Systematic Observations Financing Facility

Fifteenth Steering Committee
21 October 2026

SOFF Operational Manual Update

Decision 15.4

Systematic Observations
Financing Facility

Weather and climate data for resilience

Decision 15.4: Adoption of the updated SOFF Operational Manual

The SOFF Steering Committee

Recalls

- the adoption of the SOFF Operational Manual through decision 2.2 following the consultation process requested by Steering Committee in its decision 1.5
- the adoption of the updated SOFF Operational Manual through decision 12.3

Notes that specific operational updates are required following decisions made by the Steering Committee.

Adopts the Update SOFF Operational Manual which reflects the following Steering Committee decisions:

- Decision 11.6 Adoption of the SOFF approach to SOFF Investment funding and the creation of the SOFF Investment phase pipeline
- Decision 14.2 Adoption of the expanded role of the WMO as SOFF Technical Authority
- Decision 14.3 SOFF Compliance Phase Framework
- Decision 14.6 Adoption of updated SOFF results framework for the extended first implementation period 2022-2027
- Decision 14.7 Adoption of the SOFF Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework

Requests the SOFF Secretariat to make the updated SOFF Operational Manual public and available on the SOFF website

Purpose of this Document
This document includes the updated SOFF Operational Manual with proposed refinements to the manual reflecting recent decisions by the Steering Committee.

Annex I

Weather and climate data for resilience

Systematic Observations Financing Facility

SOFF OPERATIONAL MANUAL

Systematic Observations
Financing Facility

Document review process notes:

- **Version 14/06/2022**
  - The SOFF First Steering Committee, taking place 30 June 2022, is expected to adopt sections 3 (governance) and 4.3 (programming criteria) of this Operational Manual
  - The SOFF Second Steering Committee is expected to adopt the remaining sections, taking into consideration
    - feedback from Steering Committee Members provided to SOFF Secretariat by 29 August 2022
    - the outcome of the joint workshop of the SOFF Implementing Entities and SOFF peer advisors that is scheduled to take place on 30 August – 2 September 2022, and
    - the recommendations from the First SOFF Advisory Board meeting expected to take place on 7 September 2022
- **Version 25/10/2025**
  - The SOFF Twelfth Steering Committee, taking place 29 October 2025, adopts the Update SOFF Operational Manual with the following refinements:
    - Updated reporting lines of SOFF Secretariat within WMO
    - Update of SOFF Implementing Entities
    - Updated language in the section 8 on 'Complaints management and conflict resolution mechanism' for better clarity
- **Version 20/09/2026**
  - The 15th SOFF Steering Committee meeting is expected to adopt the updated version of this Operational Manual to reflect the following Steering Committee decisions:
    - Adoption of the SOFF Compliance Phase Framework through Decision 14.3
    - Adoption of the expanded role of the WMO as SOFF Technical Authority through Decision 14.2
    - Adoption of the SOFF approach to SOFF Investment funding and the creation of the SOFF Investment phase pipeline through Decision 11.6
    - Adoption of updated SOFF results framework for the extended first implementation period 2022-2027 through Decision 14.6
    - Adoption of the SOFF Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework through Decision 14.7

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
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
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 Intergrated 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 administratively 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. The implementation of GBON is essential for effective, resilient development and climate adaptation action that results in saved lives, improved and more sustainable livelihoods, and better-protected property.

The support provided by SOFF systematically addresses persistent problems that are caused by 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) peer advisors (advanced national meteorological services)) and WMO that serves as Technical Authority. During the Readiness phase, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and other Overseas Development Aid (ODA[2]-eligible countries[OBJ] can access technical assistance provided by SOFF peer advisors to undertake a GBON Gap Analysis and develop a GBON National Contribution Plan, as well as the Country Hydromet Diagnostics. 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.

[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)

SOFF is a partnership among its co-creators, SOFF funding partners, beneficiary countries, IEs, and peer advisors. The development of SOFF has benefitted 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. 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.

3. Governance

[3] See more information about the Alliance for Hydromet Development at: https://alliancehydromet.org/about/
[4] https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm

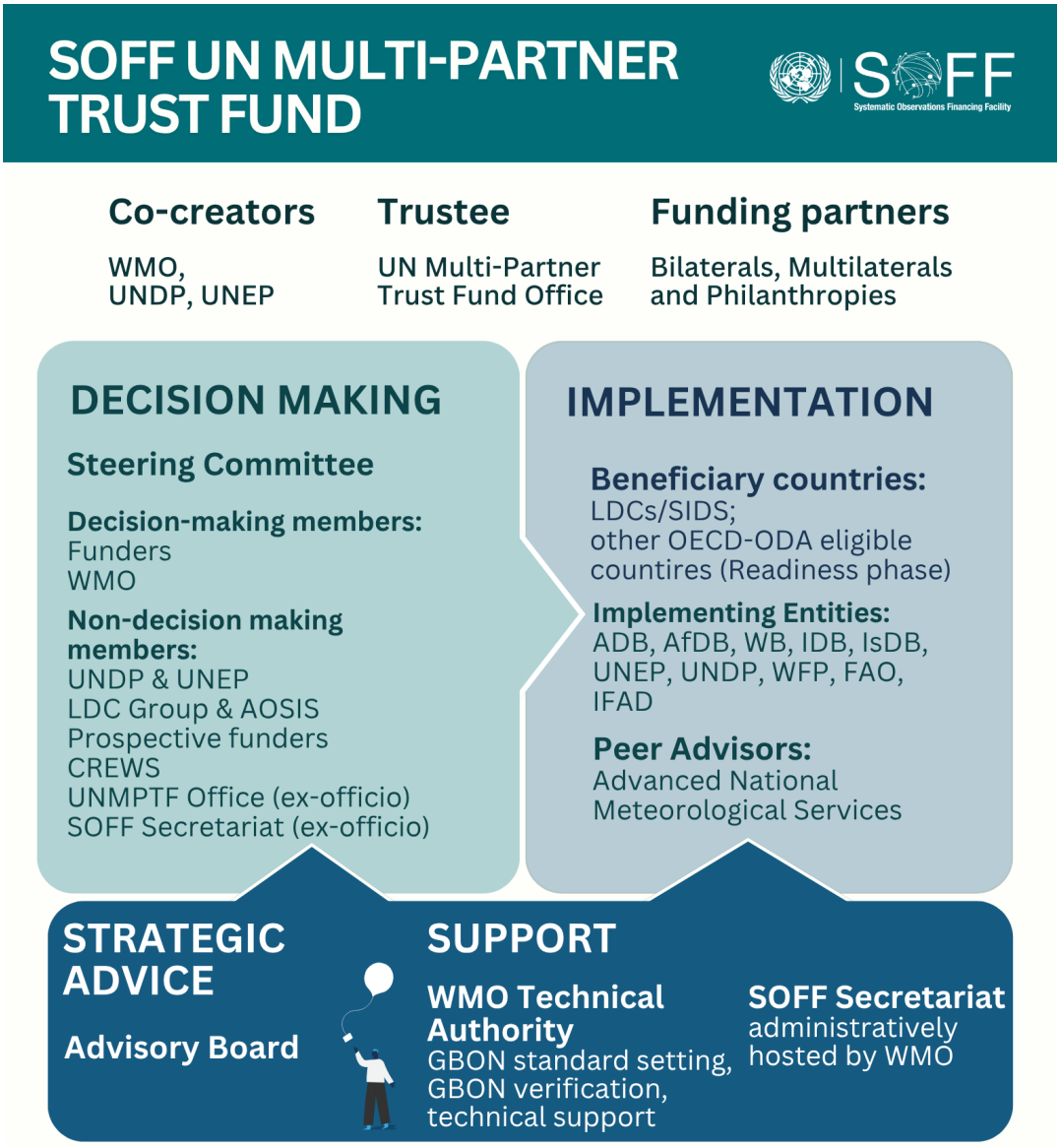

Figure 1. SOFF Governance and operational partners

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 regular 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	Other non-decision-making ad-hoc participants
• Funders (including those with a firm pledge) • WMO in representation of the SOFF co-creators	• UNDP and UNEP • Chair of the LDC Group • Chair of AOSIS • CREWS • Prospective Funders • SOFF Secretariat (ex-officio) • UNMPTF Office (ex-officio)	

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 consensus 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 administratively 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 Assistant Secretary-General of WMO.

As co-creators, UNEP and UNDP may each second one staff member to the SOFF Secretariat to be funded by the SOFF UNMTPF. 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 MEL and 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.

- **Support to 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
- **Support to 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

4.1 Concessionality and country allocations

SOFF provides grant-only finance and technical assistance to beneficiary countries. Country allocation is country-specific and depends on the national activities required for each of the phases of SOFF support (see 3.12).

4.2 Beneficiary countries' access

Any SOFF-eligible country may request SOFF support at any time through the head of the NMHS. Based on the support requests received, the SOFF programming criteria (see 3.11), 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 classification[5]
- **Readiness phase support only.** Other ODA recipient countries from the DAC list of ODA recipients for reporting on the effective calendar year[6]

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.

[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

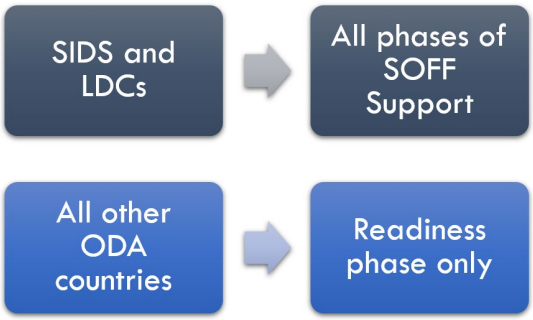

Figure 2. SOFF eligible beneficiary countries for SOFF phases

Beneficiary country focal point. NMHSs from the SOFF beneficiary countries are the focal points for SOFF support.

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 UNDP, UNEP, World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). 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 UMPTF, 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.

Implementation fee. IEs receive a maximum implementation fee of 7% to cover indirect costs.

4.4.3 Peer Advisors

Eligibility. NMHSs that are members of WMO[7] 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. Advanced Meteorological Services can express their interest in becoming SOFF peer advisors. 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.

The peer advisor can subcontract other partners to contribute to the delivery of the outputs of the assignment, as per the umbrella Agreement between WMO and the peer advisors. However, the sole responsibility for the quality and timely delivery of the outputs remains with the peer advisor's institution.

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)

4.4.5 WMO as SOFF Technical Authority

Roles and responsibilities.
The World Meteorological Congress is responsible for setting and approving the GBON

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

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, in its role as SOFF Technical Authority, provides technical support to the peer advisors, IEs and beneficiary countries on GBON regulations. WMO is responsible for the technical screening of the GBON Gap Analysis and the GBON National Contribution Plan (see 4.5.1) against the GBON regulations as well as the review of the Country Hydromet Diagnostics (CHD) and for the independent verification of the status of beneficiary countries' stations against the GBON regulations.

Following SOFF Steering Committee decisions 9.3 and 14.2, the role of the WMO Technical Authority has been updated and expanded. The extended role covers the SOFF Investment Phase.

WMO contribution:
WMO covers the costs associated with its core Technical Authority role through its own resources, complemented by resources provided by SOFF as approved by the Steering Committee.
WMO Reporting: WMO as SOFF Technical Authority reports through the Director of the WMO Integrated Global Observing System (WIGOS) Division to the SOFF Steering Committee on delivery of its services to SOFF, including activities undertaken, emerging technical risks, lessons learned, and progress against agreed deliverables.

4.4.6 WMO as host of the SOFF Secretariat

Roles and responsibilities. The SOFF Secretariat is administratively 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.

4.4.7 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% for administering the SOFF peer advisors' pass-through mechanism.

4.5 Phases of support

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

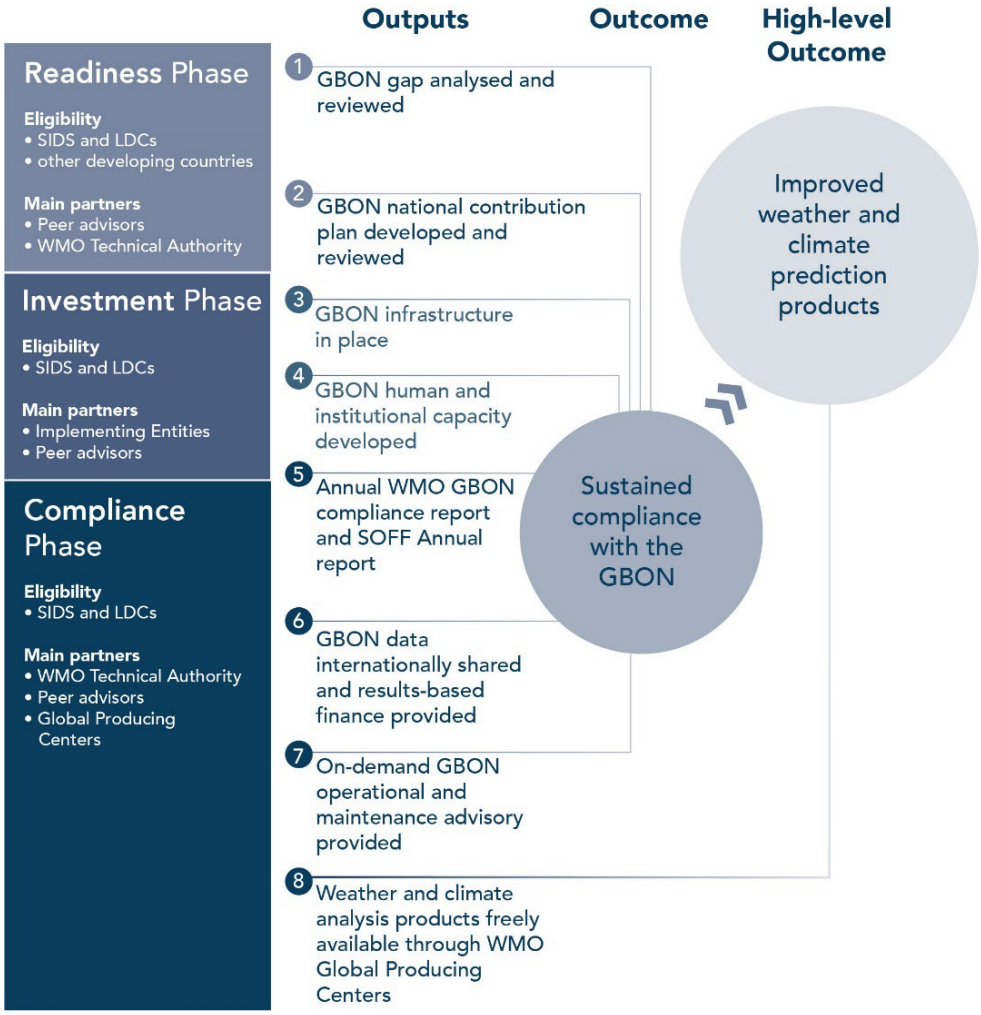

Figure 3. SOFF phases, partners, outputs, and outcomes

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

[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 become compliant 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.

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 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
- 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 regularly submits a summary of approved Readiness funding requests and their implementation status to the Steering Committee.

Readiness phase implementation

- Upon approval of the funding request by the Steering Committee, the SOFF Secretariat (on WMO's behalf) 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 and timeline indicated in the assignment agreement and approved by the Steering Committee.

Readiness phase reporting and completion

- The peer advisor submits the draft reports with the Readiness phase outputs to the WMO Technical Authority. WMO screens the outputs 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, which must be approved by WMO TA. Upon confirmation of approval by the beneficiary country and the IE, the SOFF Secretariat 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 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 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

Outputs	Partner

GBON gap analysis	• Beneficiary country NMHS • Peer advisor • WMO Technical Authority • Implementing Entity
GBON National Contribution plan	• Beneficiary country NHMS • Peer advisor • WMO Technical Authority • Implementing Entity
On-demand Country Hydromet Diagnostic	• Beneficiary country NHMS • Peer advisor • WMO Technical Authority • 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 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).

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. In order to ensure

continuation of GBON compliance after the Investment Phase, countries will submit their first SOFF Compliance Phase funding request prior to the end of the SOFF Investment Phase so that Compliance payments can kick in immediately after the end of the Investment Phase.

Table 3. Investment phase outputs and responsible partners

Output	Partner
GBON infrastructure installed and operating and maintained	• Beneficiary country NMHS • Implementing Entity • WMO Technical Authority
GBON human and institutional capacity developed	
On-demand GBON advisory provided	• Beneficiary country NMHS • Peer adviser • WMO Technical Authority

Process for the Investment phase funding request

- 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 and the WMO Technical Authority review the request to ensure compliance with the information requirements in the template and provide feedback as needed
- The SOFF Secretariat transmits the funding request to the Steering Committee for decision making.

Investment phase pipeline: The SOFF Steering Committee, through Decision 8.4.2, endorsed an approach for responding to future Investment funding requests in the context of limited financial resources. Decision 11. 6 subsequently established a more comprehensive approach to managing all country funding requests across the three SOFF phases for the remainder of the first implementation period.

For the Investment phase, at each SOFF Steering Committee meeting, the SOFF Secretariat will review and bring forward a batch of Investment Funding requests for Steering Committee consideration. The funding requests will be prioritized by applying the following criteria:

- Technical feasibility
- Project timing and scheduling

- Financial considerations
- Risk assessment

The Steering Committee, through Decision 11.6, endorsed the approach to managing country funding requests to respond to country demand, while recognizing the current financial constraints, through the creation of a SOFF Investment phase pipeline that follows the prioritization criteria and process. The SOFF Investment phase pipeline is publicly available on the SOFF website and updated after every Steering Committee meeting.

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 as prime operational partner in the Investment phase, the peer advisor, and WMO Technical Authority, implement 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 and SOFF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework (Decision 14.7).
- The IE submits semi-annual progress updates, annual narrative reports, and annual financial reports. Upon completion, it submits final narrative and financial reports. The reporting schedules are set out in Annex III of the MEL.
- 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.
- All the financial reports including the final financial report are submitted by the IE to the Trustee as per the provisions stipulated in the Legal Agreement with the Trustee.
-

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. 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.

WMO Technical Authority support: During Investment phase implementation, WMO acts as a technical backstop first for peer advisors, and secondarily for Implementing Entities and countries. WMO reviews the Investment Funding Requests, provides technical guidance, and facilitates coordination with WMO Regional Offices and designated centres to promote regional alignment with existing projects and ensure well-coordinated support to countries on GBON and related infrastructure. The SOFF Secretariat facilitates communication between the peer advisors, beneficiary countries, and WMO.

Commissioning period: During the final year of the Investment Phase, countries must operate and maintain their networks according to the GBON compliance criteria. Performance is monitored jointly by the country and the Implementing Entity, with support from the Peer Advisor and the WMO Technical Authority. A station is formally declared commissioned once WMO verifies that it has met the criteria over a continuous three-month period.

4.5.3 Compliance phase

The Compliance phase provides results-based finance and on-demand peer advisors' technical assistance to beneficiary countries to operate and maintain the SOFF funded surface-based observation network and the international sharing of dataThe SOFF Compliance phase framework adopted through Decision 14.3 outlines the details of how and under what conditions this support is provided. Table 4 describes the outputs and responsible partners in this phase.

Table 4. Compliance phase outputs and responsible partners

Outputs	Partner
WMO quarterly and annual GBON compliance report issued	• WMO Technical Authority
GBON data shared internationally and results-based finance provided	• Beneficiary country NMHS • WMO Technical Authority • Trustee
On-demand GBON operational and maintenance advisory provided	• Beneficiary country NMHS • Peer adviser
Weather and climate analysis products freely available through WMO Global Producing Centres	• Participating Global Producing Centres

GBON compliance monitoring, reporting and verification: SOFF Compliance phase support is based on station-level GBON compliance which will be achieved when a given station reports the required measurements, at the required temporal frequency, with the required reporting quality. Monitoring of GBON stations is achieved through publicly available tools: WDQMS, the GBON Compliance app and the SOFF Compliance Monitoring tool. Station level compliance will be verified by the WMO Technical Authority quarterly and annually. WMO will provide SOFF-tailored quarterly GBON compliance reports showing the SOFF-funded stations' performance and

progress, including the percentage of Compliance across a given time period for each SOFF country. Quarterly GBON compliance monitoring reports will be made publicly available on the SOFF website. These Compliance monitoring processes and outputs are integrated into the SOFF Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework.

Execution and disbursements: Compliance payments will be made according to a results-based finance model in which funds are disbursed upon WMO verification of GBON compliance through their quarterly and annual Compliance reports.

To disburse funds, two modalities will be available to SOFF countries depending on the financial and legal structures in place within the NMHS:

- **Direct disbursement from UNMPTF to the NMHS (or national government entity designated by the country).** In this model, the UNMPTF will directly disburse the annual Compliance Phase payments to the country upon approval of the Steering Committee. The NMHS or designated government entity will need to pass mandatory due diligence assessments required by the UN System. The assessments will evaluate the financial management capacity and risks of implementing partners.
- • **Disbursement through UN entity pooled project modality to the NMHS**. In this model, funds from the UNMPTF will be disbursed to a UN entity as a pooled multi-country project managed by the entity. The entity will directly manage the disbursement of results-based payments to all countries who have selected this model, preferably through their decentralized office using the entity's internal due diligence requirements. The UN entity will manage these funds with the 7% Implementing Entity fee as determined by the UNMPTF. This option is suitable for NMHSs in which the financial and legal structures for direct receipt of payment are not yet established. The funds for Compliance will be transferred to the NMHS according to an agreement between the UN entity and the NMHS.

The financial and operational design features of the SOFF Compliance Phase are outlined in the SOFF Compliance Phase framework (Decision 14.3).

Peer advisory support during the Compliance phase. Peer advisors provide on-demand GBON operational and maintenance advisory support throughout the Compliance phase. When issues occur with the performance of SOFF funded stations, or GBON compliance is threatened or compromised, the Peer Advisors are the "first line of defense" and liaise with the NMHS and WMO regional centers, as necessary, to ensure the fastest possible resolution of issues. Peer Advisory costs will be provided upon country request and will be included in the Compliance Phase funding request. Peer technical assistance is capped at USD 100,000 per country over a 3-year period. 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.[11] 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 NHMS for remediation. Further details on roles and responsibilities of the Peer Advisor is outlined in Annex I of the SOFF Compliance Phase framework (Decision 14.3).

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. WMO will further support the operationalization of the Compliance Phase by providing timely technical feedback to countries and Peer Advisors, helping to diagnose compliance issues related to observation quality, metadata, communications, or data exchange. This support will be delivered in close coordination with WMO-designated regional centres, ensuring that regional capacities are leveraged effectively while maintaining a clear Technical Authority interface for SOFF. The SOFF Secretariat facilitates communication between the peer advisors, countries, and WMO. Further details on roles and responsibilities of the WMO Technical Authority is outlined in Annex I of the SOFF Compliance Phase framework (Decision 14.3).

Compliance phase completion. The Compliance Phase provides predictable, results-based financing to sustain GBON operations. Given the global public good nature of GBON data generated and internationally exchanged by SOFF beneficiary countries, the provision of Compliance Phase support is envisioned as long as countries remain eligible for funding, initially until 2032 taking into consideration that the SOFF UN fund is currently set up for an initial 10-year period.

4.6 Private sector

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.

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

SOFF does not prescribe a specific solution, but peer advisors recommend particular models. 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.

In the case in which 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 for the operation and maintenance.

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 representations in the SOFF governance and promoting women's empowerment through SOFF operations.

The Gender Action Plan is an element of the SOFF monitoring and evaluation. It should be used as a reference framework for any gender sensitivity component or question. The gender sensitivity component should be always included in SOFF evaluations.

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 in accordance with the Advisory Board Terms of Reference.

- **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 conducting 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

Risk management and quality assurance will take different emphasis during the three phases of SOFF-funded activities.

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, evaluation and learning

The SOFF MEL Framework (Decision 14.7) defines the scope, objectives, methods, and timelines for monitoring, evaluation and learning across SOFF activities. It harmonizes data collection methods, indicators, and reporting processes to ensure consistency, comparability and reliability of information across SOFF phases. It also supports adaptive management through the systematic use of evidence and lessons to be learned. The reporting schedules are set out in Annex III of the MEL.

The SOFF MEL framework:

- Define the scope, objectives, methods, and timelines for monitoring, evaluation and learning activities.
- Harmonize SOFF monitoring data collection methods, indicators, and reporting processes to ensure consistency, comparability, and reliability of information across phases and stakeholders.
- Allow for adaptive management that involves an ongoing process of working collaboratively and flexibly to learn, make decisions, test assumptions, and adjust actions on this basis (OECD 2023)

7. 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.

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.
- 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.

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.

8. 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,[12] which applies to all UNMPTFs.

[12] 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 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 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. The Technical Authority role was expanded after Decision 14.2 to also provide technical support in the revision of Investment Funding Requests and technical helpdesk assistance to beneficiary countries, peer advisors, and Implementing Entities during the Investment Phase.

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 advocacy 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 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 SOFF Administrative 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.[13] 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
		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

[13] Accessible at: https://ane4bf-datap1.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wmocms/s3fs-public/ckeditor/files/Gender-Action-Plan_2020-2023.pdf?88gPxymrcU1nHy2gliu.ffCX.YggqPr9

	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

Annex VI – SOFF Results Framework

The SOFF updated Results Framework for the extended First implementation period July 2022-June 2027 was adopted by the 14th Steering Committee through Decision 14.6.

Annex VII – Terms of Reference of the WMO Technical Authority function for SOFF

The SOFF Operational Manual describes the WMO Technical Authority support provided through different phases of SOFF Implementation. The Steering Committee through Decision 9.3 updated the initial role of WMO Technical Authority originally outlined in the SOFF Operational Manual.
The Annex I of Steering Committee Decision 14.2 defined the expanded support of WMO Technical Authority. The WMO Technical Authority functions are:

Provide baseline Technical Authority functions

- Serve as the custodian of the Global Basic Observing Network (GBON) technical regulations.
- Perform independent verification of the status of beneficiary countries' observing stations against GBON regulations using WMO Integrated Global Observing System (WIGOS) tools.
- Conduct technical screening of the GBON National Gap Analysis, the GBON National Contribution Plan, and the Country Hydromet Diagnostics against GBON regulations.
- Provide technical support to peer advisors, Implementing Entities, and beneficiary countries on GBON regulations.

Support the SOFF Investment Phase

- Conduct detailed technical reviews of Investment Funding Requests, focusing on the appropriateness and sustainability of proposed technical solutions based on approved National Contribution Plans.
- Participate in SOFF Secretariat-led review meetings with Implementing Entities, Peer Advisors, and beneficiary countries related to Investment Funding Requests.
- Operate a technical helpdesk acting as a single one-stop-shop entry point for SOFF-related technical questions, including the triage, assignment, tracking, and closing of requests.
- Provide technical backstopping during Investment Phase implementation, serving as the primary technical resource for Peer Advisors, and secondarily for Implementing Entities and beneficiary countries.
- Provide timely technical feedback to help diagnose operational compliance issues related to observation quality, metadata, communications, or data exchange.

Manage collective technical knowledge and guidance

- Develop and maintain practical technical knowledge products supporting the SOFF operational community, building on peer advisor knowledge and existing WMO regulations.
- Provide accessible technical guidance covering procurement specifications including for but not limited to, surface and upper-air systems, calibration and traceability approaches, WIS 2.0 data exchange implementation, and station metadata.
- Facilitate collective technical knowledge management and peer learning based on proactive engagement with the peer advisor community, in collaboration with the SOFF Secretariat.
- Collaborate with the Commission for Observation, Infrastructure, and Information Systems (INFCOM) to convert recurring technical issues and best practices into codified WMO guidance materials available for all Members.

Coordinate regional support for GBON compliance

- Coordinate directly with WMO Regional Offices and designated WMO regional centres to promote regional alignment with existing projects and ensure well-coordinated support to countries on GBON infrastructure.
- Ensure integrated and effective support to beneficiary countries by closely coordinating with the WMO Secretariat supporting other project activities related to SOFF, including those funded by the CREWS initiative.
- Support the technical aspects of SOFF impacts work performed by global numerical weather prediction centres.

Monitor, report, and advise governance

- Report to the Steering Committee regarding activities undertaken, emerging technical risks, lessons learned, and progress against agreed deliverables.
- Provide SOFF-tailored quarterly and annual GBON compliance reports , in collaboration with the Global Producing Centres, showing the performance and progress of SOFF-funded stations to trigger results-based financing.