

ANNEX X – RULES FOR VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION IN CONFLICT ZONES/ TRAVEL DESTINATIONS WITH HIGH RISK

1. Background

Project participants have faced considerable challenges in contracting DOEs for the validation and the verification of projects located in conflict zones, refugee camps or areas that pose high risk to life and/or health¹. The Gold Standard rules allow all projects under these circumstances to combine DOE validation or verification (based on a desk-review) with on-site validation or verification conducted by an Objective Observer (OO) that is retained by the project participants.

2. Steps and procedures for projects that want to apply the proposed approach

2.1.1. Submission for approval

The Gold Standard Foundation will assess applications on a case-by-case basis. To be eligible for the rule deviation described herein, there must be evidence that demonstrates that DOEs are not willing to go on-site.² Furthermore, the applicant must demonstrate prior experience working in conflict zones/areas that pose a high risk to life and/or health. And show involvement in other activities within the considered area, apart from implementing the project under review. Alternatively, the establishment of a formal collaboration with partners who have such experience and involvement in the considered area may qualify under these rules as long as the collaboration is sustained over the entire crediting period of the project.

2.1.2. Selection of Objective Observer

The project proponent is required to identify and provide Gold Standard with the name and contact details of three Objective Observers (independent experts from local universities, NGOs, consultancies, etc.) who can credibly carry out an appraisal of the project.

It is preferable for the list of suggested Objective Observers to be comprised of representatives from development organisations that have experience within conflict zones and the host country, so that environmental and socio-economic impacts can be safely and credibly assessed. Where applicable, the Objective Observer suggested by the project participant should already have authorisation to work in the specified area.

¹ This can include situations like severe disease outbreak in a country or a part of country and where advisories are issued by national governments / health departments notifying people against travel to a particular region/ country. For eg. the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issues travel health notices to inform travellers about current health issues in specific destinations and warns them about the risks associated or avoiding non-essential travel. Refer to the website for more information - <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices#>

² This evidence includes, but is not limited to, written correspondence from two or more auditors refusing to go on-site in the conflict zone/ areas that pose high risk to life and / or health.

The Gold Standard will select an Objective Observer amongst the three suggested candidates based on an assessment of their expertise or, if they do not match the required criteria, Gold Standard will ask for other candidates to be proposed or may suggest another expert to act as the Objective Observer.

The DOE shall provide a checklist to the selected Objective Observer before the site visit to assist the Objective Observer in assessing the relevant aspects related to the project's validation or verification. The checklist must be limited to issues that the DOE thinks would be necessary to check on-site to form the validation or the verification opinion. The project participant will be responsible for contracting with and covering the costs of the Objective Observer(s). The relationship between and among the project participants, the Objective Observer and Gold Standard shall be established in a Memorandum of Understanding that must be signed by all parties.

2.1.3. Site visit by Objective Observer and submission of the report

During validation, the appointed Objective Observer is required to visit the project site to meet the local stakeholders in order to provide an independent assessment of the risks associated with the project, as well as to identify potential negative impacts associated with the project on the social, environmental and economic elements of the local community.

During verification, the appointed Objective Observer is required to visit the project activity and confirm the status of project operation. The Objective Observer will also assess whether the mitigation plan has been effectively implemented, and whether negative impacts and risks have been mitigated. Further, the Objective Observer is required to check that other negative impacts have not resulted due to implementation and operation of the project.

The Objective Observer shall make use of the Validation or Verification Appraisal Report template provided by Gold Standard as well as the checklist provided by the DOE.

The Validation or Verification Appraisal Report prepared by the Objective Observer will be made available to Gold Standard and the DOE. This report forms part of the final Validation or Verification Report submitted by the DOE for requesting registration or issuance. The DOE may seek clarification from the Objective Observer at anytime and will use the findings from the Validation or Verification Appraisal Report to form the DOE's final validation or verification opinion.

The Gold Standard Foundation will review the report delivered by the Objective Observer during the 6-week registration or 3-week issuance review process.