy & workplans
  - The initiative’s stakeholder engagement processes
  - Accountability Framework content
- Directs the AF development process to ensure that input & representation builds legitimacy and a strong coalition
- Guides and directs the work of the backbone team, which supports the SG and working groups
- Meets regularly by tele-conference and in-person
- Once convened, the SG will set its own rules about decision-making (e.g., consensus vs. majority; how to address minority views relative to the goal of a common norm from the coalition)
- To speed decision-making, SG may delegate certain decisions to the backbone team, or may choose to form an executive committee
- SG members that represent their organization participate with an aim toward securing the broad buy-in, endorsement, and support of their organization; this includes conducting ‘inreach’ and internal coalition building as needed
Provisional List of Working Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lands (addressing environmental and land rights dimensions of land)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social accountability (focused on labor rights and other human rights)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification norms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reporting &amp; disclosure</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Working Group Composition

- One member of the Steering Group serves as the WG Chair. This person liaises between the SG and WG and presents recommendations to the SG on behalf of the WG.
- Other WG members can be drawn from any of:
  - Other SG members
  - Other staff of orgs represented on the SG
  - Other experts or stakeholders from among the broader set of partners/network
- WG members contribute to the technical development of AF elements, i.e., typically including desk work, consultation, or other activities beyond just the WG meetings.
- Formal membership of the WG should be small enough to permit constructive task-oriented work (e.g., 10-12 max). However, a WG may recruit or invite other stakeholders or experts to contribute on a one-off or ongoing basis.
- Each WG will also have a designated liaison from the backbone team to provide both technical and administrative support. In some cases project funds may also resource personnel in the backbone team or partner orgs to conduct technical work as directed by the WG.

Working Groups’ Remit

- Develop technical proposals for AF norms & guidelines in the WG’s thematic area (or, for regional adaptation & integration, in the case of regional WGs)
- Develop strategy & direct stakeholder engagement, vetting, pilot testing, and refinement to ensure that the proposals are technically sound, feasible, useful, and adhere to the overall AF strategy
- Present draft and final materials to the SG for incorporation into the AF
Accountability Framework
Summary Work Plan & Key Milestones for Year 1

Lead entity
- Dec16 Jan17 Feb17 Mar17 Apr17 May17 Jun17 Jul17 Aug17 Sep17 Oct17 Nov17 Dec17 2018+
  - Meeting
  - Meeting
  - Meeting
  - Meeting
  - Meeting

Steering group
- Oversee the development of the initiative at a strategic level; review and ensure alignment of Accountability Framework elements as they are developed

Corporate Engagement
- Periodic one-on-one communication with leading companies to ensure engagement & intent to pilot-test and adopt framework
- Engagement with a broader set of companies and key sector initiatives such as TFA2020

Working Groups
- Land Working Group (WG): key definitions & criteria ... monitoring norms & parameters ... integration into other tools/processes
- Social WG: key definitions & criteria ... monitoring norms & parameters ... integration into other tools/processes
- Verification WG: develop basic verification norms ... more detail guidance & integration
- Reporting WG: norms for disclosure, communications & claims

Additional Partners / Network
- Participate in Working Groups
- Review and provide inputs to draft Accountability Framework elements
- Promote uptake of the framework by adoption or endorsement of key stakeholders

Initial engagement

Define governance structure and work plans
- Ensure effective communication and coordination among Steering Group, Working Groups, and stakeholders
- Manage and coordinate public face of the partnership, including stakeholder engagement, website, and other communications

Convene Steering Group
- Engage wider circle of supportive NGOs (partners) in development & promotion of the framework
- Help facilitate Working Groups; support Working Groups with technical content development

Fundraising

Regional and commodity based adaptation

Promote uptake of the framework by adoption or endorsement of key stakeholders