



GEF/E/C.71/01
May 1st, 2026

71st GEF Council Meeting
May 31 – June 03, 2026
Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Agenda Item 10

**FY27 WORK PROGRAM AND BUDGET OF THE INDEPENDENT
EVALUATION OFFICE**

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed the “FY27 Work Program and Budget of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office,” acknowledges the progress made by the Independent Evaluation Office, and approves the budget request of \$8.233 million to carry out the work program for fiscal year 2027.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION1

II. EVALUATION WORK PROGRAM IN PROGRESS FOR DELIVERY IN 20271

III. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, LEARNING, AND OUTREACH5

Knowledge Products.....5

Collaborations and Knowledge Exchange6

IV. BUDGET AND HUMAN RESOURCES FOR FY277

Budget.....7

Human Resources.....8

TABLES

Table 1: Summary of FY27 Evaluation Work Program..... 1

Table 2: IEO FY 26 Budget and Budget Request for FY27 (USD Thousand) 8

Table 3: IEO Staffing Structure..... 9

Quick Scan

1. In December 2025, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) presented to the GEF Council the Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS8) and the Evaluation of GEF Food Systems Programs, alongside several information documents, whose findings were reflected in OPS8.
2. Since then, the IEO has finalized OPS8 and completed three evaluations for the June 2026 Council: Evaluation of the Sustainable Cities Program, Lessons from Evaluating GEF Support for Policy Coherence, and the Evaluation of GEF Support for Marginalized Groups. A revised GEF Evaluation Policy is also being presented as a working document, alongside the knowledge product *Uzbekistan: On the Path to Sustainability*—a story map shared as an information document and part of the new Country Evidence Series.
3. In addition, the IEO has finalized the Annual Evaluation Report of the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund (LDCF/SCCF), and the Formative Evaluation of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF).
4. This report outlines the FY2027 evaluation work program, provides an update on IEO's knowledge management activities, and presents the FY2027 budget proposal, marking the final year of the GEF-8 cycle.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the December 2025 Council meeting, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) presented the Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS8) and the Evaluation of GEF Food Systems Programs, supported by information documents on Evaluating the transition to Small Grants Programme 2.0, the Evaluation of GEF Support for Technological Innovation, the Assessment of Ceiling Options for Agency Share of GEF Resources, and The Approach to Transformational Change in the Multilateral Climate Funds: AF, CIF, GEF and GCF.
2. Since then, the IEO has finalized OPS8 for the GEF-9 replenishment process and completed three evaluations: Evaluation of the Sustainable Cities Program, Lessons from Evaluating GEF Support for Policy Coherence, and Evaluation of GEF Support for Marginalized Groups, submitted to the June 2026 Council. A revised GEF Evaluation Policy is also presented as a working document. In addition, the IEO presents a new knowledge product—a visual country story map, *Uzbekistan: On the Path to Sustainability*, which is part of the Country Evidence Series—as an information document. The IEO has also finalized the Annual Evaluation Report for the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund (LDCF/SCCF), and the Formative Evaluation of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), both to be presented to their respective Councils in June 2026.
3. This report outlines the FY2027 evaluation work program, provides an update on IEO’s knowledge management activities, and presents the FY2027 budget proposal, marking the final year of the GEF-8 cycle.

II. EVALUATION WORK PROGRAM IN PROGRESS FOR DELIVERY IN 2027

Table 1 provides an overview of the FY2027 work program currently under implementation.

Table 1: Summary of FY27 Evaluation Work Program

Institutional & System-Level	Thematic	Regional / Country Cluster
IEO Four-year Strategy	Gender Policy Evaluation	West Africa Coastal Evaluation
Management Action Record Review	LDCF/SCCF Program Evaluation	Central Asia Evaluation
Portfolio Performance Report (PPR) 2027	Off-grid Energy Evaluation (Africa)	Caribbean SIDS Evaluation

Institutional & System-Level	Thematic	Regional / Country Cluster
LDCF/SCCF Annual Evaluation Report Annual Work Programs & Budgets (GEF, LDCF/SCCF, GBFF)	GBFF Evaluation	Amazon Biome Evaluation

Knowledge: Country Evidence Series (including visual country story maps); Finance for Coral Reefs (Belize)

4. *The details of the ongoing evaluation work program summarized in Table 1, with delivery planned for FY27, are presented below.*

IEO Four-year Strategy, Work Program and Budget

5. The GEF IEO's four-year strategy, work program, and budget together will provide a cohesive framework for translating the GEF Evaluation Policy into operational direction across the GEF-9 cycle. Anchored in a Theory of Change, a results framework, and a calibrated portfolio of evaluation products, the Strategy will map how institutional priorities and resources will generate evidence that shapes decision-making and drives improved environmental outcomes. Key strategic components include the use of technology encompassing data analytics, geospatial tools, and AI-assisted methods, to sharpen analytical capacity, and a Knowledge Management and Communications component to ensure findings are accessible, audience-tailored, and systematically curated to support learning across the GEF partnership. A four-year work program and budget translates this vision into concrete deliverables and resource allocations, positioning the IEO as a credible driver of accountability and impact throughout GEF-9. This will be presented to the Council in December 2026.

Review of the Management Action Record

6. This review aims to draw practical lessons from experience with the Management Action Record (MAR) and make them relevant to stakeholders involved in the process. It examines factors influencing the adoption of recommendations and the follow-up of management actions, including the types of recommendations, the alignment between recommendations and corresponding actions, the quality of action plans and timelines, and the pace of implementation. The review then compares these findings with practices in other multilateral organizations in tracking progress on management responses to evaluations, with a view to identifying approaches applicable to the GEF context. It is based on a comparative analysis of institutional practices and an assessment of implementation patterns. The findings will be presented to the GEF Council in December 2026.

Evaluation of GEF's Experience with Implementation of the Gender Policy

7. Gender equality and women's empowerment are key priorities for the GEF, supported by the 2017 Policy on Gender Equality. While these issues have been addressed across multiple

evaluations, no dedicated evaluation has been conducted in recent years. This evaluation will draw on evidence from existing evaluations and country case studies to assess how the policy is being implemented across GEF projects and programs. It will examine where implementation has been effective, under what conditions, and why, as well as the role of gender equality in driving transformational change. The evaluation will also identify lessons and their applicability to ongoing and future interventions. The methodology combines desk reviews, key informant interviews, and country case studies. The report will be presented to the GEF Council in December 2026.

Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation of GEF Interventions in Coastal Zones of West Africa

8. This evaluation focuses on the coastal zones of thirteen West African countries, where environmental and socio-economic pressures—such as erosion, flooding, mangrove loss, fisheries depletion, pollution, and climate risks—affect ecosystems and livelihoods. It will assess the GEF’s contribution to addressing these interconnected challenges and to strengthening integrated coastal and source-to-sea management, governance, and institutional capacity. The evaluation also examines GEF support to policy processes, partnerships, innovation, and private sector financing, identifying lessons for future programming. Methodologically, it adopts a mixed-methods design, combining portfolio analysis, document review, key informant interviews, policy and institutional analysis, and targeted country case studies, complemented by geospatial analysis of environmental risks and changes over time. The evaluation will be presented to the Council in June 2027.

Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation of GEF Interventions in Central Asia

9. Central Asian countries face interconnected challenges including water scarcity, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and increasing climate risks. This evaluation will assess GEF engagement and performance in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan from GEF-5 onward. Its objectives are to assess the relevance, results, and sustainability of benefits of GEF investments, including contributions to transformational change, and to examine country and regional engagement approaches, institutional arrangements, and partnerships. Cross-cutting issues include private sector engagement, blended finance, women’s empowerment, and whole-of-society approaches. This evaluation follows a mixed-methods approach, combining document and literature review, portfolio analysis, key informant interviews, geospatial analysis, and in-depth case studies. It also aims to generate lessons to inform future programming and engagement in the region. The evaluation will be presented to the Council in June 2027.

Strategic Sub-regional Evaluation on the Caribbean SIDS

10. Caribbean SIDS operate in a context of structural vulnerability with high exposure to climate-related hazards such as hurricanes, sea-level rise, and coastal erosion. These risks are compounded by dependence on climate-sensitive sectors, particularly tourism, fisheries, and

agriculture, as well as by institutional capacity constraints, limited domestic resources, and the concentration of population and assets in coastal zones. This evaluation will assess the GEF's contribution to environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and socio-economic outcomes in Caribbean SIDS, with a focus on system-level change beyond individual projects. Covering GEF-5 to GEF-8, it examines the shift toward programmatic and integrated approaches and aims to generate strategic lessons for future programming. Methodologically, this evaluation applies a theory-based, mixed-methods approach combining portfolio analysis, document review, stakeholder consultations, country case studies, and geospatial analysis. The evaluation is scheduled for presentation to the Council in June 2027.

Portfolio Performance Report of the GEF: 2027

11. The Portfolio Performance Report (PPR) provides a comprehensive assessment of the performance of the GEF project portfolio, covering outcomes, sustainability, key processes affecting results, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements. It also examines the performance of GEF systems, policies, and procedures that influence institutional effectiveness. The report includes the Management Action Record (MAR), which tracks the implementation of management responses to evaluations. PPR 2027 will also analyze regional and global project performance, as well as trends in private sector cofinancing. The report will be presented to the Council in June 2027.

Least Developed Countries Fund/Special Climate Change Fund Program Evaluation Reports 2027

12. This program evaluation assesses the performance of the LDCF/SCCF since the 2020 and 2021 evaluations, examining progress, financing challenges, and the funds' comparative advantage relative to other climate finance mechanisms. It aims to inform stakeholders and the LDCF/SCCF Council on achievements and areas for improvement. The scope includes performance and coherence within country portfolios where the LDCF/SCCF operate alongside other climate funds, as well as an assessment of the Challenge Program for Adaptation. The methodology combines portfolio analysis of relevant projects, systematic review of project documentation, key informant interviews, surveys, and field visits in selected countries, with findings validated through triangulation. The evaluation will be presented to the Council in 2027.

Evaluation of GEF interventions in the Amazon Critical Forest Biome

13. This evaluation assesses the GEF's contributions to biodiversity conservation, reduced deforestation and degradation, and improved community livelihoods in the Amazon. Focusing on the three phases of the Amazon Sustainable Landscapes Program, it aims to generate lessons to inform future GEF interventions. The evaluation is conducted at strategic, program/project, and country levels to provide a comprehensive perspective on performance, results and enabling factors across the program. It applies a mixed-methods approach combining portfolio analysis, geospatial analysis, and use of artificial intelligence alongside traditional evaluative tools. A

detailed portfolio review is underway, and field missions are planned to Brazil, Peru, Colombia, and Suriname. The evaluation is scheduled for submission to the Council in 2027.

Evaluation of the Off-grid Energy program in Africa

14. The GEF Independent Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, will conduct a joint evaluation during 2026–2027 of GEF support for off-grid energy access implemented by UNDP. The evaluation will assess results and whether and how GEF support has contributed to expanding off-grid energy access. This work is timely given the GEF’s significant investments in mini-grids, particularly through the Africa Mini-grids Program implemented by UNDP, which provides a strong basis for joint assessment. This evaluation is scheduled for completion in 2027.

III. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, LEARNING, AND OUTREACH

15. The IEO’s knowledge, learning, and outreach activities promote the use of evaluation across the GEF partnership and beyond, helping apply lessons to improve the performance and impact of GEF interventions. During the reporting period, the IEO engaged in conferences, workshops, webinars, and strategic meetings to share findings, build capacity, and foster collaboration. It also introduced new knowledge products, including country story maps, to support evidence-based learning and inform environmental decision-making.

Knowledge Products

A series of visual country story maps will be produced as part of the IEO Country Evidence Series.

The series opens with *Uzbekistan: On the Path to Sustainability*

16. Uzbekistan has partnered with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) since 1996, developing a diverse portfolio of projects addressing major environmental challenges—water scarcity, land degradation, biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution. Its experience offers valuable lessons for GEF programming across Central Asia and other arid regions. This “story map” examines the relevance and performance of GEF engagement in the country, highlighting the conditions needed to scale interventions from pilot projects to system-level transformation, drawing on GEF Portal data, evaluations, geospatial analysis, and broader research.

Mobilizing Private Finance: The Case of Coral Reefs in Belize

17. This study, conducted by IEO with students from Columbia University, assesses financing options for coral reef conservation in Belize, focusing on pathways from grant-based support to sustainable, long-term financing. Grounded in in-country research and stakeholder interviews, it reflects perspectives from government, private sector, and conservation actors. The study

identifies viable financing approaches and the institutional capacity needed to implement them over time. Findings will be presented to the Council in December 2026.

Collaborations and Knowledge Exchange

18. *The IEO strengthened collaboration with the evaluation units of the major climate funds, including the Adaptation Fund, Climate Investment Funds, and the Green Climate Fund, through joint research, shared methodologies, regular coordination, and joint dissemination events. Key outputs include a document on AI-driven evaluation synthesis on Sustainable Forest Management and a joint report on transformational change, helping align approaches across institutions.*

19. *The IEO significantly expanded its global engagement and strengthened knowledge dissemination across multiple platforms. It actively participated in major international forums such as Asian Evaluation Week, the IUCN World Conservation Congress, the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association conference, and meetings of the United Nations Evaluation Group and Evaluation Cooperation Group—to promote methodological innovation and cross-institutional learning. It also convened its own workshops, including evaluating transformational change, bringing together stakeholders from across the GEF partnership and climate funds. The IEO also participated in workshops organized by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) on the use of digital technologies, as well as in integration-focused workshops convened by the Global Environment Facility Secretariat.*

20. *The IEO also reinforced its engagement in global policy and climate financing processes. As a key partner in the Evidence for Climate Action initiative led by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), it contributed to the Pavilion at COP30 in Belém (2025) through several events. These also included joint panels with the other climate funds, including the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund, and the Climate Investment Funds.*

21. *Outreach and knowledge dissemination were significantly expanded through a broader mix of engagement channels and strengthened digital platforms. This included a wide range of webinars and regional events, such as sessions with the EvalforEarth network and UN system-wide workshops on evaluation independence and learning, which covered topics including systems thinking, tracking implementation of evaluation recommendations, sustainability in Small Island Developing States, and the applications of AI in environmental evaluation. A more active social media presence further broadened engagement with diverse audiences. These efforts were complemented by enhanced digital tools, including a redesigned website with improved navigation, interactive dashboards, an OPS8 Evaluation Hub, and AI-powered search to make evaluation findings more accessible and user-friendly.*

22. *Innovation remained a strong focus, with continued advancements in digital and analytical tools. The IEO enhanced its AI-powered search engine on its website, developed geospatial country story maps to better visualize results, and embedded AI tools into portfolio analysis to strengthen insights. It also introduced more interactive knowledge products, including*

the OPS8 e-reader for improved accessibility and the EvalVision series to communicate findings through engaging multimedia formats.

23. *In FY27, the IEO will continue to build on its knowledge, outreach, and methodological foundations to enhance learning and impact.* It will expand its knowledge products and deepen engagement in global evaluation forums, biodiversity and climate COPs, and joint learning initiatives with climate funds. These efforts will focus on transformational change for sustainability, financing approaches, and the application of AI in evaluation. Planned activities include participation in major events in the second half of 2026, such as the European Evaluation Society and American Evaluation Association conferences, CBD COP17 and Climate COP31, alongside strengthened outreach through an upgraded online course, Introduction to Environmental Evaluation: Approaches and Tools, 2.0, and delivery of training through the Climate MEL (Climate Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) Systems Academy at IPDET.

24. At the same time, methodological guidance and evaluation processes will be further enhanced to improve rigor, consistency, and efficiency. This includes more explicit theory-based approaches, expanded use of mixed methods—combining quantitative, qualitative, geospatial, and AI-assisted analysis—to better capture results, identify early signals of transformational change, and generate actionable knowledge to inform decision-making.

IV. BUDGET AND HUMAN RESOURCES FOR FY27

Budget

25. The GEF Council approved a FY2026 budget of \$7.891 million for the Independent Evaluation Office (Table 1). This includes \$5.803 million for fixed, variable and operational costs, \$1.0 million for evaluation activities, and the remainder for indirect and lease costs. Fixed costs, primarily salaries, benefits, and operations are estimated at \$5.498 million, while variable costs, including professional development, networks, knowledge management, communications, and technology, total \$305,000. Estimated FY2026 expenditures are projected at \$7.782 million, reflecting efficient execution across operational and variable cost categories. Evaluation funds are expected to be fully utilized at \$1.0 million, supporting delivery of the IEO work program.

26. For FY2027, the final year of the IEO under the GEF-8 cycle, the Office is requesting a total budget of \$8.233 million (Table 2). This includes \$5.826 million in fixed costs (salaries, benefits, and operations), and \$400,000 in variable costs to support professional development, networks, and the development of AI-powered tools for enhanced data analysis. The evaluation budget is set at \$800,000, focused on initiating work for the GEF-9 cycle. The request also includes office lease costs and World Bank hosting fees (indirect costs), calculated at 11 percent of total costs in line with existing agreements. Overall, the FY2027 supports a transition to the next evaluation cycle while maintaining core functions and aligning resources with evolving priorities and workload demands.

Table 2: IEO FY 26 Budget and Budget Request for FY27 (USD Thousand)

Fixed Cost	Approved for FY2026	FY2026 Estimated Expenses	Budget request for FY 2027
Salaries	3,193	3,083	3,356
Benefits	2,205	2,158	2,349
Sub total (A)	5,398	5,241	5,706
Operations	100	100	120
Sub total (B)	100	100	120
Variable Cost			
Professional Development and networks	105	150	100
Knowledge Management/Communications and Technology	200	200	300
Sub-Total (C)	305	350	400
Total D = (A+B+C)	5,803	5,691	6,226
Multi Annual Budget			
Evaluations (E)	1,000	1,000	800
Total Direct Cost (D+E) = (F)	6,803	6,691	7,026
Total Lease Cost (G)	340	320	391
Indirect Cost (H)	748	771	816
IEO Total Budget FY26 (F+G+H) = I	7,891	7,782	8,233

Human Resources

27. In FY2026, the IEO operated with 19 staff members and one extended-term consultant. For FY2027, it will maintain a core team of 19 staff, supported by two extended-term consultants with data science expertise. From 2027 onward, the IEO will further strengthen its use of data science to enhance the empirical and analytical foundations of its evaluations. This staffing approach aligns with the IEO's strategic priorities, including the development of AI-enabled evaluation systems and databases, and the expansion of data science capacity (Table 3).

Table 3: IEO Staffing Structure

IEO staff	No. in FY 2026	No. in FY 2027
Director	1	1
Deputy Director and Chief Evaluation Officer	1	1
Senior Evaluation Officers	5	5
Senior Knowledge Management and Communication Officer	1	1
Evaluation Officers	4	3
Evaluation Analysts	4	4
Senior Operations Officer	1	-
Data Scientists		2
Financial Analyst	-	1
Information Analyst	1	-
Senior Executive Assistant	1	1
Subtotal staff	19	19
Extended-term consultant	1	2