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LESSONS FROM EVALUATING GEF SUPPORT FOR POLICY COHERENCE

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AI	Artificial intelligence
ASGM	Artisanal and small-scale gold mining
BD	Biodiversity (GEF focal area)
BIMS	Biodiversity Information Management System
BIOFIN	Biodiversity Finance Initiative
CAF	Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBIT	Capacity-Building Initiative for Transparency
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CC	Climate Change (GEF focal area)
CCCD	Cross-Cutting Capacity Development
CES	Country Engagement Strategy
CI	Conservation International
COP	Conference of the Parties
COTAMA	Technical Advisory Commission for Environmental Protection (Uruguay)
CW	Chemicals & Waste (GEF focal area)
DMT	District multisectoral teams
EA	Enabling Activity
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECW	Expanded Constituency Workshop
EPR	Extended producer responsibility
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FOLUR	Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (Impact Program)
FSP	Full-sized project
G7	Group of Seven
G20	Group of Twenty
GBFF	Global Biodiversity Framework Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IAP	Integrated Approach Pilot (GEF-6)
IDP	Integrated Development Plan (Zambia)
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO)
IEM	Integrated Ecosystem Management
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IP	Integrated Program (GEF-8)
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
IW	International Waters (GEF focal area)
KMGBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
LD	Land Degradation (GEF focal area)
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
LLM	Large-language model
MDB	Multilateral development bank
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MRG	Mainstreaming Reference Group(Bhutan)
MRV	Monitoring, results and verification
MSP	Medium-sized project
MFA	Multifocal area
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NAPCD	National Action Plan to Combat Desertification

NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NCA	Natural Capital Accounting
NbS	Nature-based Solution
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPIF	Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund
NSC	National Steering Committee
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
OFP	Operational Focal Point
OPS8	Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation / Overall Performance Study of the GEF
PFD	Project Framework Document
PCSD	Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development
POPs	Persistent organic pollutants
RSCN	Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (Jordan)
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SE4All	Sustainable Energy for All
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SIDS	Small island developing states
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
S2S	Source-to-sea
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
TDA	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis
TDA-SAP	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis–Strategic Action Program(me)
TE	Terminal Evaluation
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WWF-US	World Wildlife Fund-United States
ZIFLP	Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Project

QUICK SCAN

1. This evaluation examines how the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has contributed to strengthening policy coherence in countries to achieve global environmental benefits, drawing lessons from past and ongoing interventions. Policy coherence—defined in this assessment as the alignment of environmental and other public policy objectives, or among environmental objectives themselves—is increasingly recognized as critical for maximizing the impact of limited environmental finance and meeting the targets of multilateral environmental agreements.

2. Although policy coherence became an explicit priority in GEF-8, the GEF has long supported cross-sectoral policy interventions. Recent strategies, including the GEF-8 Strategic Positioning Framework and the 2023 roadmap, have elevated policy coherence as a lever of systems transformation through Integrated Programs and led to the piloting of corporate-level initiatives, with further expansion planned for GEF-9.

3. The evaluation assesses GEF support at the project, program and portfolio levels, using a mixed-methods approach that combines large-scale portfolio analysis—including AI-based methods—with document reviews, interviews, surveys and field-based case studies across multiple regions. Findings are informed mainly by projects approved from GEF-5 onward, where data quality is strongest, and are triangulated across quantitative and qualitative sources.

Support for policy coherence in the GEF portfolio

4. **Most GEF projects are designed to contribute to policy coherence, mainly through upstream interventions in the policy cycle, such as policy development and implementation arrangements.** The predominant approach has been to mainstream environmental considerations across sectoral policies, rather than directly addressing policy conflicts, as this typically requires less intensive coordination across sectoral government agencies. Agriculture is the sector most frequently engaged in policy coherence-related interventions, while areas such as fossil fuel subsidy reform, despite representing the largest source of harmful subsidies, have received comparatively less attention. The GEF's various project modalities provide different types of policy coherence support, with integrated programs more likely to target such outcomes than other project or program types. Contributions to policy coherence are mainly tracked at the project level and only indirectly reflected at the portfolio level.

Results of support for policy coherence

5. **Most completed projects have achieved outcomes that contribute to policy coherence to varying degrees.** Across its five focal areas, the GEF has supported policy alignment within and across levels of government, including between national and higher levels. However, given the upstream nature of many interventions, contributions to more concrete indicators of policy

coherence—such as harmonized budgets—and to global environmental benefits have typically not been reported.

6. **Country ownership is a key driver of outcomes, but its impact is constrained by insufficient technical capacity and implementation timeframes**, particularly in smaller countries such as SIDS. Policy coherence initiatives are more likely to continue and expand beyond GEF support when they help governments advance broader development priorities, generate socioeconomic benefits, and are supported by stable institutions and staffing. By contrast, policy coherence initiatives often end with GEF support where lack of political will, convening authority, economic revenue or relevance to institutional mandates limit continued government funding.

Initial results of GEF-8 policy coherence initiatives

7. **Integrated programs have evolved from diagnosing policy conflicts in GEF-6 to more actively embedding policy coherence-related targets in GEF-8**, through strengthened institutions, financing mechanisms, broader stakeholder engagement aligned with a whole-of-society approach, and results indicators linked to policy reform. Despite this progress, many opportunities remain to strengthen policy coherence contributions in intervention design and to directly deal with sectoral policy drivers that are not yet adequately addressed.

8. GEF**-8 corporate activities have increased attention to policy coherence across the GEF partnership, although most efforts remain at a pilot stage.** As in previous phases, Country Engagement Strategy (CES) activities in GEF-8 have largely focused on facilitating intersectoral dialogue rather than directly supporting longer-term policy reform. While most stakeholders agree that the GEF can play a role in advancing policy coherence, most do not view a dedicated funding window as essential. Early experience from a pilot project engaging legislative bodies highlights the importance of clearly defining policy coherence at the institutional level and identifying priority production sectors and geographic areas. It also underscores the need to engage all branches of government involved in policymaking, with additional time, transparency, and communication required to build trust and shared understanding, particularly with legislators and non-environmental agencies, which are often less familiar with the GEF.

Strengths, gaps and opportunities

9. **The GEF's diverse, multi-country portfolio and global knowledge platforms position it to effectively disseminate lessons, benefits and practical examples.** These assets can help address a common gap among partners: limited understanding of what policy coherence entails, why it matters and how to operationalize it. Although its engagement has largely been limited beyond environment ministries, the GEF's partnership model offers cross-sector experience and relationships that can engage key stakeholders beyond the environmental sphere at different stages of the policy cycle. Furthermore, the comparative advantage of its Agencies, such as in

demonstrating the economic costs and benefits of more coherent policies and maintaining long-term relationships beyond the project cycle, can help mitigate the impacts of shifting political priorities.

10. At the same time, opportunities remain to strengthen the GEF's effectiveness by addressing important gaps. These include better accounting for complex political and institutional realities, particularly misalignments between project implementation timelines and the pace of policy reform. These challenges are compounded by wide variations in country capacity to implement policy coherence initiatives, especially with the added complexity brought on by whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. The GEF's predictable, country-driven, and flexible funding, delivered through its multiple modalities, can be more strategically programmed within a country's GEF portfolio to better respond to stakeholder needs, accounting for the longer timelines and iterative nature of policy processes and multisectoral engagement.

Conclusions

11. The GEF has contributed to policy coherence over the years, primarily by laying the foundations for, rather than catalyzing, systemic policy change. The GEF is well-positioned to convene actors and support integrated policy approaches through its existing project and program modalities. Across its portfolio, the GEF has consistently supported policy coherence through policy development, capacity-building and intersectoral exchange. These efforts have contributed to more aligned policy frameworks, particularly in upstream stages of the policy cycle. Mainstreaming environmental objectives into sectoral policies has been the most common approach, enabling integration without requiring more challenging institutional change. However, more complex dimensions of policy coherence, such as addressing harmful subsidies and ground-level enforcement, have received less support.

12. **GEF support for policy coherence has added greatest value by accelerating and testing policy reforms, but sustaining outcomes requires aligning closely with country incentives and engaging relevant stakeholders.** The role of GEF projects as a neutral facilitator supporting enabling conditions and pilot demonstrations, which governments do not usually fund, has been crucial for building stakeholder ownership and momentum in policy adoption and implementation. However, this alone has not led to sustained coordination or behavioral change across institutions. Successful and sustained policy coherence support depends on interventions aligning with socioeconomic incentives as well as priorities in the government's broader development agenda. More consistent engagement beyond environmental institutions is also needed to ensure equal ownership across relevant stakeholders, particularly those that can most influence outcomes and their long-term sustainability.

13. **Outcomes meant to support policy coherence are ultimately shaped by domestic governance dynamics, with the GEF playing a strategic but bounded role.** The success of interventions depends heavily on country-specific factors such as political will, institutional dynamics and shifting priorities. The GEF is most effective when reinforcing existing policy processes and leveraging institutional champions, but its interventions have not always accounted for domestic political economy realities during design and implementation, which has resulted in outcomes not being achieved or sustained. Policy coherence requires sustained, iterative engagement across the full policy cycle. In contrast, GEF projects are typically time-bound and focused on early-stage outcomes, which can undermine progress toward long-term reforms. While GEF projects are driven by country priorities, addressing this intervention design mismatch is important to increase achievement of outcomes and strengthen continuity beyond project completion.

14. **Pilot corporate initiatives in GEF-8 have raised visibility across the GEF partnership but mainstreaming and expansion of policy coherence support require more systemic changes.** The GEF partnership recognizes the need for shared definitions and practical guidance, which will be necessary to effectively implement the GEF-9 strategy. However, systematic criteria for tagging at project level and outcome tracking at portfolio level have yet to be addressed, limiting learning and accountability as GEF 9 expands its scope of support.

Recommendations

15. The following actions are recommended to increase the financial and institutional sustainability of GEF-supported policy coherence initiatives, while reducing operational and transaction costs:

(1) **Clarify and articulate the GEF's strategic niche in supporting policy coherence, drawing on its comparative advantage and track record, while preserving the flexibility to respond to country-driven priorities.** The GEF should establish broad guiding principles on how, where and when it can add the most value—building on country portfolios and the complementary roles of other actors, particularly its partner Agencies, in areas such as large-scale policy reform and financing. This approach will allow the GEF to remain responsive to evolving, context-specific opportunities for supporting policy coherence, while providing strategic direction for programming, partnerships, and resource allocation.

(2) **Ensure policy coherence interventions are grounded in country contexts by systematically assessing governance conditions and institutional capacities prior to designing interventions.** The GEF should systematically identify appropriate entry points by first assessing baselines to better respond to contextual needs. Interventions

should identify key stakeholders to engage—such as those with the most relevant mandates and structural influence—and increase attention to the context-specific economic and social benefits of policy coherence, for greater sustainability. Intervention designs should clarify pathways toward long-term impact that consider the various stages of the policy cycle—from the development and adoption to the implementation and evaluation of policy reforms.

(3) **Leverage existing learning and monitoring mechanisms to strategically support and track outcomes of long-term policy processes.** The GEF should leverage its mechanisms for adaptive learning to more strategically inform intervention design across different contexts and track its contributions to systems transformation over time. At the project level, this would include establishing appropriate baselines to enable assessment of policy coherence outcomes beyond project completion. Building on the GEF-9 results framework, system-level policy and regulatory reform indicators could be tested and adapted to explicitly capture progress in policy coherence. Knowledge management efforts should complement these actions by systematically capturing and disseminating experiences in policy coherence support across countries and Agencies.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. This report, *Lessons from Evaluating GEF Support for Policy Coherence*, examines how the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has contributed to greater coherence in country policies to achieve global environmental benefits.

2. The GEF-8 Strategic Positioning Framework for the first time explicitly identifies the need to support policy coherence to maximize and sustain the benefits of GEF investments. In October 2023, the GEF Council approved a strategic roadmap to enhance policy coherence across projects, programs, and corporate activities, highlighting governance and policies as one of four key levers of systems transformation.[1] The GEF-9 Strategic Positioning Framework further underscores the importance of supporting policy coherence to help reduce the costs of restoring ecological health while increasing the impact of existing environmental funding.

3. Policy coherence, as defined by the OECD and cited in GEF documents, is "the systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies, creating synergies toward achieving agreed objectives" (OECD 2001). This definition was developed in the context of policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) among OECD member countries.[2] Building on this definition, this assessment draws on insights from project document reviews and stakeholder interviews to adapt the concept to the GEF context.

4. In this assessment, policy coherence refers to the alignment between environmental and other public policy objectives, or among environmental policy objectives themselves (e.g., biodiversity and climate change), so that policies reinforce rather than undermine environmental outcomes.

5. While the 2023 paper highlights the GEF's explicit focus on policy coherence in GEF-8, GEF support for policy development and reform is not new. This report assesses the GEF's interventions through the lens of their contribution to greater policy coherence. It aims to draw lessons on how the GEF has supported policy coherence thus far, identify the strengths and gaps in this support, and examine the GEF's comparative advantage in addressing existing challenges to enhancing policy coherence. The findings draw on analyses of active and completed projects, program-level and corporate documents, field-based case studies, a survey, stakeholder interviews, and other IEO evaluations.

[1] GEF/C.65/04, Enhancing Policy Coherence through GEF Operations

[2] With the advent of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), OECD amended its definition in 2019 to include coherence between domestic and international policy-making, and the transboundary and long-term impacts of policies (https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/oecd-legal-0381); while this amended definition has been adopted by UNEP to assess SDG 17.14 (policy coherence for sustainable development), the GEF uses the 2001 definition.

2. METHODOLOGY

6. This chapter defines the key questions, concepts used, and the scope of the evaluation. It presents the methods and evidence sources used in data collection and analyses, and the measures taken to address evaluative challenges.

2.1. Key questions

7. This assessment aimed to answer three key questions:

(1) How has the GEF supported policy coherence in countries to increase global environmental benefits?

(2) What lessons from past GEF interventions explain how policy coherence can be strengthened and sustained[3] across different contexts?

(3) How is GEF support for policy-related interventions at the portfolio, program and project levels adapting to effectively promote policy coherence?

Specific sub-questions are detailed in Annex A.

2.2. Conceptual definitions and scope

8. In this assessment, ***policy coherence*** refers to the alignment between environmental and other public policy objectives, or among environmental policy objectives themselves (e.g., biodiversity and climate change), so that policies reinforce rather than undermine environmental outcomes. In the literature, alignment across different sectoral government entities is known as ***horizontal policy coherence***; other types are vertical, temporal and political (STAP 2023; see Annex A for discussion on other types of policy coherence).[4]

9. This analysis focuses on horizontal coherence as it is the type most relevant to the GEF's aim of reducing conflicts in natural resource use and integrating efforts toward environmental protection. ***Vertical policy coherence***, or alignment in policies across different levels of government (e.g. national and local), is also assessed as a necessary condition for on-the-ground adoption and implementation of intersectoral policies. Interventions that promote policy alignment across different levels of government but exclusively within the same sector usually require only coordination between units of the same ministry or sectoral agency rather than with external entities, yielding lessons that are less relevant to the focus of this assessment. Temporal

[3] Sustainability in the GEF Evaluation Policy is defined as "The continuation/ likely continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has come to an end, and its potential for scale-up and/or replication; interventions need to be environmentally as well as institutionally, financially, politically, culturally and socially sustainable."

[4] Alignment of GEF-supported interventions with national priorities and policies or with international agreements is assessed as "coherence" under the OECD-DAC criteria. While they may influence each other, "coherence" is conceptually distinct from "policy coherence", which is strictly about alignment across public policies, regardless of external intervention.

and political policy coherence emerge at time scales and in domains typically beyond the scope of GEF reporting and therefore could not be assessed.

10. In this assessment, the term ***policy*** refers to a broad range of policy framework elements, including strategies, laws, plans, implementing regulations, standards, programs and institutional mechanisms. ***Policy-related*** refers to activities occurring at any stage of the policy cycle, which generally consists of:

- agenda-setting, e.g. stakeholder consultations to identify issues that need attention;
- formulation, e.g. analysis of options and corresponding costs and benefits;
- adoption, e.g. formal approval and integration into government operations;
- implementation, e.g. development of delivery mechanisms, enforcement of laws; and
- evaluation, e.g. assessment against objectives and of any unintended effects.

Political in this report refers to the context in which policy cycles and governance processes occur, as well as the mechanisms that shape how they are carried out. It includes elements such as power dynamics, decision-making structures, negotiation, and campaigning. ***Political economy*** refers to the interaction between political and economic systems.

11. A GEF-supported ***policy coherence-related intervention*** refers to an activity aimed at creating or strengthening the enabling conditions for horizontal coherence (e.g. training for interministerial coordination) or improving coherence across specific sectoral policies (e.g. policy studies, enforcement mechanisms). As this is the first evaluation dedicated to this theme, this broad framing—consistent with stakeholder perspectives—was chosen to ensure that the full range of GEF support for horizontal policy coherence is accounted for. In addition, at the project level, the intervention must intend to:

- directly or indirectly contribute to meeting environmental public policy objectives; and
- directly or indirectly lead to the adoption of a policy instrument, such as through legislation or budget allocation.

12. Interventions not designed to be taken up by government are therefore excluded from the project-level assessment. For instance, a pilot demonstration working directly with the private sector with no explicit links to current or future government programs would be excluded. Similarly, an interministerial steering committee established as part of a GEF project to guide its implementation—without contributing to policy-related activities—would also be excluded.

13. Figure 1 shows how these concepts relate to each other. It illustrates how GEF support for policy coherence interacts with public policy processes, and how it ultimately aims to contribute to global environmental benefits, with a vision to catalyze transformational change in the systems it invests in. While their scale and scope preclude them from directly creating the type of structural policy coherence that is a property of national governance systems, outcomes targeted

by individual projects, programs and portfolio-level initiatives are expected to contribute to catalyzing this system-level outcome, ideally through planned synergies across interventions. The conceptual framework highlights how GEF-supported interventions do not occur in isolation but interact with other actors' interventions, operating within specific country context drivers and conditions, such as its political economy landscape — all of which affect the achievement of target outcomes and impacts.

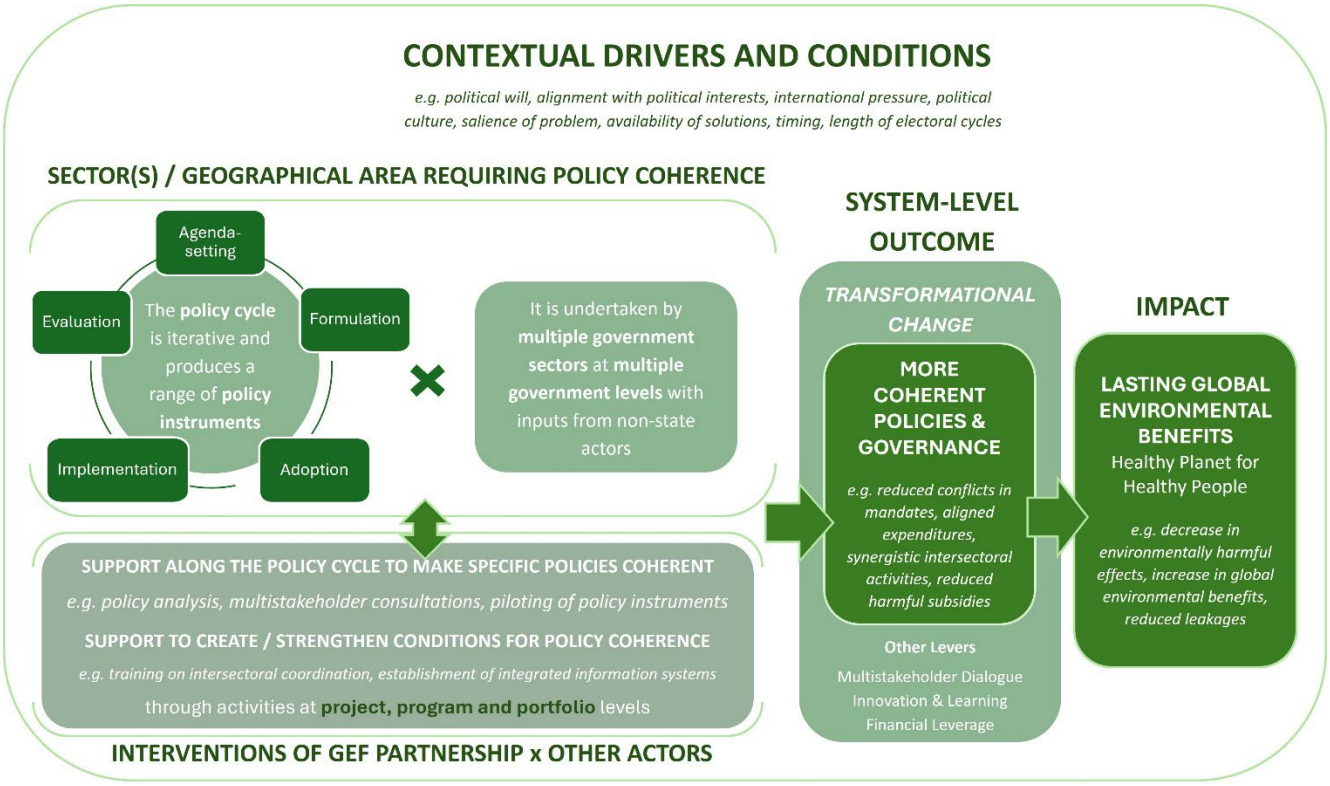

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of how GEF support for policy coherence interacts with public policy processes and country contexts to achieve more coherent policies and, ultimately, lasting global environmental benefits

2.3. Methods and sources of evidence

14. GEF support was analyzed at three levels: project, program and portfolio/corporate, aligned with the areas of intervention identified in the 2023 strategic roadmap. The first two key questions were addressed through analysis of historical evidence mainly starting from GEF-5, while the third was considered by comparing this historical evidence with activities implemented in GEF-8.

A mixed-methods approach was applied through portfolio reviews using both human and artificial intelligence (AI) analyses, including large-language models (LLMs), machine learning and statistical analyses; interviews and focus group discussions with GEF partners at the corporate and country levels; field-based post-completion case studies; observations of GEF corporate activities; reviews of GEF documents and completed IEO evaluations; sector mapping using network analysis; and a multilingual online survey. Table 1 presents the evidence sources used in

this assessment. Annex C provides additional details on the sample selection criteria and areas assessed at each level of support.

Table 1. Methods and sources of evidence used at three levels of GEF support

LEVEL OF SUPPORT	Methods and Sources of Evidence
Project	**DESIGN (Active and Completed Projects)** • LLM analyses of project components dataset of projects CEO-endorsed from GEF-5 to -8 as of 30 June 2025 (n=2830) • Statistical analyses of extended general report dataset for projects CEO-endorsed from GEF-5 to -8 as of 30 June 2025 (n=2830) • Analysis of project documents of ongoing GEF-8 projects CEO-endorsed as of 31 December 2024 (n=62 out of 148 approved projects) and completed GEF-6 and -7 projects with available terminal evaluations as of 30 June 2024 (n=48 out of 161 TEs) selected using keyword analysis • LLM analysis of executing agencies data on CEO-endorsed projects from Pilot Phase to GEF-8 as of 30 June 2025 (n=4705) • Statistical analysis of activity-level financing dataset for completed GEF-6 and -7 projects with available terminal evaluations as of 31 December 2023 (n=118) • Analysis of CEO endorsement request documents of GBFF projects selected under the first programming tranche in 2024 (n=40) [selected but not all active as of 30 June 2025] **RESULTS (Completed Projects)** • LLM analyses of terminal evaluations of GEF-5 to -8 projects submitted as of 30 June 2025 (n=854) • Statistical analysis of IEO Annual Performance Report dataset (terminal evaluation reports validated as of June 2025, n=2384) • Analysis of project documents of GEF-6 and -7 projects with terminal evaluations submitted as of 31 December 2024 selected using keyword analysis (n=48 out of 161 TEs) • Sector mapping and network analysis of projects with policy components CEO-endorsed from GEF-5 to -8 as of 30 June 2024 in the top 5 recipient countries (Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico; n=306) • Field-based case studies of 10 project clusters in 6 countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, Philippines, Uruguay, Zambia) conducted from July 2024 to October 2025 • Additional field data collection in countries visited for other IEO activities (e.g. Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea) • Review of IEO evaluations
Program	• Analysis of Program Framework documents of GEF-6 and -7 Integrated Approach Pilots and Impact Programs (n=5) and GEF-8 Integrated Programs (n=5) • Analysis of project documents of IAP, Impact and IP child projects approved as of 31 December 2024 with 1-2 keywords related to policy coherence (n=15) • Review of IEO evaluations
Portfolio/ Corporate	• Review of GEF strategy documents and templates • Interviews (oral and written) of GEF focal points in the top 5 recipient countries (Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico) • Focus group discussions and interviews with GEF Secretariat teams, GEF Agencies, expanded constituencies and OFPs (n>130) • Field observations of GEF corporate activities • Analysis of GEF Focal Point data as of 31 January 2026 • Multilingual online survey • Review of IEO evaluations

2.4. Addressing challenges and limitations

15. A key challenge was the absence of a shared institutional understanding of policy coherence across the GEF partnership. At the operational level, projects intended to contribute to policy coherence could not be easily identified, as the term was not explicitly used in GEF documents prior to GEF-8. To address this limitation, findings were triangulated across in-depth human reviews of project documents, LLM analyses of key project information—using multiple models, criteria and iterations—and keyword analyses. While the report presents the results of the final iterations, only trends that are both statistically significant and consistent across the multiple methods and sources of evidence are included.[5] Quantitative findings were further triangulated with qualitative insights from stakeholder inputs.

16. Another challenge was the lack of information on earlier GEF projects. To ensure comparability, the core analyses focused on projects CEO-endorsed under GEF-5 and later, as this portfolio comprises the most complete and reliable datasets. Older projects were reviewed as part of scoping activities or as part of selected country cases to better understand the broader context; they are also referenced where previous IEO evaluations had already collected relevant information on them.

17. As the GEF's strategic roadmap on policy coherence was adopted only in October 2023, more time is needed for results to materialize. This report therefore primarily examines activities similar to those proposed in the roadmap but implemented prior to its adoption, drawing relevant lessons with a forward-looking perspective.

3. CONTEXT

18. This chapter highlights why and how enhancing policy coherence has gained increasing importance in the GEF and what the current constraints are.

3.1. Rationale for the GEF's focus on policy coherence

19. **The financing gap to restore nature is significant.** According to the latest State of Finance for Nature report, investments in nature-based solutions must increase to $571 billion annually to meet the world's biodiversity, climate and land restoration commitments by 2030, yet one estimate puts current investments at $154 billion (UNEP 2026, Willis 2026). Another estimate found that an additional $711 billion per year, on average, is required to reverse biodiversity decline by 2030 (Deutz et al 2020); achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions necessitated $3.8 trillion in annual investment through 2025, yet only 16 percent of this was deployed by governments, financial institutions, and the private sector (Kozloski et al 2022).

[5]All statistical analyses used a 95% confidence level to determine significance of results. Recall and precision rates of the LLM analyses are presented in Annex C.

20. **Government spending on activities that harm nature far exceeds the amount needed to restore it.** A 2023 World Bank report estimates that governments spend $1.25 trillion annually on direct subsidies for agriculture, fishing, and fossil fuels. In addition, more than $6 trillion is spent to address the negative consequences of these subsidies on human populations and the environment (Damania et al 2023). A more recent study estimates harmful subsidies at between $1.7 and $3.2 trillion per year, with environmental externalities ranging from $10.5 to $22.6 trillion. These new estimates cover six major sectors driving biodiversity loss—agriculture, fossil fuels, forestry, infrastructure, fisheries/ aquaculture and mining—and are likely underestimated due to data gaps (Reyes-Garcia et al 2025). Even proenvironment investments can generate environmental harm. For example, some national policies prioritize meeting carbon emissions targets at the expense of highly biologically and culturally diverse forests, increasing land use pressures (e.g. Gonon 2025, The Gecko Project 2023, Bennun et al 2021).

21. **Greater coherence in government policies has been proposed as a way to close the environmental financing gap and accelerate progress toward environmental targets.** The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the largest and longest-running financial mechanism for multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) on climate, biodiversity, land, chemicals and waste, and transboundary water bodies. In its GEF-8 Strategic Positioning Framework, the GEF highlighted the importance of policy coherence for increasing funding to reverse environmental degradation while reducing harmful government subsidies (GEF 2022a). In 2021, G7 leaders adopted the Nature Compact, which calls for reforming policies harmful to nature and committing to a whole-of-government approach toward a nature-positive world (G7 2021). Equally important, policy coherence translates global commitments into domestic planning, budgeting and investment decisions that determine MEA implementation success (Dzebo et al 2025).

22. **All three Rio Conventions for which the GEF serves as financial mechanism have directly or indirectly emphasized the importance of policy coherence in achieving their targets.** The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the first multilateral environmental agreement that explicitly aims to phase out or reform harmful subsidies by 2030 (UN CBD 2022). In 2015, Article 2 of the Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) called for making "finance flows consistent with a low-greenhouse-gas emissions and climate-resilient pathway", indicating the importance of coherent fiscal mechanisms across sectors (UNFCCC 2015). Similarly, Principles 10 and 15 of the Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) emphasize the need to balance social, economic and environmental dimensions in implementation, including through the removal of nature-negative policies (Orr et al 2017).

23. **As the financial mechanism for multiple environmental agreements, the GEF is well-positioned to promote greater policy coherence at national and international levels.** As early as

2001, the parties to the three Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, UN CBD, UNCCD) formed an informal Joint Liaison Group after recognizing that achieving their targets required coordinated action (UNFCCC 2026). The OECD Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development framework highlights coherence across financial sources as one of five dimensions of policy coherence (OECD 2014). However, research suggests that greater coherence is still needed among international environmental processes (Bizikova et al 2018, Rantala et al 2021, Boran et al 2024). As the financial mechanism for six MEAs, the GEF adopted a "family of funds" approach in GEF-8 to strengthen coherence across MEA programming, enabling a coherent system-level response to environmental challenges (MOPAN 2025). In addition, it has engaged with other multilateral climate funds through a Multilateral Climate Funds Joint Action Plan to align complementarities, financing approaches and progress reporting to governing bodies.

3.2. Evolution of GEF support for policy coherence

24. **Support for policy coherence is not new to the GEF.** With a mandate that cuts across multiple sectors, the GEF has funded cross-sectoral policy interventions throughout its more than 30 years of operation. For example, through its multifocal area projects, it has helped establish multisectoral and multistakeholder mechanisms at the national, provincial and village levels. These mechanisms enable environmental, social and economic problems to be discussed simultaneously, and support the development of integrated solutions (GEF IEO 2018a). The Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF highlighted the GEF's innovations in governance, including efforts to increase policy coherence through integrated approaches (GEF IEO 2022). Individual focal areas have likewise implemented approaches that inherently address policy coherence, such as biodiversity mainstreaming and land degradation neutrality.

25. **In GEF-8, policy coherence became an explicit priority, mainstreamed through programming design, country engagement and dedicated funding.** In October 2023, the GEF Council approved a roadmap to enhance policy coherence across multiple levels of GEF operations (GEF 2023). The GEF-8 Programming Directions identify "governance and policies" as one of four levers of system transformation, seeking to foster policy coherence through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach from the project design stage (GEF 2022a). As the GEF's main vehicle for transformational change, almost all GEF-8 Integrated Programs include policy coherence as a key intervention. Beyond programming, policy coherence was planned to be mainstreamed in the GEF's proposal screening process, Country Engagement Strategy, Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy, and Results Management Framework, as well as supported through dedicated funding windows. The GEF's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) has supported these efforts by developing recommendations for embedding policy coherence at the project, program and portfolio levels (STAP 2023; Stafford Smith et al 2022). Pilot activities implemented so far include knowledge dissemination and multistakeholder workshops on policy coherence, increasing attention to opportunities for policy coherence during project screening, and the launch of a competitive funding window on policy coherence.

26. **In GEF-9, policy coherence is planned to be further mainstreamed across GEF operations, expanding its scope beyond the national level to the international arena.** The GEF-9 Strategic Positioning Framework characterizes policy coherence as three levels of "nature-positive governance": domestic, international, and systemic (GEF 2026). For example, the Dryland and Drought Management Program aligns with and leverages existing national-level processes under both UNFCCC and CBD to integrate drought management into broader development efforts and optimize resource use. (GEF 2025a). The GEF-9 Programming Directions mainstream policy coherence in the strategies of all its five focal areas and eight Integrated Programs, in some cases making it part of project approval criteria. The Country Engagement Strategy is also planned to engage ministries beyond the environment sector, as well as sub-national governments and legislative bodies, through mechanisms such as national steering committees and country platforms. Although policy coherence is not currently included as an indicator in the GEF's Results Management Framework, policy coherence initiatives are expected to be monitored at the project, program, and portfolio levels throughout the project cycle. A series of guidance documents, knowledge products and knowledge exchanges—particularly in partnership with MEAs—are also planned to support both GEF programming and initiatives of the broader international community.

3.2. Previous evaluative evidence and remaining challenges

27. **The GEF has long supported policy reform, but evaluations highlight the limited tracking and varied results across country contexts.** Policy support in the GEF is typically delivered through an institutional capacity-building project component, with activities ranging from policy research and development to multistakeholder consultations to awareness-raising. Recent GEF IEO evaluations undertaken for the Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS8) note significant efforts in promoting policy coherence, but with uneven success (see Annex B for list of evaluations). While policy coherence is increasingly embedded across GEF focal areas and has delivered notable outcomes, persistent obstacles such as short project timelines, institutional fragmentation, limited cross-disciplinary capacity and inconsistent political support have impeded results (GEF IEO 2026). The strongest outcomes have occurred where national governments took ownership of coordination efforts; conflict, staff turnover and misaligned incentives, on the other hand, have often undermined progress. Tracking policy-related outcomes, particularly over the long term, has been limited (GEF IEO 2018b). At the global level, UNEP—the custodian of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 17.14 on policy coherence for sustainable development— developed a framework and score-based methodology to assess the level of domestic policy coherence across eight domains, but its application has also been limited so far, reflecting the difficulty of assessing this multidimensional target even beyond the GEF context (UNEP 2020, 2024).

28. **Contextual conditions influence the degree of policy coherence in a country, making it difficult to standardize interventions for implementing and assessing policy coherence.** Political

will, power dynamics and institutional culture shape policy coherence, alongside coherence in stakeholder values, beliefs, interests, objectives, rules, and structures, among others (Fopa Tchinda and Talbot 2023; Shawoo et al 2023). A key challenge to environmental policy coherence are the conflicting mandates and siloed approaches across sectoral ministries which—ttogether with limited technical and financial capacity-- can hinder communication and the design of coherent frameworks (OECD 2016, Joshi et al 2015). Coordinating policies vertically across local, national, and international levels adds further complexity (Underdal 2017). Moreover, short electoral cycles and the systematic undervaluation of natural capital in national accounting often undermine long-term policy coherence (Howlett & Migone 2025, Dasgupta 2021). Even when conditions are favorable, unavoidable trade-offs can complicate implementation (Cairney 2025, Iacobuta et al 2021). In addition, the absence of agreed definitions and robust tracking frameworks makes it difficult to identify and address policy misalignments in the first place (Nilsson et al 2012, Dzebo et al 2025).

29. **Previous IEO evaluations have provided recommendations on GEF support for policy reform, but a more targeted assessment is needed given the GEF's growing focus on policy coherence.** OPS8 highlights the importance of embedding policy alignment throughout programming, including through early engagement with non-environment ministries, stronger operational focal points, multistakeholder dialogues, and integrated programming. As GEF-9 expands this focus, further assessment is needed on how to effectively operationalize and sustain policy coherence at the portfolio, program, and project levels.

4. SUPPORT FOR POLICY COHERENCE IN THE GEF PORTFOLIO

30. This chapter presents how the GEF has provided support for policy coherence in project design, based on the analyses of CEO-endorsed documents and the GEF Portal project components dataset. Evidence is drawn mainly from projects approved under GEF-5 until GEF-8 as of 30 June 2025, including closed and ongoing.

4.1. Characteristics of policy coherence support

31. **Most GEF projects are designed to contribute to policy coherence.** At least 65 percent of the 2,830 projects approved since GEF-5 include outputs and outcomes that could enhance policy coherence. This proportion has remained relatively consistent across GEF phases, indicating sustained attention to this objective over time (Figure 2). While the share of GEF-8 projects supporting policy coherence, spanning the phase's first three years, is slightly higher, this difference is not statistically significant. Examples of outcomes contributing to policy coherence include a low-emission livestock strategy endorsed by multiple ministries, the private sector and key civil society actors in the Dominican Republic (GEF ID 10054, FAO); and building institutional capacities for natural capital accounting to ensure the value of ecosystem services in the agriculture, aquaculture and fishery sectors are incorporated into national decision-making in

Palau (GEF ID 11258, IUCN). The majority of projects aim for coherence between environmental and non-environmental policies, with some of these also aiming for coherence across environmental objectives. Projects that exclusively target coherence across environmental policies usually aim to harmonize implementation of the three Rio Conventions.

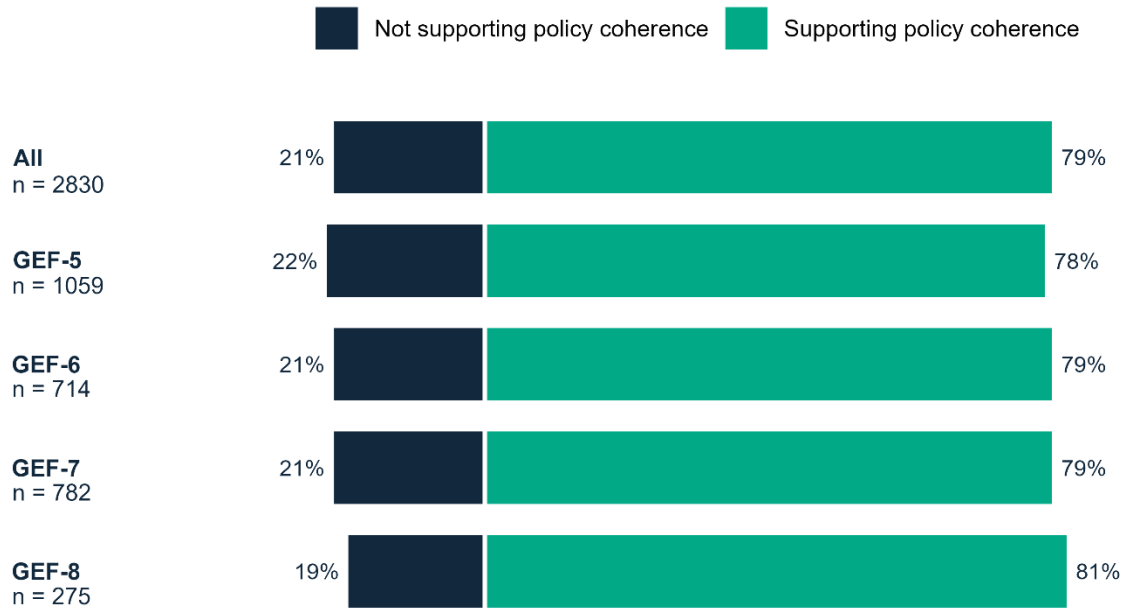

Figure 2. Percent of GEF projects that support policy coherence, based on target outputs and outcomes, showing no significant differences in frequency of support for policy coherence across GEF phases thus far

32. **Most projects support the development and implementation of specific policies, mainly in the upstream stages of the policy cycle.** At least 60 percent of projects directly help develop or implement more coherent policies; at least 11 percent do not aim at specific sector policies but instead support enabling conditions for policy coherence. These enabling conditions include integrated decision-making platforms, intersectoral dialogues, and training on integrated planning tools that build the baseline data and institutional relationships essential to later develop specific coherent policies. The majority of projects provide policy coherence support by helping countries develop and adopt intersectoral policies, laws, regulations, plans, or strategies—either by integrating environmental considerations into existing policy instruments or creating new ones (Figure 3). While many projects also support policy implementation, this occurs in the early stages, such as setting up interagency coordination bodies, awareness-raising among stakeholders on the policy's provisions, and training on specific environmental approaches mandated by the policy. On-the ground operationalization and enforcement—often cited by countries as the most challenging stage — is less supported and usually occurs after the project ends. For the same reason, policy evaluation receives the least support even though it enables the assessment of intended and unintended impacts of policy instruments and allows lessons to feed back into policy development.

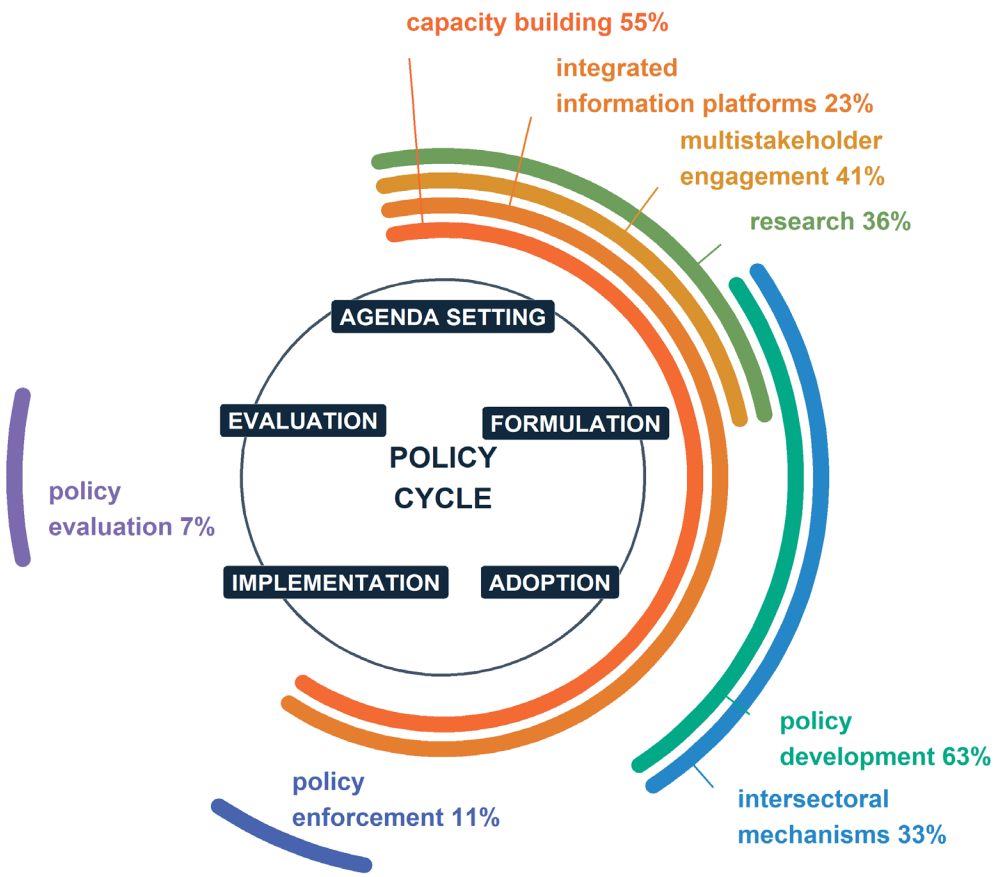

Figure 3. Types of GEF-funded activities that support policy coherence along the policy cycle (n=2235), with most interventions contributing to the upstream stages of the policy cycle

33. **Projects supporting policy coherence devote a larger share of funding to capacity-building activities.** Although projects allocate similar absolute amounts to these activities on average, those supporting policy coherence devote more than twice the proportion of their GEF grants and cofinancing to capacity-building. No significant differences were observed across projects in funding allocations for policy development, stakeholder coordination, or other types of activities (Figure 4).

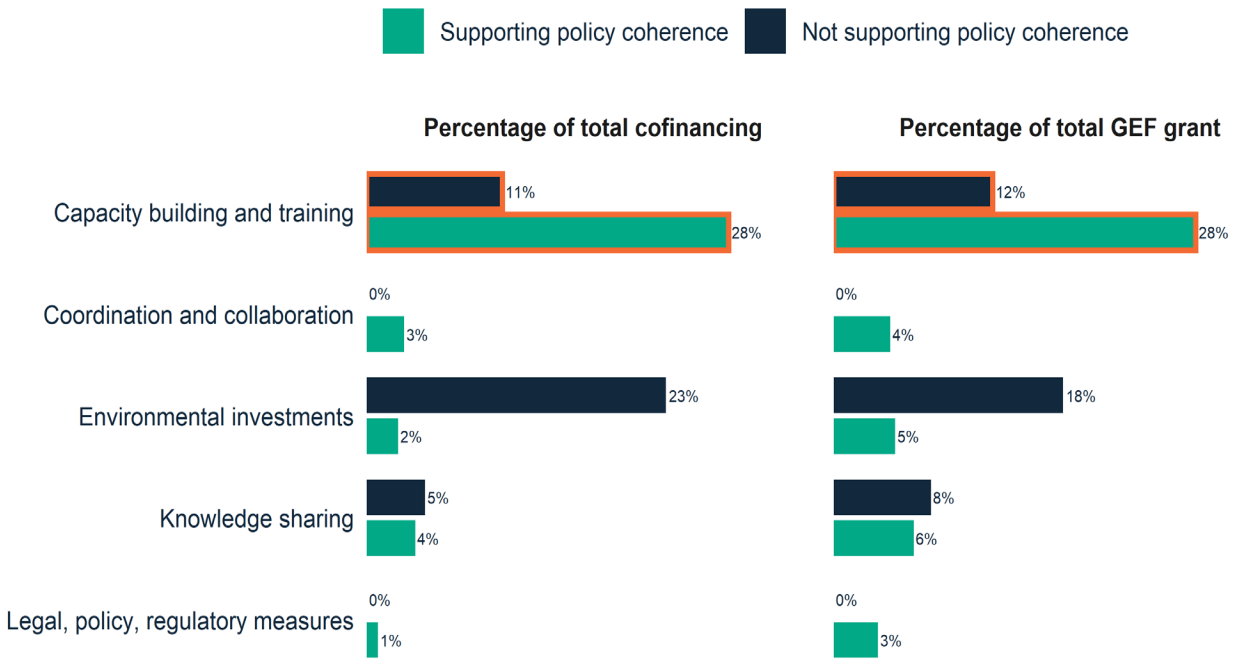

Figure 4. Comparison of GEF grant and cofinancing allocations to different project activities (median %); bars outlined in orange are statistically different from each other

34. **Mainstreaming environmental considerations across sectoral policies has been the GEF's most common approach to fostering policy coherence.** Portfolio analyses show that GEF-supported interventions use at least one of three pathways to achieve their policy coherence objectives:

- Mainstreaming environmental objectives into sectoral policies, e.g. integrating biodiversity guidelines into tourism permitting processes (*Conserving Biodiversity in Coastal Areas Threatened by Rapid Tourism and Physical Infrastructure Development*, GEF ID 5088, UNDP);
- Reducing policy conflicts and mandate overlaps, e.g. harmonizing agriculture, aquaculture, and fisheries policies (*Transforming Productivity in Palau's Food Systems Through Nature Positive Innovations*, GEF ID 11258, IUCN).
- Creating synergies between environmental and other sectoral policy goals, e.g. bringing together ministries involved in electric vehicle policy for mutually beneficial implementation (*Enhancing Electric Vehicle Mobility and Integration in Fiji's Land Transport Sector*, GEF ID 11078, UNDP);

35. Mainstreaming does not always require intensive coordination across sectoral government agencies. As a result, it has been a relatively less costly way—from an operational and political perspective—to integrate environmental objectives into the regular activities of production sectors. This has made mainstreaming one of the most common approaches used to promote policy coherence. In such cases, a project may work directly with the tourism and

agriculture ministries, for example, to adopt guidelines on biodiversity conservation and carbon emission reductions as part of their legal requirements or incentives. When the relevant environmental policies already exist, such efforts do not require extensive coordination with the environment ministry to support policy implementation in other sectors.

36. **Efforts to reduce policy conflicts have generally focused on introducing coordination mechanisms and integrated planning approaches.** Explicit efforts to address harmful subsidies have emerged mainly in GEF-8. Policy interventions aimed at generating mutual gains across sectoral government agencies are less explicit, although such synergies often arise through policy harmonization. While many environmental policy interventions also generate socioeconomic benefits, this does not necessarily translate to coherence with other sector policies. For example, while better ecological health has clear links to improved human health, especially through reduction of chemicals and waste, initiatives involving health-related policies have been less common. While about 10 percent of projects, especially in GEF-8, aim for gender-sensitive environmental policies, such initiatives aim to make environmental benefits more equitable for women rather than aligning with specific social policies.

4.2. Areas of policy coherence support

37. **International waters and biodiversity projects have targeted outcomes supporting policy coherence more explicitly—and earlier—than those in other focal areas.** The IW focal area has applied the TDA-SAP (Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis–Strategic Action Program)[6] methodology to promote regional policy coherence in over 90 countries since GEF-1. This approach has been complemented by frameworks and tools that support policy coherence at national and local levels, including integrated water resources management and marine spatial planning. In the biodiversity focal area, mainstreaming biodiversity in production landscapes and seascapes—such as agriculture, forestry and tourism—became an explicit strategic objective in GEF-4, although pilot projects had been implemented earlier. These interventions typically combine policy and regulatory frameworks (including addressing harmful subsidies), land use planning, and promotion of biodiversity-friendly practices to conserve biodiversity. The BD focal area is also the first to implement interventions working directly with legislative bodies on policy reform. Table 2 presents examples of focal area approaches supported by the GEF that by their multisectoral nature can contribute to policy coherence when used as policy instruments.

Table 2. Examples of GEF focal area approaches that can contribute to policy coherence

GEF Focal Area	Examples of Approaches that Can Contribute to Policy Coherence	Examples of Applications in Projects
Biodiversity (BD)	Mainstreaming biodiversity into production sectors through policy reform, establishment	NCA integrated in provincial planning and resource allocation, including development

[6] The TDA-SAP methodology is applied in transboundary water bodies such as seas and rivers, allowing bordering countries to jointly identify priority environmental issues and agree on actions to address them (https://iwlearn.net/documents/22298).

	of "green units", integrated spatial planning across landscapes/seascapes, Natural Capital Accounting (NCA)	of sustainable financing mechanisms, for biodiversity conservation and management aligned with existing programs of the ministries of tourism, trade and industry and economy (GEF ID 10386, UNEP)
Climate Change (CC)	Mainstreaming climate-smart practices (adaptation) and fiscal incentives (mitigation) in energy and other sector policies, Capacity-Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT)	Establishment and operationalization of an integrated platform for data-sharing and policymaking, including climate-resilient policies, for ministries of the environment, mine and energy, transport and agriculture as well as the Monrovia City Cooperation (CBIT, GEF ID 9923, CI)
Land Degradation (LD) / Multifocal Area (MFA)*	Sustainable Land Management (SLM), Integrated Ecosystem Management (IEM), Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), Nature-based Solutions (NbS)	Strengthening of community governance and planning to support equitable and gender-sensitive nature-based solutions that address landscape/seascape interactions and dynamics (GEF ID 11265, FAO)
Chemicals & Waste (CW)	Sector-wide approaches (e.g. POPs reduction in agriculture), circular economy, extended producer responsibility (EPR)	Integrated information and data management system covering national, regional and local levels of the WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment) management chain operating in support of the EPR system (GEF ID 4862, UNDP)
International Waters (IW)	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis-Strategic Action Program (TDA-SAP), integrated water resources management (IWRM), source-to-sea (S2S), ridge-to-reef, integrated coastal management (ICM), marine spatial planning, blue economy, conjunctive water management	S2S approach used in a Regional Environmental Framework Strategy with agreed indicators to measure progress on land- and sea-based interaction through a consolidated intersectoral, interagency S2S governance, coordination, and planning mechanism (GEF ID 11520, FAO)
*MFA is combined in this table with the LD focal area because historically, most LD projects have been merged with other focal area funding as MFA projects that simultaneously address soil conservation, biodiversity protection and climate change.		

38. **Agriculture has been the sector most frequently engaged in policy coherence-related interventions, followed by forestry.** These two production sectors, both associated with some of the world's largest environmentally harmful subsidies, have typically been addressed through the biodiversity, land degradation and multifocal areas since the GEF's early phases. In contrast, mining and fossil fuels have been the least frequently addressed nature-negative production sectors. GEF-supported interventions in mining have primarily focused on formalizing the artisanal mining sector, with the aim of motivating mercury use reduction by improving access to socioeconomic support. While GEF projects have contributed to policy coherence by mainstreaming energy efficiency standards and financial incentives for renewable energy use in various sectors, they have less frequently aimed to eliminate or reduce fossil fuel subsidies. Fossil fuel subsidies are among the most politically difficult to address even in countries that have significant investments in climate change mitigation due to the immediate social and economic impacts of energy price increases. Only two percent of projects that target policy coherence-

related outcomes explicitly mention subsidies, although the share is twice as high among GEF-8 projects. No significant differences were found across focal areas.

4.3. Project modalities supporting policy coherence

39. **Policy coherence support has been most frequently delivered through full-sized projects.** A higher percentage of full-sized projects (FSPs, 84 percent) include aims supportive of policy coherence than medium-sized projects at 72 percent (MSPs) (Figure 5). MSPs and enabling activities tend to have less explicit policy coherence-related targets in their results frameworks than FSPs. Adjusting for the higher number of FSPs, projects that supported policy coherence were similar to those that did not in terms of GEF grant, cofinancing, total project amount and duration. No significant difference was seen in frequency of policy coherence support across the GEF family of funds.[7]

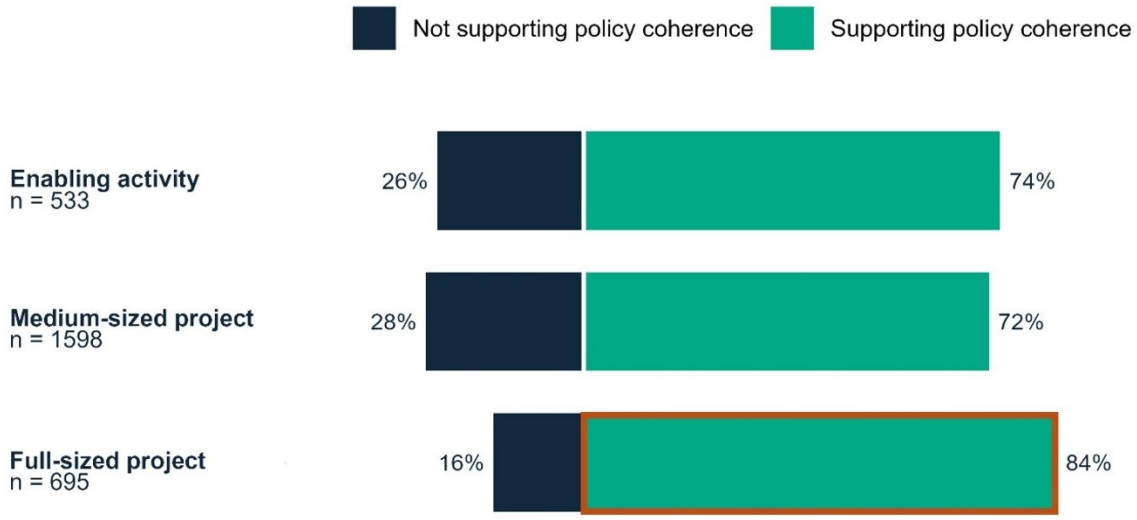

Figure 5. Share of different project modalities that support policy coherence; orange outline indicates statistically higher share

40. **Medium-sized projects funded through the Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) program have aimed to promote coherence of the Rio Conventions in ways responsive to country contexts since GEF-5.** Administered by UNDP, the CCCD program originated in GEF-3 with in-depth country self-assessments that enabled countries to identify capacity barriers to meeting their Rio Convention commitments. Its funding in GEF-5 as a distinct program led to follow-up projects designed to remove these barriers, typically by strengthening coordinated decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms. The program explicitly seeks to increase synergies and cost-effectiveness by integrating all Rio Convention obligations through a

[7]Projects funded by the GEF Trust Fund, LDCF, SCCF, CBIT and NPIF are included in this analysis. GBFF projects are excluded as only four had been approved as of 30 June 2025. Given the KMGBF's explicit policy coherence targets, Box 1 provides an in-depth analysis of GBFF projects selected but not yet approved as of this date.

sector-wide approach, helping create an enabling environment for more coherent policies over the long term.

41. **Enabling activities support Convention planning and reporting requirements that are designed to increase policy coherence across sectors.** Instruments such as national adaptation programs of action (NAPAs), national action plans to combat desertification (NAPCDs) and national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) are typically developed through participatory, research-driven processes that engage multiple sectors. These processes include multistakeholder dialogues and reviews of existing policies, with the goal of creating shared baselines and aligned commitments. These ultimately form the bases of policy instruments that integrate data and priorities of multiple government sectors within each environmental focal area. Increasingly, these Convention requirements also aim for coherence across environmental focal areas. Several stakeholders have also mentioned how enabling activities are highly suited for funding baseline assessments of domestic policies to identify areas of incoherence.

42. **Global projects also contribute to national policy coherence.** While less likely to aim for policy coherence contributions than national or regional projects, some global projects are designed to enhance coherence at the national level. For example, the *Blue-Green Island Integrated Program Global Coordination Projec*t (GEF ID 11266, UNDP) provides technical assistance on analytical tools such as natural capital assessment and ecosystem services valuation and their application for greater policy and planning coherence, such as in the food, urban and tourism sectors. Training and support to develop guidelines or decision-making tools are commonly intended to standardize more coherent policy instruments across multiple countries, increasing alignment with MEAs. Some global and regional projects also help mainstream these instruments within the policy framework of each participating country. Through a global enabling activity (GEF ID 11054, UNDP), the GEF is replicating UNDP's Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) methodology in 91 additional countries—for a total of 133—to identify government subsidies both supportive and harmful to biodiversity, aligning their national budgets to meet KMGBF targets.

43. **Integrated programs, first piloted in GEF-6, are more likely to target outcomes supporting policy coherence than other types of projects.** Child projects under these programs (i.e. GEF-6 Integrated Approach Pilots, GEF-7 Impact Programs and GEF-8 Integrated programs) show a higher share of projects aiming for policy coherence contributions (87 percent) compared with standalone projects (79 percent) or with child projects of other programs (77 percent). This difference likely reflects the cross-sectoral nature of the economic drivers that are addressed by integrated programs, and their targeted use of policy interventions as a lever for systems transformation. Chapter 6 further reports on how integrated programs support policy coherence.

Box 1: Policy Coherence Support through the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund

The Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) is the first multilateral environmental agreement to explicitly call for reform and phase-out of harmful subsidies (Target 18). Several other KMGBF targets promote policy coherence: Target 14 advocates for mainstreaming biodiversity across government, sectors, and society; Target 1 calls for spatial planning and integrated landscape and seascape approaches that would require coordination across land-use and sectoral policies to reduce biodiversity impacts; Target 15 links corporate disclosure, business activities and financial flows with biodiversity goals; and Target 10 highlights alignment of sectoral policies in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture.

The Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), which funds implementation of the KMGBF, is the first and only one so far in the GEF family of funds to include policy coherence and cross-sector coordination across ministries, public agencies, the private sector and civil society as one of its formal project selection criteria. Some of its action areas also support this aim—for example, through integrated spatial planning (Action Area One), identifying opportunities for subsidy reform and policy alignment (Action Area Three), and mainstreaming biodiversity in production sectors (Action Area Six).

A review of the 40 projects approved under the GBFF's first programming tranche in 2024 shows that 68 percent include policy coherence-related activities, increasing across the tranche's selection rounds from 25 percent (1 project) in the first round to 83 percent (15 projects) in the third round. For instance, the project *Addressing Outstanding Barriers and Leveraging Durable Financial Mechanisms to Achieve Target 3* in Gabon (GEF ID 11512, WWF-US) addresses conflicting conservation and agricultural policies that may exacerbate human-wildlife conflicts.

4.4. Project management trends

44. **Many GEF Agencies have country programming frameworks or similar instruments to ensure their interventions align with national development priorities, but they differ in how frequently they support policy coherence.** Within the GEF portfolio, UN development agencies are more likely than multilateral development banks (MDBs) to implement projects supporting policy coherence objectives. For example, at least 89 percent of projects implemented by FAO and UNDP include policy coherence-related activities, compared with 63 percent for the World Bank. Interviews indicate that these differences may reflect country preferences regarding the types of projects implemented by each agency. FAO and UNDP tend to lead more upstream activities—such as capacity-building, policy dialogue, and technical research—which align more closely with the forms of policy coherence support funded by the GEF. MDBs, which normally administer GEF funds as part of larger loans, are often selected to implement interventions with direct socioeconomic benefits, such as infrastructure. While they also support policy reform through their own dedicated instruments, these mechanisms operate outside GEF modalities and are generally not financed with GEF resources. No significant differences were observed across

agencies in average GEF grant and cofinancing allocations for policy coherence-related activities, either in absolute terms or as a share of total project costs. However, within UNDP's portfolio, projects that supported policy coherence allocated more than double the share of GEF grants (6 percent) and cofinancing (4 percent) to policy development activities and project management costs compared to those that did not.

45. **Projects that support policy coherence do not necessarily partner with non-environmental government institutions as executing agencies.** Most GEF projects since the Pilot Phase have been executed by environmental agencies (56 percent), regardless of their policy coherence aims. Only 40 percent of projects supporting policy coherence involve non-environmental government agencies as executing partners, showing that sectoral ministries often participate even when they do not lead the project. Projects led only by non-environmental agencies were most common in the Pilot Phase, while joint execution by environmental and non-environmental agencies was most common in GEF-4 and GEF-5, indicating early awareness of the importance of broad sectoral engagement to achieve global environmental benefits.

46. **Indicators of policy coherence contributions are mainly tracked at the project level and only indirectly at the portfolio level.** At least 80 percent of projects aiming for policy coherence contributions include related indicators in their results frameworks. The most common indicators track the approval or endorsement of policies and action plans by government agencies, the establishment of coordination mechanisms, and strengthened institutional capacity for decision-making. Reflective of the types of GEF-supported activities seen in Section 4.1, these indicators track policy development and implementation outcomes earlier in the policy cycle rather than during policy operationalization and enforcement (e.g. through harmonized government budgets and reduced conflicts or overlaps in on-the-ground activities). At the corporate level, the GEF has begun to track policy reforms—directly or indirectly—through its core indicators for outcomes related to biodiversity (1.2, 2.2), international waters (7.2, 7.3) and chemicals and waste (9.4, 10.1) focal area objectives. However, only core indicator 7.3, the "level of national/local reforms and active participation of inter-ministerial committees" in transboundary interventions, captures a form of policy coherence. Core indicators for climate change outcomes (6.5, 6.7) track carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in agriculture, forestry, and other sectors, but these metrics are not necessarily linked to policy reforms. The proposed GEF-9 Results Management Framework tracks policy change as part of new system-level indicators contributing to transformational change, but not explicitly to policy coherence.

5. RESULTS OF SUPPORT FOR POLICY COHERENCE

47. This chapter presents the project-level outcomes that contribute to policy coherence, drawing primarily from the analyses of terminal evaluations of completed projects, as well as findings of previous IEO evaluations. It also draws on field-based case studies to examine the

extent to which GEF-supported policy coherence initiatives are adopted and sustained beyond project completion, and how they contribute to coherence at national and local levels.

5.1. Trends in achievement of project-level outcomes

48. **Most completed projects have achieved outcomes that contribute to policy coherence to varying degrees.** About 45 percent of projects with such targets fully achieved at least one of them, while about 40 percent only partly achieved them, often citing the need for additional time beyond project completion. Examples of achieved outcomes include the integration of climate resilience activities in the medium term development plans, agriculture and water policies and programs, and annual work plan budgets of one province and three pilot districts in Indonesia (GEF ID 4340, UNDP); and different government agencies in China adopting 17 national standards for integrating electric vehicles in the electricity grid, with nine city governments adopting interagency coordination plans to integrate electric vehicles with renewable energy grids (GEF ID 9226, UNIDO). Partially achieved outcomes include a policy on land degradation, desertification and drought in Guatemala still under review by government institutions as of project completion, as not all of the targeted national agencies participated in integrating principles of SFM and SLM in sector policies (GEF ID 4479, UNDP). In contrast, a common example of unachieved outcomes is projects failing to develop intended national strategies or legislation. The degree of outcome achievement did not vary across focal areas, GEF phases, project modalities or GEF agencies. Given the upstream nature of many interventions, contributions to more concrete indicators of policy coherence—such as harmonized budgets—and to global environmental benefits were typically not reported.

49. **Projects that achieved their policy coherence-supportive outcomes were more often rated satisfactory and likely to be sustainable overall than those that only partially achieved or did not achieve these targets.** Outcome and sustainability ratings were similar whether policy coherence was supported by the project or not; nor did they vary whether government executing agencies were environmental, non-environmental or both. The GEF grant amount, cofinancing and project duration did not drive the degree of outcome achievement, nor did achievement vary across focal areas, GEF agencies, project type, or the sectoral mandates of government executing agencies.[8]

50. **Small island developing states (SIDS) had a higher proportion of projects with partially achieved outcomes.** While the failure rate was similar across all country types, SIDS had a larger proportion of projects that partially achieved outcomes (40 percent). SIDS also had a much lower percentage of full achievement (56 percent), while others such as middle-income countries had a higher percentage (81 percent). Based on stakeholder feedback and findings of previous IEO evaluations, this is likely due to the limited human resources available in SIDS to carry out not just

[8] Average realized cofinancing varied with the level of outcome achievement but upon further analyses was not a statistically significant causal factor.

policy-related but GEF-supported activities in general, indicating the need for context-sensitive support.[9] This difference was not significant in least developed countries (LDCs); neither was it significant across geographical regions or country income groups.

5.2. Outcomes at project completion

51. **The GEF's five focal areas have generated outcomes that contribute to policy coherence in different ways.** The following examples, drawn mainly from previous IEO evaluations (see Annex B), illustrate how GEF support has improved policy coherence across various focal area contexts:

(1) ***Biodiversity.*** By supporting strategically positioned national institutions for capacity-building, research, and knowledge management, the GEF has enabled the dissemination of accurate data on biodiversity status and emerging threats—critical inputs for developing cross-sectoral National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (NBSAPs) and other policy instruments. In several cases, this research has underpinned the creation of national programs that engaged a broad range of stakeholders in biodiversity conservation, often for the first time. For example, Colombia's project on socio-ecosystem connectivity in the Caribbean region (GEF ID 5288, FAO) leveraged integrated planning processes to embed biodiversity activities into municipal, regional, and sectoral programs, particularly in post-conflict areas. Enabling conditions in successful cases have included strong government buy-in through dedicated budgets, stable institutions, and committed champions who bridged organizational silos. Extended implementation time frames—spanning at least a decade—also proved critical to achieving lasting mainstreaming outcomes.

(2) ***a) Climate Change Mitigation.*** Progress has been reported toward more environmentally coherent energy policies, particularly in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy, such as through the development of certification schemes, efficiency standards, labeling, and feed-in tariffs. For example, the *Energy Efficiency Codes in Residential Buildings and EE Improvement in Commercial and Hospital Buildings* project in Morocco (GEF ID 2554, UNDP) was instrumental in the adoption of Energy Efficiency Law No. 47, which mandates building codes, energy audits, and environmental impact assessments for new urban developments. The project also inspired the Ministry of Housing and Urban Policies to launch a green cities initiative to address urbanization and rural migration challenges. Compared to other climate funds that focus more narrowly on investment, the GEF's emphasis on strengthening the enabling environment through policy reform has been seen as a distinct advantage in mobilizing broader public and private climate finance. This impact has been most significant in countries where government ownership and stakeholder engagement have been strong.

b) Climate Change Adaptation. The intersectoral process of developing national adaptation programs of action (NAPAs) and the mainstreaming of frameworks for climate resilience across various sectors, including other focal areas, have both contributed to policy coherence

[9] Constraints within SIDS are also recognized in the 2024 Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS).

outcomes. For example, climate and environmental criteria were integrated into the mandatory template used by the Bangladesh Planning Commission to appraise all capital investment proposals, thus requiring sectoral ministries to account for the National Adaptation Plan in the earliest stages of all government projects (GEF ID 8036, UNDP). A GEF/LDCF project in Bhutan (GEF ID 9199, UNDP) sought to operationalize an integrated landscape management approach through biological corridors, sustainable land use, and enhanced climate resilience. At the national level, the project aimed to strengthen policy and planning frameworks and institutional capacity within key national agencies. At the local level, it supported mechanisms and tools to integrate climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability considerations into local development planning systems. The project helped revitalize the Environment, Climate Change and Poverty Mainstreaming Reference Group (MRG), meant to strengthen the integration of cross-cutting issues into government decision-making processes, with local MRGs also fully functional in 20 districts by project end.

(3) ***Land Degradation.*** Many projects were strategically designed to complement existing national action plans to embed land degradation concerns within countries' broader sustainable development policies. Strategic partnerships with international donors, regional organizations, and multilateral development banks have facilitated a more coherent and coordinated approach to land degradation control. Programs such as the Dryland Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program and TerrAfrica have promoted transboundary collaboration and cross-sectoral coherence that responded to both ecological conditions and national development priorities. Such successes were particularly seen where projects engaged local institutions and governance structures, though challenges remain in achieving policy coherence at the subnational level due to more complex and varied governance contexts. Weak, unclear and conflicting mandates related to different land uses have led to policy coherence support being undermined in some projects where government incentives for short-term agricultural production provided greater financial gains than adopting sustainable practices.

(4) ***Chemicals and Waste.*** GEF-funded interventions have supported interministerial collaboration, improving coherence between environmental policy targets and industrial regulations. In Indonesia, a GEF-financed textile project (GEF ID 10523, UNEP) facilitated the first formal cooperation between the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and the Ministry of Industry, overcoming long-standing coordination barriers. In Viet Nam, the *Implementation of Eco-Industrial Park Initiative for Sustainable Industrial Zones* project (GEF ID 4766, UNIDO) built on an existing interministerial steering committee to align efforts across ministries, resulting in new national legislation that enabled the scaling up of eco-industrial park models. These examples highlight the value of institutionalized interministerial dialogues and regular national-level coordination in advancing policy coherence. However, such efforts have been less effective in smaller countries like Senegal and Trinidad and Tobago, where limited staffing capacity have hampered sustained coordination.

(5) ***International Waters.*** As the primary approach used by the International Waters focal area, the TDA-SAP (Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis–Strategic Action Program) process has

produced politically endorsed frameworks for coordinated action between regional and national initiatives. For instance, the *Protection and Sustainable Use of the Dinaric Karst Aquifer System* project (GEF ID 3690, UNDP) established national interministerial committees in four countries to align domestic and regional water policies. Although these committees faced challenges such as staff turnover, irregular meetings, and funding gaps, they contributed to long-term institutional gains such as the creation of Albania's Water Resources Management Agency to oversee cross-sectoral water governance.

52. **GEF-supported interventions have helped harmonize policies both within and across government levels, most prominently through integrated planning approaches.** GEF projects typically supported vertical—in addition to horizontal—policy coherence where countries prioritized environmental objectives in their broader development agenda and wanted to mainstream them in local government planning processes. At least a quarter of projects that support horizontal policy coherence involve local governments, and 20 percent support both local governments and planning processes. The Sustainable Cities and Food Systems IPs in particular have generated outcomes contributing to both horizontal and vertical coherence. Other projects harmonized national and local policies by building capacities of local governance structures in areas such as participatory forest management, municipal waste management and urban environmental integration. The Sustainable Cities and Food Systems IPs in particular have generated outcomes contributing to both horizontal and vertical coherence.

53. **GEF support has also contributed to vertical policy coherence between national and higher levels.** In Ethiopia, the *Enhanced Management and Enforcement of Ethiopia's Protected Areas Estate* project (GEF ID 9157, UNDP) mainstreamed biodiversity and land protection objectives into both the land management and law enforcement sectors by successfully establishing interagency agreements at the national level; intersectoral task forces and integrated landscape management plans at the local level; and international agreements with its neighboring countries to address illegal wildlife trade.

5.3. Outcomes beyond project completion

54. **Most outcomes that contribute to policy coherence—such as integrated planning approaches and intersectoral policy instruments—continue to generate benefits after project completion; however, activities that require ongoing intersectoral coordination or data collection often cease without continued GEF support.** Field visits to projects in six countries carried out between one to six years after completion found that the continuation of outcomes that support policy coherence varied within each project, depending on the type of intervention. The following case study summaries illustrate the different contexts in which project outcomes have either continued or stopped without GEF support (see Annex F for project details):

Azerbaijan and Georgia: Integrated Water Resource Management (2009-2017, 2016-2022, FSP)

55. The Kura River is the largest river in the Caucasus region, and an important source of freshwater for Azerbaijan and Georgia. After providing support for a transboundary diagnostic analysis and development of a strategic action programme (SAP) in 2009 (GEF ID 1375, UNDP), the GEF funded a SAP implementation project (GEF ID 6962, UNDP) that used IWRM as its primary approach. IWRM is also the approach used by the European Union's Water Framework Directive, which both Azerbaijan and Georgia wanted to align with. The aim was to address the "water-energy-food-ecosystem security nexus" in both countries.

56. Regular meetings sponsored by the project strengthened cooperative relationships and enabled a common technical language not only between technical staff of the two countries, but also for government agencies within the countries dealing separately with water quality and quantity. At the strategic level, the project hosted quarterly national policy meetings with various water-related sectors forming advisory groups which, along with the technical working groups on water quality and quantity, served as "prototype" intersectoral bodies and approaches towards improved policy coherence.

57. Two years after the project closed, Georgia enacted a Water Law that integrates the various water-related EU directives, such as on water protection, pollution and flooding. In the same year, Azerbaijan's State Water Resources Agency was established, bringing together the functions for managing drinking water supply, irrigation, amelioration, and water reservoirs—which include the management of water-related emergencies and disasters—under one umbrella institution. These reforms marked the first coordinated approach to water-related issues in both countries. Government staff credited GEF support for speeding up the adoption of IWRM in the countries through the multistakeholder trainings and meetings, which increased country capacities for this approach, and strengthened working relationships across sectors.

58. The planned binational agreement and IWRM commission, however, have not materialized due to lack of political and financial support to convene the two countries. Similarly, while communication improved between the two countries' technical water agencies, data sharing has ceased, in part because monitoring technology provided to both countries stopped working in Azerbaijan.

Jordan: Biodiversity Mainstreaming in Tourism (2013-2019, FSP)

59. Tourism makes up to 15 percent of Jordan's GDP, a significant contributor to its economy and one of eight growth drivers identified in Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision of 2022. Its accelerated expansion has led not only to a higher demand for the country's scarce water resources and increased pollution in culturally significant sites, but also encroachment into ecologically fragile areas. In 2014, the project *Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation in Tourism Sector Development in Jordan* (GEF ID 4586, UNDP) was implemented to help protect biodiversity in high-traffic tourist areas.

60. At the national level, it conducted the first strategic environmental assessment for the tourism sector, established the first "green unit" in the tourism ministry to integrate biodiversity concerns in tourism planning, and initiated a biodiversity information management system (BIMS) for three major tourism sites that were also protected areas. At the site level, in addition to collecting baseline data for the BIMS, the project introduced an integrated land use planning process that clearly identified zones for economic development and biodiversity protection. The land use plans were endorsed by the respective local governments with inputs from multistakeholder local advisory groups.

61. Six years after project completion, the most commonly lauded contribution is the integrated land use planning approach, which has helped ease pressure on biodiversity-sensitive areas while maintaining—and in some cases even increasing—economic opportunities for surrounding communities. At the national level, the green tourism unit no longer exists, as priorities shifted to the more urgent COVID-19 response; the ministry's SDG unit is currently responsible for implementing environmental and social guidelines in tourism. The national-level BIMS continues to be maintained and funded by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), an NGO designated with managing most of the country's protected areas since 1975. Biodiversity data collected at the national level has also been used by the ministry of local administration for land use planning. However, data collection has not continued at some pilot sites due to the downturn in tourism, leading to constrained budgets.

Philippines: Illegal Wildlife Trade Reduction (2017-2023, MSP)

62. The Philippines is one of the world's most biodiversity-rich countries but has been estimated to lose $230 million annually in tourism revenue due to illegal wildlife trade. In response, the government has enacted wildlife protection legislation and established interagency mechanisms to enforce this law. The project *Combating Environmental Organized Crime in the Philippines* (GEF ID 9658, ADB) was designed to support these existing initiatives by, among others, strengthening capacities of the various enforcement agencies to collaborate on stopping illegal wildlife trade. Training on the wildlife protection law was conducted for multiple agencies in the environment, fisheries, law enforcement, judiciary and port sectors. The environment ministry highlighted how support for this specialized training was important, as the government only had enough funds to train on broader environmental laws, and typically could not accommodate staff from non-environment agencies.

63. The virtual interagency training provided an opportunity for staff to meet key counterparts in other agencies where previously it was difficult to identify the appropriate personnel to contact. At their own initiative, they have established informal communication networks that continue to facilitate enforcement operations previously slowed down by bureaucracy. The project also helped pass a joint administrative order between the environment, agriculture, and local government ministries to clarify their respective roles in wildlife trade. It provided technical knowledge and broad consultations that normally receive lower government funding priority,

thus speeding up the passage of the joint order. On the other hand, no knowledge transfer or operational integration was found in most sectoral agencies that were part of the training beyond the individuals who were trained. This was attributed both to the lack of follow-up activities and lack of relevance to their day-to-day mandate; at the same time, these agencies already had functional mechanisms to coordinate with other sectors on environmental issues more relevant to their work, such as illegal deforestation.

Uruguay: Mercury Life-Cycle Management (2013-2021, MSP)

64. As chair of the Minamata Convention's International Negotiating Committee and host of the Basel Convention Coordinating Centre-Stockholm Convention Regional Centre, Uruguay has signified that chemical pollution reduction is one of its priorities. One of the aims of the project *Environmental Sound Life-Cycle Management of Mercury Containing Products and Their Wastes* (GEF ID 4998, UNDP) was to develop a law regulating the import, phase-out and disposal of mercury-containing medical products. The project's main national partners were the ministries of environment and public health, but policy implementation required changes in other sectoral regulations such as in customs, product standards and waste management.

65. The four-year project implementation period was insufficient to achieve its policy-related aims, but the GEF's flexibility allowed the project to pivot from passing a law through Uruguay's legislative branch, to instead promulgating a decree through its executive branch. The latter was a faster process that required clearance by Uruguay's COTAMA (Technical Advisory Commission for Environmental Protection), an interministerial, multistakeholder body created as an offshoot of the 1992 Rio Summit. Through COTAMA, government, private sector and civil society representatives jointly discuss all proposed public policies related to the environment and sustainable development. The project funded a legal expert to help draft the decree; afterwards, the government budgeted for a permanent staff position for this person, after experiencing how in-house expertise made a difference in the policy development process.

66. The project supported both the ministries of environment and public health, providing mercury analysis equipment to the latter. However, the health ministry did not have the infrastructure or human resources to manage it, and over-all was less engaged due to its historical mandate and expertise in disease prevention and management rather than the health impacts of environmental pollution. The health ministry declined to issue supporting guidelines, citing its existing ones to be sufficient. The only health sector representative who consented to being interviewed credited the project with expanding awareness in the sector of the country's existing mercury management guidelines through additional funding for information dissemination and its international standing.

Zambia: Integrated Forest and Land Use Management (2017-2024, FSP)

67. In 2022, Zambia launched its five-year Eighth National Development Plan, for the first time elevating environmental sustainability as one of the country's four strategic development areas.

The plan's implementation mechanism includes interministerial clusters at national, provincial and district levels that convene every quarter to discuss cross-sectoral concerns and projects addressing each strategic development area. The *Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Project* (GEF ID 9213, World Bank) or ZIFLP tested and refined the process for developing district-level Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) that feed into the national plan's implementation process.

68. ZIFLP promoted a land use planning approach that enabled each district to spatially map out the various priorities and projects of different ministries and identify conflicts and potential synergies, starting at the lowest jurisdictional levels. In addition, ZIFLP supported the integrated implementation of the IDPs. Rather than each sectoral agency individually providing assistance on their respective initiatives, government staff worked together through provincial and district multisectoral teams (DMTs). DMTs conducted joint field visits to address issues in a more holistic manner, which increased synergies while reducing costs of visits. This also led to staff in agriculture, disaster management or social protection agencies becoming more knowledgeable in environmental matters such as forest and wildlife protection; they reported becoming confident enough to respond to community queries on these matters and associated initiatives when their concerned colleagues were not available to do so. In addition, the project deliberately opened opportunities for women to lead and participate in community governance and implementation groups, which had always been led by men.

69. While the DMTs currently receive support from a follow-on GEF project, members felt certain that their integrated approach to operations would be funded by their respective sectoral budgets beyond GEF support, as joint activities had led to cost savings. Lessons from ZIFLP's process have also served as input to revising the national IDP guidelines, which has reduced the estimated costs of developing each IDP by organizing efforts at the provincial rather than municipal level.

70. **Outcomes of enabling activities and smaller MSPs have also been sustained and expanded by governments and partner organizations, usually after an extended implementation period.** A regional enabling activity (GEF ID 9276, UNEP) with a $4 million GEF grant helped eight African countries develop their respective National Action Plans for artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM). In Zambia, the project established an interministerial and multistakeholder National Steering Committee that three years after completion continues to address ASGM-related issues beyond the project's original aims. MSPs with budgets of less than $1 million have likewise supported mainstreaming and scaling of more coherent policy instruments.[10] In the Philippines, for example, sustainable land management (SLM) was integrated into the national land use planning agency's guidelines, while the agriculture ministry and provincial and municipal governments adopted SLM practices as part of their agriculture and

[10] MSPs, designed to have a more streamlined approval process than FSPs, typically have a planned implementation period of 2 to 3 years. The maximum grant was capped at $1 million from 1996 until 2012, when it was raised to $2 million. As of 2024, this cap has been raised to $5 million.

environmental programs based on pilot site demonstrations at village level (GEF ID 5767, UNDP). These projects have often taken twice as long as planned to be completed.

5.4. Conditions to achieve and sustain outcomes supporting policy coherence

71. Based on terminal evaluations and case studies, the following contextual conditions were identified to have the greatest influence on whether or not outcomes were achieved and sustained. The GEF's role in addressing these conditions is discussed in Chapter 7.

72. **Strong country stakeholder ownership was a critical factor in achieving outcomes.** Ownership by a broad range of country stakeholders, including non-state actors, was the most frequently cited driver of success in terminal evaluations, case studies and previous IEO evaluations, and was also associated with greater institutional sustainability. Among others, ownership was seen in dedicated government budgets and institutional champions who served as intermediaries across sectors. Conversely, limited political support, institutional instability (e.g. frequent elections and executive reorganizations) and complex legal processes created challenges for achieving outcomes. For example, a project that sought to mainstream mercury-free technologies in Guyana's mining sector (GEF ID 9713, CI) convened multistakeholder fora as part of the policy input process, yet by the end of the project, no policies had been approved. Among key reasons cited were insufficient buy-in from government stakeholders and weak governmental commitment that undermined momentum at the national level. Similarly, in Belarus (GEF ID 9895, UNDP), adoption of legislation and regulations drafted by the project remained pending, attributed to unequal ownership across ministries, which created bottlenecks. While important for any type of intervention, ownership of interventions by all key stakeholders is especially crucial for policy-related targets because success is determined by institutional uptake and legitimacy.

73. **Operational constraints hindered outcome achievement even where country ownership was strong.** Limited technical capacity to address intersectoral issues, and mismatches between project timelines and policy cycles often resulted in partially achieved or unachieved outcomes. For example, a global SE4All energy efficiency accelerator project (GEF ID 9320, UNEP) saw strong ownership across most countries and cities where it was implemented, leading to monitoring, results and verification (MRV) frameworks being developed and incorporated into local strategies. However, some cities lacked the capacity to implement them, and most initiatives remained at pre-investment or early investment stage rather than fully functional district energy system demonstrations. On the other hand, government staff with interdisciplinary technical expertise or cross-sectoral experience served as champions who bridged silos—such as the GEF OFP in Uruguay who previously worked in the customs agency, which facilitated coordination on import guidelines involving mercury-containing products, or the head of a city environment office in the Philippines who was a former agriculturist, easing collaboration with the city agriculture office in jointly implementing SLM.

74. **Policy coherence initiatives were more likely to continue and expand beyond GEF support when they helped governments advance broader development priorities and generate socioeconomic benefits, and when long-term institutions and staff supported their implementation.** For example, both Azerbaijan and Georgia prioritized adopting IWRM adoption to align with EU standards and access EU support, which created high-level political will to adopt intersectoral policy instruments. Azerbaijan also prioritized IWRM as a solution to recent costly droughts. Similarly, in the Philippines, governments at all levels adopted SLM practices as a way to reduce landslides and increase crop productivity. The continued presence of institutions and staff beyond project completion, such as through the absorption of project consultants into government positions (e.g. Uruguay) and repeated partnerships with established organizations (e.g. Jordan), greatly helped in advocating for continued implementation, and in leveraging long-term institutional knowledge to adapt to evolving circumstances. The presence of long-term champions can increase the likelihood of both temporal and political policy coherence.

75. **In contrast, policy coherence initiatives often ended with GEF support when governments did not allocate funds to sustain them due to limited political will, convening authority, economic revenue or relevance to institutional mandates.** Intersectoral coordination bodies, for example, ceased operating in Azerbaijan and Georgia, because neither country maintained sufficient political commitment to continue meetings, and no higher-level or third-party authority convened them. In the Philippines and Uruguay, agencies outside the environment sector—such as the port authority, coast guard and health ministry—did not continue any project activities, as these did not align closely with their primary mandates. In Jordan, activities were only continued by local governments that generated sufficient revenue from economic activities; otherwise, waste management was the only environmental activity considered essential enough to receive continued funding.

6. INITIAL RESULTS OF GEF-8 POLICY COHERENCE INITIATIVES

76. This chapter presents the initial results of initiatives that have been implemented since policy coherence became a corporate focus in GEF-8. Findings are drawn from stakeholder interviews; analyses of corporate strategy, program and project documents; and field observations of corporate activities.

6.1. Integrated programs

77. Piloted in GEF-6, the GEF's integrated programs were more explicitly envisioned to leverage governance and policies starting in GEF-7 to transform key economic systems from being drivers of environmental degradation to enablers of human and planetary health. In GEF-8, integrated programs became the primary modality for more deliberate policy coherence support. This section assesses the extent to which integrated programs have adapted since GEF-6 to reflect

the GEF-8 focus on policy coherence, and how their respective child projects have operationalized it.

78. **The design of integrated programs has evolved from identifying policy conflicts in GEF-6 to establishing institutional and financial mechanisms that support policy coherence in GEF-8.** GEF support has evolved from acknowledging fragmented governance systems to actively embedding policy coherence as a strategic objective. In GEF-8, coherence is treated not only as an operational challenge but also as a driver of systems transformation. Earlier programs, such as the GEF-6 Sustainable Cities Integrated Approach Pilot, emphasized integrated planning but had limited mechanisms to ensure implementation. In contrast, the GEF-8 Sustainable Cities Integrated Program (IP) incorporates multilevel governance structures that align municipal, regional, and national policies and link them to financing instruments such as green bonds and performance-based grants tied to institutional reforms. Similarly, the Congo Critical Forest Biome IP, which started in GEF-7, included policy coherence as a program objective. In GEF-8, it has expanded this focus through a dedicated component targeting legal reform across the forestry, agriculture, and mining sectors, with carbon markets and biodiversity offsets linked directly to policy coherence milestones.

79. **GEF-8 IPs expand stakeholder engagement in the policy process, consistent with the GEF's whole-of-society approach and increasing coherence with international processes.** While earlier programs, such as those under GEF-6, often limited participation to local actors or sector-specific working groups, GEF-8 IPs engage a broader array of stakeholders—including indigenous peoples, the private sector, national agencies, and global platforms like the G7 and Rio conventions—through more structured mechanisms to co-design and implement coherent strategies. From consultative processes in GEF-6, GEF-8 IPs evolved to include institutionalized co-governance where Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities have structural representation in legal reform processes rather than just consultation rights. The FOLUR Impact Program stood out in GEF-7 for its systematic engagement with ministries of finance, central banks and trade ministries to align financial regulations with environmental goals – at that time a novel entry point. In GEF 8, the Food Systems IP explicitly links national reforms to the G7/G20 agenda, SDGs, and the Rio Conventions. These developments reflect the increasing application of whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches as set out in the GEF Programming Directions.

80. **Some GEF-8 IPs have introduced capacity-building and results indicators linked to policy reform and institutional alignment.** Monitoring has shifted from tracking outputs to assessing systemic changes such as cross-sectoral alignment, reduction in perverse incentives, and institutional behavior change. For example, the Congo Basin IP tracks changes in policies and legal frameworks that promote effective forest governance at both national and transboundary levels, from previously focusing on the increase in areas covered by integrated land use planning. Likewise, capacity-building approaches have evolved from institutional scorecards measuring planning capacity (GEF-7) to capacity-building with gender-disaggregated indicators explicitly

linked to policy transformation tools (GEF-8). Both GEF-7 and -8 IP child projects have targeted outcomes that support policy coherence more frequently than those of GEF-6 IAPs (89 percent compared with 72 percent).

81. **Some GEF-8 IP child projects, while more explicit in targeting policy coherence-related outcomes, have missed opportunities to design for greater policy coherence contributions.** A key gap is limited interministerial engagement, which does not include all relevant sectors. For example, the project *Eliminating hazardous chemicals from textile fashion supply chains in India* (GEF ID 11178, UNIDO) promotes cleaner production of natural textiles such as cotton, but does not explicitly involve the Ministry of Agriculture. While the importance of policy coherence is recognized in many child projects, some provide limited detail on the mechanisms needed to achieve it, reducing the likelihood that policies will be effectively implemented. The *Accelerating Cabo Verde's Transition to Blue and Green Economy* project (GEF ID 11255, FAO) promotes multistakeholder policy dialogues specifically to support policy coherence at national and local levels, but does not clearly outline if or how they will be institutionalized. The IEO evaluation of the Sustainable Cities IP also finds that while most child projects now include activities that support policy coherence, these continue to focus mainly on developing and strengthening strategies and frameworks rather than explicitly aiming to harmonize laws, reduce tradeoffs or harmonize standards. Similar to the historical GEF portfolio, many IP child projects still lack explicit plans for policy evaluation, including research and analysis to identify policy gaps.

82. **Despite the evolution in GEF-8 toward increasing policy coherence, many opportunities remain to tackle major, unaddressed sectoral policy drivers.** For example, the Food Systems IP identifies harmful agricultural subsidies and land degradation as key drivers but does not address food pricing and land tenure policies, or how policy reforms will redirect subsidies. It acknowledges the importance of food loss and waste but does not tackle policy interventions on food labeling and consumer education, among others. The impact of trade policies on sustainability is recognized but global trade agreements are not considered as a potential entry point for addressing policy coherence. The IEO Food Systems IP evaluation also found insufficient attention to the political economy as a critical weakness at program level. These opportunities continue to be missed in the proposed GEF-9 iteration so far.

6.2. Dedicated funding window

83. As part of its 2023 roadmap to enhance policy coherence, the GEF launched the GEF-8 STAR (System for Transparent Allocation of Resources) Competitive Window on Policy Coherence in June 2024. The window pooled 8 percent of the STAR allocations of the top five recipient countries—Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, and Mexico—to finance projects explicitly focused on policy coherence, with a ceiling of $9 million per country. Eligibility was limited to these countries on the premise that their large GEF portfolios offered the greatest potential impact on global

environmental benefits. Proposals were submitted for Council approval in the December 2025 Work Program; one country did not submit a proposal, while some submitted multiple.[11]

84. Four of the top five recipient countries who responded to requests for interview shared their perspectives on having this dedicated funding window. One policy coherence-focused project, *Accelerating Rapid Transition of Subsidies and Incentives (ARTSI) Grant Mechanism* (GEF ID 11855, CI), was also Council-approved in 2025 through the Innovation Window of the Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy. This global MSP will support subsidy reform in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. As of March 2026, there is no plan to continue these two funding windows in GEF-9. The 2023 proposal to include domestic policy coherence in the GEF's STAR index has not been adopted, as an in-depth review found no currently feasible option for systematically measuring policy coherence across countries and integrating it into the index.

85. **The dedicated projects intervene in sectors where the GEF has historically supported policy coherence in these countries.** The four approved projects address policy incoherence in the agriculture and land use sectors, as well as in landscapes and seascapes where biodiversity conservation is central to a sustainable bioeconomy. Interventions include strengthening policy and implementation frameworks, aligning fiscal incentives and disincentives, developing intersectoral data and decision-support platforms, and piloting these approaches at the local government level. All projects include local governments in capacity-building and implementation; some also emphasize private sector and civil society participation. Portfolio analyses show that all five countries have historically allocated GEF funding to these sectors for policy coherence-related interventions, with each previous project engaging an average of three different sectors (see Annex D). In most countries, climate change and local government participation have also featured prominently in policy coherence-related projects.

86. **Although all interviewees agreed that the GEF can advance policy coherence, most did not consider a dedicated funding window essential.** They pointed out that policy coherence has been—and could continue to be—addressed more efficiently through existing modalities, such as MSPs for policy development, FSPs that introduce integrated management approaches and intersectoral coordination mechanisms, and child projects under Integrated Programs that by their nature bring multiple sectors together and enable on-the-ground piloting of more coherent policy instruments. A widely shared view was that policy coherence should be mainstreamed in projects rather than treated as a standalone objective.

87. **Countries reported that the window introduced additional administrative complexity, high human resource demands, and unclear guidance and eligibility criteria.** Given that regular GEF projects can address policy coherence alongside other environmental challenges with fewer resources, one country suggested that future windows of this scale should instead support regional coherence initiatives or the implementation of existing broader, cross-sectoral policy

[11] GEF/C.70/03, Work Program for GEF Trust Fund

mandates, rather than sector-specific interventions. By contrast, another country argued that the window's funding level is insufficient to address policy incoherence, which it viewed as structural in origin, requiring systemic reform. Interviews with corporate stakeholders suggest that financial matching incentives, such as those offered in IPs, could be used to encourage more projects with explicit policy coherence objectives. In GEF-9, the GEF Secretariat is considering implementing pilots that would be more representative of the GEF's diverse set of recipient countries, and generate transferable lessons.

6.3. Corporate-level initiatives

88. A major change in the GEF's support for policy coherence in GEF-8 is its corporate initiatives, which aim to increase a policy coherence focus in projects and programs earlier in the design process, when countries and Agencies develop their respective GEF portfolios. These initiatives mainly consist of country engagement, knowledge and learning, and portfolio review and management activities.

89. **GEF-8 corporate activities have increased attention to policy coherence across the GEF partnership, although most efforts remain at a pilot stage.** For the first time in the GEF's history, the term "policy coherence" appears in project titles and objectives, in proposals submitted for GEF-8.[12] Since GEF-5, the term has appeared in the documents of only five percent of projects that support policy coherence. Corporate activities outlined in the 2023 roadmap have helped raise broader awareness on this theme. These include a multistakeholder conference on KMGBF Target 18 at the UN CBD COP16 in October 2024; a dedicated section featuring policy coherence projects in the Work Program Cover Note presented to the GEF Council; and sessions in some regional and corporate workshops emphasizing the GEF's objective to mainstream policy coherence. While awareness-raising and project identification activities initially depended on staff availability to be carried out, more systematic efforts have increased. For example, policy coherence-related projects submitted for Council approval were initially flagged at the initiative of GEF Secretariat or Agency staff for inclusion in the Cover Note; more recently, all projects in the work program are now reviewed to be potentially featured. However, in GEF-8, there has been no systematic criteria for identifying and tagging such projects during the proposal screening stage, which would enable more targeted project design feedback and facilitate cross-project learning. The plan in GEF-9 is to develop guidance for both internal project reviewers and countries, which is anticipated to further increase attention to policy coherence in programming.

90. **Country engagement activities in GEF-8 have made a positive, though largely indirect, contribution to policy coherence.** The Country Engagement Strategy (CES), identified in both GEF-8 and GEF-9 as a key mechanism for advancing policy coherence, has primarily promoted interactions across government actors. For example, "best practice" guidance encourages GEF Operational Focal Points (OFPs) to involve ministries of finance and planning in National Dialogues

[12] The only exception is the GEF-7 pilot MSP (GEF ID 10920, UNEP) discussed in the next paragraphs.

and to establish interministerial GEF National Steering Committees (Box 2). Country delegations participating in Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs) are also encouraged to collaborate with sectoral agencies in the design of Integrated Program (IP) child projects. While countries report that these activities have strengthened interministerial communication, there is limited evidence to assess whether and how they translate into more coherent policy actions. As in previous GEF phases, CES activities in GEF-8 have tended to emphasize facilitating intersectoral dialogue rather than directly supporting longer-term policy reform.[13]

91. **Early experience from a pilot project engaging legislative bodies offers important lessons for expanding policy coherence support.** As part of GEF-9's enhanced focus in this area, the CES plans to increase engagement with institutions such as Congress and Parliament. A GEF-7 pilot MSP, *Policy Coherence for Global Environmental Benefits* (GEF ID 10920, UNEP), was approved to test approaches for supporting policy coherence through legislative bodies in the biodiversity focal area. A key output is a "guidebook on policy coherence" for countries, informed in part by experiences from three volunteer pilot countries: Colombia, Mongolia, and Zambia. The project highlights several important lessons. First, a clear institutional definition of policy coherence, along with stakeholder identification of priority production sectors and geographic areas, is essential for defining the scope of interventions. Second, policy coherence efforts must engage all branches of government involved in policymaking—not only legislators—to ensure alignment across stakeholders, policy instruments, and processes. Initial feedback also indicates that legislators and non-environment sector agencies, often less familiar with the GEF, require additional time, transparency, and communication to build trust and understanding. As one member of parliament noted, "Things can only succeed if you overcommunicate." Furthermore, evidence from this and other projects shows that legislative processes are more politically sensitive and typically take longer than executive processes, requiring sustained engagement beyond the lifespan of a single project to achieve policy outcomes.

[13] The CES also seeks to indirectly harmonize policies through country platforms or climate finance roundtables that facilitate coordination in donor funding. However, this initiative is not originally linked to the GEF's 2023 policy coherence roadmap. It is discussed further in Chapter 7.

B*ox 2: Mainstreaming National Steering Committees*

As indicated in the GEF-9 Strategic Positioning Framework, one of the GEF's avenues for enhancing policy coherence is the mainstreaming of National Steering Committees (NSCs) that would link GEF programming with the broader national development agenda, in line with the GEF's whole-of-government approach. In GEF-8, through the 2023 policy coherence roadmap, an interim steering committee was established in Grenada. More recently, NSCs have become the focus of policy coherence information sessions at ECWs, with learning stations and discussions dedicated to promoting this mechanism. The example of the Philippines, which at its own initiative formally established an NSC in 2019, provides a view into how such a mechanism can work in practice, and the challenges it may entail.

The Philippines' NSC was established in GEF-7 following a smaller interim committee formed in GEF-5. Prior to this, GEF Agencies would directly engage with a specific ministry to develop proposals without involving other relevant ministries, despite the multisectoral nature of GEF projects. Through a Special Order issued by the environment ministry and corresponding Orders by each member ministry, the NSC brings together 12 high-level government representatives from planning, finance, Convention focal point agencies and other sectors, and 5 from civil society to jointly review and approve project proposals developed by GEF Agencies.

Member institutions are permanent; alternate members are pre-identified. Personnel are formally appointed and changes communicated to ensure continuity. The NSC meets once or twice a year, jointly chaired by the OFP from the environment ministry and the Political Focal Point from the planning ministry. It convenes very early in the GEF cycle to ensure that proposals are ready for funding.

Technical Working Groups headed by Convention focal points review proposals relevant to their sector then recommend them to the NSC for approval. The coordinated reviews allow sector agencies to assess not only technical quality, but also how proposed projects align with existing policies, institutional arrangements and timelines. For cross-cutting issues that are more global in nature, such as chemicals and waste, the NSC provides a venue for the various sectors to share how these issues affect them domestically. NSC members are also invited to other GEF activities such as constituency meetings and ECWs.

The NSC's broad representation and approval by consensus has shifted GEF programming away from being driven by individual GEF agencies' agendas toward alignment with the country's development plan and environmental strategies, making portfolio decisions more transparent and widely supported.

One challenge of having an NSC is the intensive effort needed to obtain timely inputs from multiple institutions between formal meetings. In addition, consensus-based decision-making can be difficult when demand exceeds available GEF resources; this has led to the proposal of a scoring system to help prioritize proposals. NSC members noted how their processes have evolved in response to operational and national requirements. Going forward, the NSC wants to strengthen feedback from project implementation, so lessons learned inform future programming and improve replicability.

7. STRENGTHS, GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

92. This chapter distills lessons from previous and ongoing policy coherence initiatives, highlighting how the GEF's comparative advantage could be leveraged to address gaps and current challenges to advancing policy coherence, based on interviews, focus group discussions and surveys of members of the GEF partnership.

7.1. Strengths in GEF support for policy coherence

93. **The GEF is widely regarded as a partner of choice for enhancing environmental policy coherence, given its role as the financial mechanism for multiple MEAs.** Surveys and interviews conducted by the IEO for this and other evaluations indicate that most stakeholders perceive the GEF as well-positioned to advance policy coherence. Among the subset of 20 GEF focal points that responded to a dedicated survey on this topic, the GEF was most frequently cited as an institution suited to support policy coherence in their respective countries, reported by 17 respondents (85%). This was followed by the Green Climate Fund (13, 65%), and UN agencies (10, 50%). Fewer than half of respondents identified national government agencies, multilateral development banks (MDBs), the Adaptation Fund or Climate Investment Funds as suited to this role.

94. **GEF-funded projects are valued for speeding up the development and testing the implementation of more coherent policies, often acting as a neutral facilitator, particularly in areas that governments are less likely to fund.** Project stakeholders found most value in GEF-supported interventions that governments normally do not prioritize for funding—such as international expertise, intersectoral workshops and multistakeholder training—which increase capacities in non-environment sectors to understand and address environmental issues, as seen in the case studies. Through these interventions, GEF projects also serve as a "neutral third party" facilitating meaningful interactions among sectoral agencies that are institutionally equal and often lack the mandate or resources to compel other agencies to participate in their activities. These interactions are critical for building the relationships necessary for long-term collaboration. Most importantly, country stakeholders highlighted that GEF support allows more coherent policies to be demonstrated and tested in real-world conditions, allowing interventions to be adapted based on lessons before being scaled up with government funding.

95. **Most GEF projects are closely aligned with government priorities and engage a broad range of stakeholders, contributing to strong country stakeholder ownership.** Evidence from completed projects shows that country stakeholder ownership is crucial for achieving outcomes. Strong ownership—often reflected in high-level political commitment—is associated with projects that align with national priorities, leverage existing partnerships and long-term champions, and are embedded in broader development agenda and processes. Alignment is strongest when projects engage stakeholders across all levels of government, including non-state actors, particularly during the design stage. The inclusion of non-state actors in policy processes

is linked to greater legitimacy and sustainability, as their continued long-term presence facilitates policy implementation beyond the lifespan of GEF support. The broader stakeholder engagement observed in GEF-8 IP child projects suggests increasing attention to country ownership, which is essential for sustaining policy coherence over time.

7.2. Gaps in GEF support for policy coherence

96. **Many projects that did not achieve or sustain their outcomes failed to account for complex political and institutional realities, resulting in limited political support and buy-in.** Inadequate assessment of an intervention's political economy context led to project designs that did not engage the relevant stakeholders, overlooked existing capacities and relationship dynamics, and introduced new coordination mechanisms and policy frameworks instead of building on existing ones. As policy coherence is ultimately a government's responsibility, GEF interventions can only meaningfully contribute to this aim when embedded in the existing governance architecture. Some projects did not engage key stakeholders equally, consistently or early enough, especially in the planning phase. In other cases, projects failed to anticipate and adapt to changing political priorities, such as those prompted by scheduled elections.

97. **Key political factors that were not sufficiently considered included competing priorities, unclear mandates, and uneven capacities across sectors.** For example, in Malawi, an SLM project (GEF ID 3376, UNDP) developed policies harmonizing forestry, charcoal, agriculture, and energy use. However, the government prioritized short-term agricultural productivity, as evidenced by continued maize production subsidies and weak implementation of the existing national charcoal strategy. These competing priorities made SLM adoption costly for farmers. Corporate lobbies and other economic interests pose more deep-rooted, challenging dynamics that, while not expected to be transformed by any single GEF intervention, are not often accounted for in design and implementation.

98. **Projects that did not achieve their policy-related outcomes by project completion often underestimated the time required for legal and institutional reforms, especially when working with multiple sectors.** Evaluations have consistently found that the typical five-year implementation period is too short relative to the duration of political and other institutional processes. Overly ambitious timelines constrained consensus-building, rushed capacity-building efforts, and undermined complex policy reform processes. In contrast, longer implementation periods—often extending to 10 years through the GEF's flexibility—have been associated with more successful policy outcomes, as noted in the biodiversity focal area. Short project timelines also limited opportunities for follow-up support, especially to non-environmental sectors, reducing the likelihood that more coherent policies were fully integrated into their priorities. Coordination with non-environmental sectors tends to require additional time and effort, as they are less familiar with the GEF and with environmental issues.

99. **GEF support has missed opportunities to strengthen policy coherence in the design of projects and programs.** While most projects and programs identify the drivers of environmental degradation, some do not go far enough in designing interventions to address elements that could undermine their intended benefits. These include harmful subsidies, interactions with other focal area objectives (e.g. promoting SLM without addressing chemical use or inorganic fertilizers that would reduce long-term crop productivity), and the lack of policy evaluation to assess effectiveness and unintended impacts. In some cases, projects identify policy coherence as a key objective but do not clearly define the mechanisms to achieve it. At the corporate level, the absence of corresponding indicators further limits the ability to track progress.

100. **At both project and portfolio levels, the GEF works primarily with ministries of environment, which often have less influence over other ministries.** As of January 2026, 61 percent of GEF focal points are based in environment ministries, and 12 percent in environment units attached to planning or finance ministries. Across 153 recipient countries, only 29 percent of operational focal points (OFPs)—who typically play a bigger role in project design and approval than political focal points—are based in finance, planning or executive offices with structurally higher government authority. In the top five recipient countries, finance or planning ministries have played a stronger intermediary role in policy-related GEF projects, while other non-environment ministries have had more variable participation (see Annex C). As highlighted in previous sections, engaging the relevant stakeholders at each stage of the project and policy cycles is crucial for strong country ownership and, consequently, successful outcomes that contribute to policy coherence.

101. **In some smaller countries, GEF funding has been significant enough to enable environment ministries to influence policies in other sectors, but in most contexts, ministries linked to revenue-generating sectors retain greater policy influence.** In some cases, limited budgets make environment ministries hesitant to approve GEF projects that primarily benefit other ministries, hindering policy coherence. Interviewees emphasized that also engaging finance or planning ministries can help direct resources toward priority areas identified in the national development plans, thereby facilitating the adoption of more environmentally coherent policies across sectors. However, this approach is effective only where environmental sustainability is prioritized alongside economic development.

7.3. Challenges in advancing GEF support for policy coherence

102. **Although GEF-8 corporate initiatives have increased awareness of policy coherence, there remains no shared understanding among GEF partners of what it entails, why it matters and how to operationalize it.** While surveys suggest that the GEF is well-positioned to support policy coherence, more in-depth interviews reveal that interpretations of the concept vary widely across the partnership. One common misconception is that policy coherence equates to project alignment with national policies. This lack of a common understanding makes it difficult for

countries, GEF agencies and the GEF Secretariat to design and review projects that explicitly aim for policy coherence. Stakeholders also identified the limited availability of practical examples as a key barrier. In addition, some noted that policy incoherence often stems from policymakers not clearly perceiving the economic and social benefits of better-aligned policies.

103. **Most countries have existing initiatives that enable policy coherence, but their capacity to implement them varies widely.** While national development strategies and plans often aim to align environmental objectives with other priorities, implementation frequently remains siloed due to uneven institutional capacities. Many middle-income countries have established strong interagency coordination mechanisms in specific areas, such as climate change and forestry, but lack similar capacity in other sectors. Smaller countries such as small island developing states (SIDS) often lack human resources, while larger countries may face fiscal constraints that reduce their capacity for interministerial coordination. More broadly, sectoral agencies typically lack interdisciplinary expertise and require significant time, funding, and human resources to build coordination capacity—resources that are often scarce. Crucially, higher complexity from integrating additional sectors, stakeholders, and levels of governance under a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach can further strain these capacities, as highlighted in IEO evaluations of GEF programming approaches, requiring careful consideration of contextual realities.

104. **Political support for policy coherence initiatives can shift with political and economic instability, jeopardizing their sustainability.** A common reason such initiatives are not sustained is the volatility of political support driven by short-term electoral cycles, economic downturns and other macro-level events that lead governments to prioritize more economically and socially beneficial initiatives. Stakeholders noted greater coherence between climate change and other public policies, as climate actions are often linked to job creation, lower energy costs, disaster resilience and public health. Interministerial climate bodies are often convened by ministries of planning or finance or by executive office, giving them high political visibility and support. By contrast, biodiversity objectives are more vulnerable to shifting political priorities as natural resource extraction often generates higher revenues than conservation in the short term. In many contexts, the ability of policy coherence initiatives to generate or align with economic benefits is critical for sustaining political support and funding.

7.4. Opportunities for addressing gaps and challenges in GEF-9

105. **While the GEF often works through environment ministries, its partnership model—bringing together a diverse set of Agencies—provides a strong comparative advantage for supporting policy coherence across sectors and stages of the policy cycle.** For example, the GEF's partner MDBs already convene finance and planning ministries for coherence toward climate change goals. UN development agencies tend to have close, long-term relationships with development-oriented ministries such as health and agriculture, and can act as facilitators to draft

and implement cross-sectoral policies; others excel in developing analytical tools that demonstrate the economic costs and benefits of more coherent policies to decision-makers. Some, such as international NGOs, specialize in linking scientific evidence and innovation with policy solutions. As seen in Section 4.4, countries engage different Agencies for different types of support. Long-term Agency relationships were highlighted by some GEF focal points as an advantage for bringing deep professional trust and knowledge of the country's political economy and governance landscape that allow meaningful long-term collaborations. The GEF can leverage this wide range of technical expertise, cross-sectoral experience, and long-standing relationships beyond the environmental sphere to strengthen policy coherence.

106. **The GEF's broad portfolio of interventions across diverse country contexts, combined with its global knowledge platforms, positions it well to disseminate lessons, benefits and practical examples of policy coherence initiatives for replication.** With projects implemented in more than 150 countries, the GEF generates valuable knowledge from a wide range of contexts, particularly through pilot demonstrations that can be adapted and replicated in other country contexts. As illustrated by the IWRM and ZIFLP case studies, GEF-supported intersectoral activities demonstrate both the benefits of enhanced policy coherence and how it can be operationalized by governments. While the 2025 IEO review of knowledge management in the GEF partnership noted a gap in the use of the GEF's global knowledge platforms for improving project design, the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) and other innovative technologies enable these to be systematically leveraged to promote good practices from policy coherence initiatives, including those embedded within larger interventions such as integrated programs. The GEF can also draw on the experience of its partners, such as UNDP and UNEP, that have implemented dedicated programs to promote policy coherence for more than a decade. The GEF Secretariat has begun collaborating with UNEP and OECD to leverage their experience and increase donor coherence on the ground by harmonizing policy coherence definitions, monitoring methodologies and learning initiatives, among others.[14]

107. **The GEF's Country Engagement Strategy (CES), which in GEF-8 focused on strengthening interministerial coordination, is intended to play a broader role in engaging other government institutions in GEF-9.** The updated CES outlines plans to support policy coherence through mechanisms such as interministerial national steering committees (NSCs) and engagement in country platforms. NSCs are intended to enhance policy and programming coherence within the GEF portfolio, while country platforms represent an emerging coordination approach to help countries mobilize and align financing—including grants, concessional loans, and private investment—for climate and development objectives. Although these platforms have thus far been initiated primarily by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and MDBs, the GEF has engaged through specific workstreams in Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Seychelles and Madagascar

[14] For example, the draft GEF-9 Strategic Positioning Framework and Programming Directions are cited as a resource in the 2025 SDG 17.14.1 questionnaire for countries to assess their progress in policy coherence.

starting in 2024. These mechanisms may offer additional opportunities for the GEF to build on existing Agency country portfolios and relationships beyond environment ministries. In addition, routine CES activities—such as National Dialogues and Expanded Constituency Workshops—could be further leveraged to facilitate multistakeholder dialogue, knowledge exchange and learning that more directly contribute to operationalizing policy coherence.

108. **The GEF's multiple project modalities and predictable, country-driven and flexible funding can be used to design or build on policy coherence initiatives in ways that align with policy cycle timelines.** Interviews consistently highlighted that, compared to other funding sources, GEF financing is more accessible and adaptable through its resource allocation framework. This flexibility facilitates cross-sectoral engagement, especially for MDBs, whose lending instruments often constrain their modes of engagement. It also enables countries to design multi-phase interventions with adaptive follow-up support, better reflecting the long-term and iterative nature of policy processes and increasing the likelihood of achieving target outcomes. Multiple project modalities allow flexibility in providing different levels of support to respond to specific country needs at each stage of the policy cycle, such as baseline policy assessments through enabling activities, technical expertise for drafting policies through MSPs, and pilot testing of policy implementation and enforcement through FSPs. Furthermore, programming different modalities to achieve a specific policy coherence goal within a geographical area or sector would increase coherence and synergies across a country's GEF portfolio to better support long-term processes.

7.5. Leveraging the GEF's comparative advantage

109. Table 3 summarizes how the GEF's comparative advantage—the strengths and opportunities in its support—can respond to current gaps and challenges in advancing policy coherence.

Table 3. Summary of how the GEF can leverage its strengths and opportunities

Gaps and Challenges to Address	Strengths and Opportunities to Leverage
• Despite increased awareness, there remains **no shared understanding** among GEF partners of what policy coherence entails, why it matters or how to operationalize it.	• The GEF's **diverse portfolio and global knowledge platforms**, complemented by its **country engagement initiatives** and collaboration with partners experienced in dedicated policy coherence initiatives, position it to disseminate lessons, benefits and practical examples for replication.
• The GEF works primarily with environment ministries, which often have **less influence over other ministries**.	• The GEF is widely regarded as a **partner of choice** for enhancing environmental policy coherence. • GEF-funded projects are valued for **speeding up development and testing implementation** of more coherent policies, often serving as a **neutral facilitator**. • The GEF's partnership model brings **cross-sector experience and relationships** that can engage key stakeholders beyond the environmental sphere at different policy cycle stages.

	• CES plans to engage more government institutions through **interministerial NSCs and country platforms**.
• Countries **vary widely in capacity** to implement existing policy coherence initiatives, exacerbated by **higher complexity** from a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach. • Projects that did not achieve or sustain outcomes often **failed to account for complex political and institutional realities**, limiting political buy-in. • Projects often **underestimated the time required for legal and institutional reforms**, especially when involving non-environment sectors. • GEF support has **missed opportunities to strengthen policy coherence** in intervention design.	• GEF funding is **predictable, country-driven and flexible**, with **multiple modalities** that can be used to assess contextual realities and **coherently programmed** across a country's GEF portfolio to better respond to stakeholder needs, **accounting for the longer timelines and iterative nature** of policy processes and multisectoral engagement.
• Infrequent support to policy evaluation in projects and the lack of explicit corporate-level policy coherence indicators **limit the ability to track progress and impact**.	• The GEF can **leverage partner experiences** in policy coherence support and has started collaborations to harmonize definitions, monitoring methodologies, and learning initiatives.
• Political support can shift with **political and economic instability**, jeopardizing sustainability of outcomes when policy coherence initiatives cannot generate or align with **economic benefits** that sustain political support and funding.	• Most GEF projects are closely **aligned with government priorities** and **engage a broad range of stakeholders**, supporting **country ownership**, which is crucial for sustainability. • Some GEF Agencies excel at tools to demonstrate **the economic costs and benefits** of more coherent policies, while others have **long-term relationships** that can sustain engagement beyond the project cycle.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

110. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the evaluation's key findings.

8.1. Conclusions

(1) **The GEF has contributed to policy coherence over the years, primarily by laying the foundations for—rather than catalyzing—systemic policy change.** The GEF is well-positioned to convene actors and support integrated policy approaches through its existing project and program modalities. Across its portfolio, the GEF has consistently supported policy coherence through policy development, capacity-building and intersectoral exchange. These efforts have contributed to more aligned policy frameworks, particularly in upstream stages of the policy cycle. Mainstreaming environmental objectives into sectoral policies has been the most common approach, enabling integration without requiring more challenging institutional change. However, more complex dimensions of policy coherence—such as addressing harmful subsidies and ground-level enforcement—have received less support.

(2) **GEF support for policy coherence has added greatest value by accelerating and testing policy reforms, but sustaining outcomes requires aligning closely with country incentives and engaging relevant stakeholders.** The role of GEF projects as a neutral facilitator supporting enabling conditions and pilot demonstrations, which governments do not usually fund, has been crucial for building stakeholder ownership and momentum in policy adoption and implementation. However, this alone has not led to sustained coordination or behavioral change across institutions. Successful and sustained policy coherence support depends on interventions aligning with socioeconomic incentives as well as priorities in the government's broader development agenda. More consistent engagement beyond environmental institutions is also needed to ensure equal ownership across relevant stakeholders — particularly those that can most influence outcomes and their long-term sustainability.

(3) **Outcomes meant to support policy coherence are ultimately shaped by domestic governance dynamics, with the GEF playing a strategic but bounded role.** The success of interventions depends heavily on country-specific factors such as political will, institutional dynamics and shifting priorities. The GEF is most effective when reinforcing existing policy processes and leveraging institutional champions, but its interventions have not always accounted for domestic political economy realities during design and implementation, which has resulted in outcomes not being achieved or sustained. Policy coherence requires sustained, iterative engagement across the full policy cycle. In contrast, GEF projects are typically time-bound and focused on early-stage outcomes, which can undermine progress toward long-term reforms. While GEF projects are driven by country priorities, addressing this intervention design mismatch is important to increase achievement of outcomes and strengthen continuity beyond project completion.

(4) **Pilot corporate initiatives in GEF-8 have raised visibility across the GEF partnership but mainstreaming and expansion of policy coherence support require more systemic changes.** The GEF partnership recognizes the need for shared definitions and practical guidance, which will be necessary to effectively implement the GEF-9 strategy. However, systematic criteria for tagging at project level and outcome tracking at portfolio level have yet to be addressed, limiting learning and accountability as GEF-9 expands its scope of support.

8.2. Recommendations

111. The following actions are recommended to increase the financial and institutional sustainability of GEF-supported policy coherence initiatives, while reducing operational and transaction costs:

(1) **Clarify and articulate the GEF's strategic niche in supporting policy coherence, drawing on its comparative advantage and track record, while preserving the flexibility to respond to country-driven priorities.** The GEF should establish broad guiding principles on how, where and when it can add the most value—building on country portfolios and the complementary roles of other actors, particularly its partner Agencies, in areas such as large-scale policy reform and financing. This approach will allow the GEF to remain responsive to evolving, context-specific opportunities for supporting policy coherence, while providing strategic direction for programming, partnerships, and resource allocation.

(2) **Ensure policy coherence interventions are grounded in country contexts by systematically assessing governance conditions and institutional capacities prior to designing interventions.** The GEF should systematically identify appropriate entry points by first assessing baselines to better respond to contextual needs. Interventions should identify key stakeholders to engage—such as those with the most relevant mandates and structural influence—and increase attention to the context-specific economic and social benefits of policy coherence, for greater sustainability. Intervention designs should clarify pathways toward long-term impact that consider the various stages of the policy cycle—from the development and adoption to the implementation and evaluation of policy reforms.

(3) **Leverage existing learning and monitoring mechanisms to strategically support and track outcomes of long-term policy processes.** The GEF should leverage its mechanisms for adaptive learning to more strategically inform intervention design across different contexts and track its contributions to systems transformation over time. At the project level, this would include establishing appropriate baselines to enable assessment of policy coherence outcomes beyond project completion. Building on the GEF-9 results framework, system-level policy and regulatory reform indicators could be tested and adapted to explicitly capture progress in policy coherence. Knowledge management efforts should complement these actions by systematically capturing and disseminating experiences in policy coherence support across countries and Agencies.

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ANNEXES

A. Evaluation Concept Note

Background

The need for policy coherence

Policy coherence, as defined in Global Environment Facility (GEF) documents, refers to "the systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies, creating synergies towards achieving the agreed objectives." In the context of international development, policy coherence typically entails alignment among environmental, social, and economic policies to support the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (OECD 2016; 2018). SDG 17 on Partnership for Goals includes Indicator 17.14.1, which tracks the number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development.

Enhancing policy coherence has the potential to mitigate activities driving environmental degradation. Moreover, coherent policies could redirect funding from harmful activities and subsidies to address the environmental financing gap. Estimates suggest that an additional $711 billion per year, on average, is required to reverse biodiversity decline by 2030 (Deutz et al 2020). Achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions necessitates $3.8 trillion in annual investment through 2025, with only 16% currently deployed by governments, financial institutions, and the private sector (Kozloski et al 2022). Yet approximately $7 trillion per year is spent on activities contributing directly to climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation, of which $1.7 trillion comes as environmentally harmful government subsidies (UNEP 2023).

A 2023 World Bank report calculated that governments spend $1.25 trillion annually on direct subsidies for agriculture, fishing, and fossil fuel alone, while over $6 trillion is spent to cope with the negative consequences of these subsidies on populations and the environment (Damania et al 2023). However, policy incoherence can also arise across different environmental focal areas, such as climate change and biodiversity. For instance, some countries lacking policy coherence may prioritize meeting carbon emissions targets at the expense of highly biologically and culturally diverse forests (e.g., The Gecko Project 2023, Bennun et al 2021).

GEF support for policy coherence thus far

The GEF is the largest and longest-running family of funds mandated to generate global environmental benefits in the areas of climate, biodiversity, land, chemicals and waste, and transboundary water bodies. With a mandate that cuts across multiple sectors, it has been in a unique position to facilitate policy coherence over its more than 30 years of existence. For example, through its multifocal area projects, it has helped create multisectoral and multistakeholder mechanisms at the national, provincial and village levels; these mechanisms allow environmental, social and economic problems to be discussed simultaneously, and solutions to these problems developed in an integrated manner (GEF IEO 2018a). In its GEF-8 Strategic Positioning Framework, the GEF highlighted the importance of policy coherence to

increase funding for reversing environmental degradation while reducing harmful government subsidies (GEF 2022).

Almost all the GEF-8 Integrated Programs already explicitly identify policy coherence as an area of intervention. The Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, ratified in 2023 and for which the GEF also serves as the financing mechanism, uses policy coherence as one of seven criteria for allocating resources. In October 2023, the GEF Council approved a suite of activities to enhance policy coherence across multiple levels of GEF operation (GEF 2023). The approach includes mainstreaming policy coherence in the GEF's country engagement strategy, knowledge management and learning strategy, results-based management framework, and specific funding windows. It considers the possibility of including policy coherence as a variable for calculating funding allocations to countries through the GEF's System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) index in the future. In coordination with this work, the GEF's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) has developed recommendations on how the GEF can mainstream policy coherence at the project, program and portfolio levels, as well as criteria for screening and monitoring policy coherence-focused projects funded through a competitive window (STAP 2023a, 2023b; Stafford Smith et al 2022).

These documents envision a more intentional role for the GEF in building capacity and creating opportunities for intersectoral dialogue among GEF country focal points and among the different global environmental conventions. In its Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO 2022) noted the GEF's innovations in governance, such as in efforts to increase policy coherence through integrated approaches.

Assessing GEF support for policy coherence

The GEF has a long history of supporting policy development and legal reform in various country contexts and environmental focal areas. Policy support in the GEF is typically through project components dedicated to institutional strengthening, encompassing activities from policy research and development to multistakeholder consultations to awareness-raising. The types of instruments supported include not only policies but also the instruments for implementation, such as statutes, regulations and administrative directives. However, tracking policy-related outcomes, particularly over the long term, has been limited (GEF IEO 2018b).

The GEF's current focus moves beyond project-level policy development and reform to policy coherence across sectors at all levels of GEF support. As this new focus is mainstreamed as a key cross-cutting theme, evidence is needed on how to effectively operationalize and sustain policy coherence at the portfolio, program and project levels.

To track progress on policy coherence in countries (SDG Indicator 17.14.1), UNEP (2020) developed a framework outlining eight domains of a coherent policy environment (see section on Conceptual Framework). However, several factors and contextual conditions influence the degree of policy coherence in a country, making it challenging to implement standardized interventions for increasing or measuring policy coherence. Capacity constraints, both technical and financial, often hinder communication across silos. Political will and culture also shape policy coherence, alongside coherence in stakeholder values,

beliefs, interests, objectives, rules, and structures, among others (Fopa Tchinda and Talbot 2023, Shawoo et al 2022).

The degree of policy coherence may also vary depending on the sector. Sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and fossil fuels have historically received subsidies that encourage wasteful resource use and decrease long-term productivity due to natural resource degradation (Damania et al 2023). The interconnectedness of water, energy and food security presents opportunities for maximizing policy synergies and mitigating trade-offs, but also risks of greater incoherence if policies are developed in isolation.

This evaluation aims to examine the GEF's past efforts in supporting policy coherence, assess preliminary effects of its recent emphasis on this theme on the nature of support provided, and analyze the mechanisms through which it provides this support. The findings of this forward-looking evaluation are expected to help inform the GEF's dedicated programming on policy coherence, enhancing its ability to effectively achieve its mission of generating global environmental benefits. This includes reducing government expenditures on environmentally harmful activities, and directing funding toward policies that restore the environment.

Key Questions

The evaluation aims to answer three key questions:

(4) How has the GEF historically supported policy coherence in countries to increase global environmental benefits?

   a. What types of interventions have proven successful and what challenges have emerged in supporting policy coherence?

   b. How have outcomes of policy-related activities affected overall project outcomes?

(5) What insights can previous GEF interventions offer on how policy coherence is enhanced and sustained across different contexts?

   a. In what ways have GEF activities contributed to sustained (or unsustained)[15] policy coherence?

   b. What contextual drivers and conditions can the GEF leverage to support policy coherence?

(6) To what extent is GEF support for policy-related interventions at the portfolio, program and project levels adapting to effectively promote policy coherence?

   a. How does the GEF's previous experience in supporting policy inform the implementation of its new approach?

[15] Sustainability in the GEF Evaluation Policy is defined as "The continuation/ likely continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has come to an end, and its potential for scale-up and/or replication; interventions need to be environmentally as well as institutionally, financially, politically, culturally and socially sustainable."

b. To what extent is the new approach designed to contribute to increased overall achievement of project outcomes, particularly environmental outcomes?

Conceptual Framework

Policy coherence encompasses multiple dimensions: horizontal, vertical, temporal and political. Horizontal coherence refers to alignment of policies across different sectoral ministries or government agencies. This term may also be expanded to include alignment with relevant policies of key stakeholders, such as private and civil society organizations. Vertical coherence refers to alignment across different levels of government, such as between national and municipal sectoral agencies, as well as with policies of regional and global organizations or agreements that a country is part of. Temporal coherence refers to the alignment of future policies with those adopted in the present. Political coherence refers to alignment across the entire policy cycle, from issued identification and analysis, to the development and adoption of policy objectives and instruments, to policy implementation and evaluation.

The broader literature emphasizes not only creating synergies and mitigating trade-offs as outcomes of good policy coherence, but also preventing "leakages"—actions that produce negative effects elsewhere or at a later time—as a result of policy changes (STAP 2023b). This could manifest as natural resource overharvesting in one country to compensate for a harvesting ban imposed in another country, resulting in a net decrease in the natural resource compared to the status quo.

A synthesis of key literature defining policy coherence (STAP 2023, UNEP 2020, OECD 2017) yields the following common components that may be used as policy coherence indicators:

1) **Evidence of political commitment to policy coherence.** Political commitment to policy coherence is expressed/endorsed at the highest level of government and formally incorporated into law, strategic frameworks and/or plans.

2) **Mechanisms for stakeholder participation.** Stakeholders (e.g., civil society, business, industry, science, academia) from different relevant sectors and levels of government are involved through participatory processes at various stages of the policy cycle in the development of laws, policies, plans, programs, and major development projects.

3) **Mechanisms for horizontal coherence.** Mechanisms are in place to for both coordination across sectors, and integration of policy efforts to avoid duplication or conflicts. Such mechanisms include data and information management systems that allow different sectors to share information for more coordinated and integrated decision-making.

    - ***Coordination.*** Sectoral ministries and agencies can share information, clearly delineate responsibilities, allocate resources, and resolve conflicting or inconsistent mandates, objectives and activities.
    - ***Integration.*** Government and non-government stakeholders can jointly make strategic decisions that help align planning, budgeting, legislation, sectoral programs and policies to simultaneously meet environmental, social and economic objectives. These include mechanisms to track policy coherence in expenditures, and to promote the alignment of both public and private funds to achieve policy coherence. These also include assessing cross-sectoral linkages throughout the policy and planning processes.

4) **Mechanisms for vertical coherence.** Mechanisms are in place to align priorities, policies and plans adopted at various levels of government, such as through systematic consultation, collaboration, and alignment of efforts at national, subnational and local levels.

5) **Mechanisms for temporal coherence.** Mechanisms are in place to ensure that long-term considerations are integrated into decision-making, policy development and planning, to account for intergenerational concerns and objectives that go beyond the current electoral cycle.

6) **Mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and report on policy effects.** Mechanisms are in place to systematically monitor and evaluate the effects of policies across sectors (horizontal coherence), including analyzing the potential effects of today's policy decisions on the wellbeing of future generations (temporal coherence). Mechanisms also assess the effects of and consistency across the policy cycle, such as in policy objectives, policy instruments, and implementation/ enforcement practices (political coherence). These mechanisms inform adaptive action to maximize synergies, mitigate negative effects, and address any harmful effects of policies that may occur elsewhere or later (leakages).

These components may exist at different levels of government, and have activities at different stages of the policy cycle. The evaluation's scoping phase found that GEF projects, while not explicitly aiming to achieve policy coherence, contribute to this goal through a range of activities that may build country capacities to establish or strengthen these components, or directly support the development of more coherent policies at specific stages of the policy cycle (figure 1).

Many of these projects are intended to resolve incoherence in specific government activities and/or geographical units, rather than throughout an entire sector. Many project activities focus on increasing coherence in policy implementation in national, subnational and local government structures rather than on policy coherence at the legislative level. In several cases, projects seek to foster greater integration and synergy between different sectoral policies, rather than addressing explicit conflicts in policy objectives. Thus, GEF support for policy coherence may not necessarily address policy incoherence directly, but rather help operationalize opportunities for greater coherence.

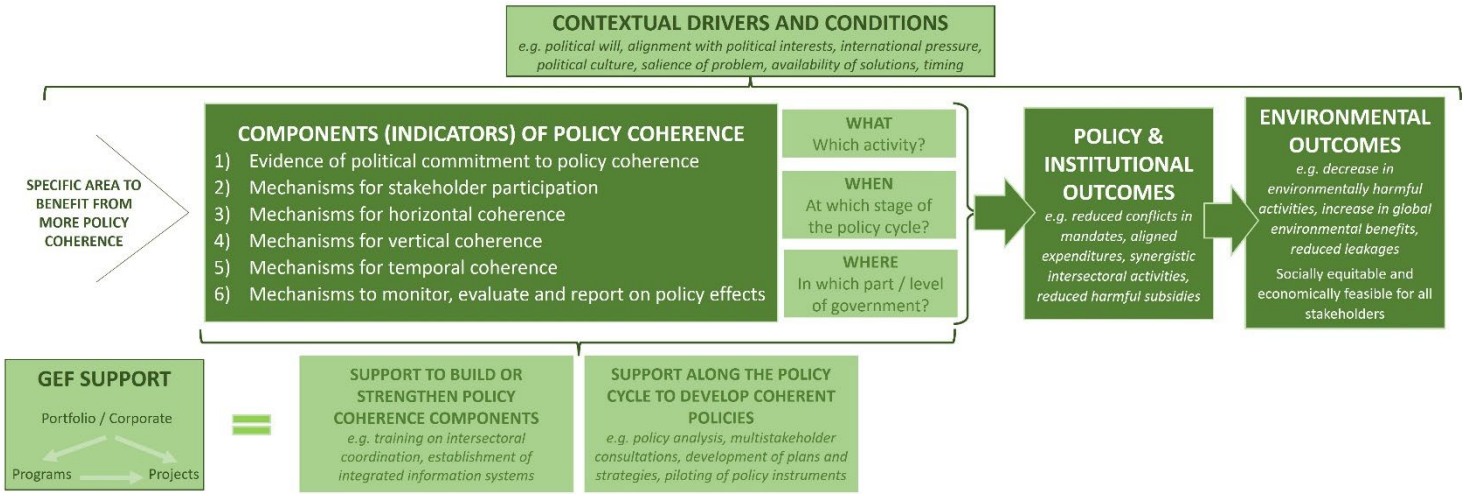

Figure 6. Conceptual framework for how policy coherence leads to positive environmental outcomes, and how GEF support contributes to policy and institutional outcomes

Contextual drivers and conditions play a big role in influencing both the outcomes of GEF support and the dynamics of each component. These ultimately shape the extent of policy coherence that is achieved in a particular sector and country context (Fopa Tchinda and Talbot 2023, Shawoo et al 2022, Nilsson et al 2012).

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework that this evaluation will use to identify areas of effective GEF support for policy coherence, and areas for potential improvement. The evaluation will also look at the interactions between GEF support and contextual drivers and conditions to identify leverage points for enhancing outcomes, and mitigating their negative effects.

Methodological Approach

The evaluation will answer the three key questions by assessing GEF activities at the portfolio/ corporate, program and project levels. The evaluation will have a forward-looking approach by assessing completed and ongoing activities with the aim of providing inputs to current and future GEF programming.

To determine changes in the GEF's approach to policy support, GEF-8 activities will be primarily compared to those in GEF-6 and GEF-7, when its focus shifted to more integrated programming. Integrated programming, by its nature, requires coordination across multiple sectors and administrative scales to tackle drivers of environmental degradation; thus, this integrated focus will serve as a baseline for how the GEF has previously helped enhance policy coherence in countries. Earlier projects will be assessed using specific criteria as appropriate. The total number of programs, projects and case studies to be analyzed will be finalized after further screening and stakeholder inputs. Policy coherence indicators from the literature will be adapted to the GEF context and used as benchmarks (see some proposed indicators in Conceptual Framework section above). STAP guidance on policy coherence may be used as a basis for assessing program theories of change. Table 1 summarizes the data sources and methods for each evaluation question.

Portfolio / corporate level

The evaluation will focus on corporate activities identified in the GEF's 2023 strategy document as areas for mainstreaming policy coherence:

- Country Engagement Strategy, especially the National Dialogues
- Knowledge Management & Learning Strategy
- Competitive and Innovation Windows
- Program and Project Screening
- Results-Based Management Framework, especially the Core Indicators

Features of these corporate strategies and processes will be compared to their precursors in GEF-6 and GEF-7 on how they deliberately enhance and track policy coherence within countries, and in relation to international institutions such as GEF Agencies and the Conventions. Data will be collected through **document analyses, key stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions,** and **observation of corporate processes** at the country and regional levels. An **online survey** of GEF stakeholders will also be administered to gather perceptions on the extent to which the GEF has enhanced policy coherence prior to GEF-8, which activities have facilitated this, and potential future activities that could help achieve this aim.

Program level

The evaluation will assess program framework documents (PFDs) on the degree to which they consider policy coherence issues when analyzing environmental drivers, and in designing program components and child projects. PFDs will also be assessed on their use of policy-related indicators, where relevant. Policy-related outcomes will be analyzed in completed programs, including program- and context-related variables that have contributed to their success or lack of success in this area. Data will be collected through **document analyses** and **key stakeholder interviews** to compare programs across GEF replenishment periods, with a focus on the Integrated Programs.

Project level

A **portfolio review** of projects funded from GEF-6 and onwards will identify the types of policy coherence support the GEF has provided, at which stages of the policy cycle, and targeting which sectors. This will include projects that are both active and completed.

A sample of completed projects working in sectors known for policy incoherence (e.g. agriculture, tourism, fisheries, water) will be assessed to identify any missed opportunities for crucial policy coherence support. Project documents will be assessed on their extent of policy coherence analysis vis-a-vis the design of activities to meet stated project objectives. Projects with policy coherence as a main objective will be analyzed for their use of policy-related indicators and outcomes, as well as project- and context-related variables affecting their success.

Field-based case studies will provide more in-depth information on project- and context-related variables affecting achievement of policy coherence-related objectives. They will also assess progress in policy coherence since project completion. Case study projects will be selected based on their focus on policy

coherence as a main objective, focal area representation, geographical representation, country type and size, and high potential for deriving lessons for the GEF's policy coherence programming, among other criteria. Where possible, case studies will be conducted in synergy with the GEF IEO studies on behavior change and broader adoption, which can provide insights on how policy support translates to sustained behavioral and environmental change on the ground.

Table 4. Summary of methods and information sources that will be used to answer each key evaluation question. The total number of programs, projects and case studies to be analyzed will be finalized after further screening and stakeholder inputs.

KEY EVALUATION QUESTION	DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS METHODS	DATA & INFORMATION SOURCES
1) How has the GEF historically supported policy coherence in countries to increase global environmental benefits? a. What types of interventions have proven successful and what challenges have emerged in supporting policy coherence? b. How have outcomes of policy-related activities affected over-all project outcomes?	**PORTFOLIO LEVEL** Document analyses Key stakeholder interviews Focus group discussions Online stakeholder survey Observation of corporate processes **PROGRAM LEVEL** Document analyses Key stakeholder interviews **PROJECT LEVEL** Portfolio review Field-based case studies	**PORTFOLIO LEVEL** ▪GEF-6/7 strategy documents ▪Corporate-level and country-level stakeholders ▪Other IEO corporate evaluations **PROGRAM LEVEL** ▪GEF-6 & -7 Program Framework Documents Council-approved as of 31 December 2023 (n=30) ▪Program Coordinators of relevant programs ▪Other IEO program evaluations **PROJECT LEVEL** ▪GEF-6 & -7 CEO-endorsed project documents as of 31 December 2023 ▪Terminal evaluations of completed GEF-6 & -7 projects validated as of 31 December 2023 (n=114) ▪Stakeholder interviews and field visits on completed projects in selected countries (n>2; TBD) ▪Other IEO case studies
2) What insights can previous GEF interventions offer on how policy coherence is enhanced and sustained across different contexts? a. In what ways have GEF activities contributed to sustained (or unsustained) policy coherence? b. What contextual drivers and conditions can the GEF leverage to support policy coherence?	**PORTFOLIO LEVEL** Key stakeholder interviews Focus group discussions Online stakeholder survey **PROJECT LEVEL** Field-based case studies	**PORTFOLIO LEVEL** ▪Corporate-level and country-level stakeholders ▪Other IEO corporate evaluations **PROJECT LEVEL** ▪Stakeholder interviews and field visits on completed projects in selected countries (n>2; TBD) ▪Other IEO case studies
3) To what extent is GEF support for policy-related interventions at the portfolio, program and project levels adapting to effectively promote policy coherence? a. How does the GEF's previous experience in supporting policy inform	**PORTFOLIO LEVEL** Document analyses Key stakeholder interviews Focus group discussions Online stakeholder survey Observation of corporate processes	**PORTFOLIO LEVEL** ▪GEF strategy documents °GEF-6/7 vs GEF-8 ▪GEF project/ program screening templates °GEF-6/7 vs GEF-8 ▪Corporate-level and country-level stakeholders ▪National Dialogues and other corporate processes

the implementation of its new approach? b. To what extent is the new approach designed to contribute to increased over-all achievement of project outcomes, particularly environmental outcomes?	**PROGRAM LEVEL** Document analyses Key stakeholder interviews **PROJECT LEVEL** Portfolio review Field-based case studies	▪Other IEO corporate evaluations **PROGRAM LEVEL** ▪Program Framework Documents °GEF-6 & -7 Council-approved as of 31 December 2023 (n=30) °GEF-8 Council-approved as of 30 June 2024 (n>19; TBD) ▪Program Coordinators of relevant programs ▪Other IEO program evaluations **PROJECT LEVEL** ▪Project documents °GEF-6 & -7 CEO-endorsed projects as of 31 December 2023 (n=1257) °GEF-8 CEO-endorsed projects as of 30 June 2024 (n>12; TBD) ▪Stakeholder interviews and field visits on completed projects in selected countries (n>2; TBD) ▪Other IEO case studies

Scope and Limitations

In this evaluation, the term "policy" will refer to a range of policy instruments -- including laws, strategies, plans, programs and implementing regulations -- that 1) are intended to achieve the government's environmental policy objectives, and 2) have been adopted through formal legislation or as part of the regular activities of a ministry or sectoral public agency. Individual programs or projects beyond the government's regular operations are excluded from this definition. The term "policy coherence intervention" will refer to any GEF-supported activity that aims to build institutional capacity for policy coherence (e.g. training for interministerial coordination), or help develop more coherent policies (e.g. multistakeholder consultations, policy studies). Given the topic's broad scope and nuances, the evaluation's conceptual framework and working definitions of these terms will be further refined in dialogues with key stakeholders. This will help ensure that the evaluation scope and findings are meaningful and useful for GEF programming.

The evaluation will focus primarily on policy coherence across different government sectoral agencies (horizontal coherence). This type of coherence is most expected to reduce conflicts in natural resource use objectives, and potentially integrate efforts toward rehabilitating and protecting the environment. This will be one of the key criteria to be used in identifying the portfolio of projects to be analyzed. All other types of policy coherence will be assessed to the extent that they support the adoption and implementation of intersectoral policies at other political, administrative and temporal scales. Interventions that promote policy alignment between different levels of government but within the same sector will not be evaluated for promoting policy coherence.

There is currently no straightforward way to identify GEF projects with a policy coherence focus. The evaluation will take a multipronged approach in defining the portfolio of projects to be reviewed, which will include keyword filters, preliminary document analyses, stakeholder inputs, and potentially AI-assisted

searches. Given the number of projects to be screened and reviewed (see table 1) within the evaluation timeline, a sampling approach may be taken in lieu of reviewing the entire population of projects and programs that meet the criteria for in-depth review.

Given that the focus on policy coherence was only approved by the GEF Council in October 2023, some of the outlined activities may still be in the early stages or have yet to be started before the findings are presented to the GEF Council and Replenishment Group. The evaluation will take this caveat into account when framing the findings, using a forward-looking lens.

Resources

Evaluation Team

The evaluation will be led by Jeneen R. Garcia, Evaluation Officer, with team members consisting of one senior evaluation expert on policy coherence and two evaluation analysts. Local country consultants may support the case study missions. Internal and external peer reviewers will be engaged to provide feedback on draft evaluation products.

Timeline

The evaluation is scheduled to be presented at the June 2025 Council and will be used as input to the Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS8). Evaluation findings will be disseminated after it is presented to the Council through, among others, print publications and events targeted at different stakeholder groups. Table 2 outlines the schedule of evaluation activities.

Table 5. Evaluation Timeline

PERIOD	ACTIVITY
February - May	Scoping phase – literature review, initial interviews, focus groups discussions and portfolio analysis Development and approval of concept note Preliminary identification of portfolio and case study countries Focus group discussions with key corporate-level stakeholders
June - July	Hiring of consultants Development of tools for portfolio reviews (programs and projects), case studies, and online survey Corporate and country stakeholder interviews Portfolio reviews
August - November	Portfolio reviews and data analysis Field visits / stakeholder interviews (Azerbaijan and Georgia, Zimbabwe, Panama, TBD) Observation of corporate processes (National Dialogues, Target 18 Workshop, TBD) Corporate and country stakeholder interviews Online survey

December 2024 – February 2025	Analysis and synthesis of data, report-writing
March 2025	Revision and circulation of draft report
April 2025	Presentation of initial findings to Replenishment Group
May 2025	Finalization and uploading of report
June 2025	Presentation at Council
July 2025 - onwards	Dissemination activities

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B. List of IEO evaluations reviewed

- Impact of GEF Support on National Environment Laws and Policies https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/regulatory-reform-2017 (2018)
- Climate Change Focal Area Study https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/climate-change-2017.pdf (2018)
- Evaluation of Programmatic Approaches in the GEF Volume 1 https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/programmatic-approaches-2016-vol1.pdf (2018)
- Evaluation of Programmatic Approaches in the GEF Volume 2 https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/programmatic-approaches-2016-vol2-technical.pdf (2018)
- Evaluation of the Multiple Benefits of GEF Support through Its Multifocal Area Portfolio Volume 1 https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/multiple-benefits-2016-v1.pdf (2018)
- Evaluation of the Multiple Benefits of GEF Support through Its Multifocal Area Portfolio Volume 2 https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/multiple-benefits-2016-v2.pdf (2018)
- Evaluation of GEF Support to Mainstreaming Biodiversity https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/biodiversity-mainstreaming-2018 (2019)
- Evaluation of the Effects of The Covid-19 Pandemic on GEF Activities https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/gef-covid-19-interventions (2022)
- Resilience, Climate Change Adaptation, And Climate Risks in the GEF Trust Fund https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/climate-change-resilience (2022)
- Special Climate Change Fund: 2021 Program Evaluation https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/sccf-2021 (2022)
- Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation of The Lower Mekong River Basin Ecosystem https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/scce-mekong (2023)
- Evaluation of the Global Wildlife Program https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/global-wildlife-program (2024)
- Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/community-based-approaches (2024)
- Evaluation of GEF Interventions in Chemicals and Waste GEF-5 To GEF-8 https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/cw-interventions (2024)
- Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/ciews-2024 (2024)
- Evaluation of the GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/water-security (2024)
- Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries Volume 1: Main Report https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/scce-drylands (2024)

- Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries Volume 1: Main Report **https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/scce-drylands-vol1.pdf** (2024)
- Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries Volume 2 – Technical Documents https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/scce-drylands-vol2.pdf (2024)
- Evaluation of the GEF Support for Nature-Based Solutions https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/nbs (2025)
- Learning From Challenges in GEF Projects https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/learning-challenges (2025)
- Evaluation of GEF Food Systems Programs https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/food-security (2025)
- Evaluation of Cofinancing in the GEF https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/cofinancing.pdf (2025)Evaluation of the Country Engagement Strategy (CES) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/CES-background-study.pdf (2025/2026)
- Assessing Portfolio-Level Risk at the GEF https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/portfolio-level-risk (2026)
- Evaluation of GEF Programs in Pacific Small Island Developing States https://www.gefieo.org/en/types/evaluations/pacific-sids (2026)
- Evaluation of the International Waters Focal Area https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/International-Waters-Evaluation.pdf (2026)
- Review of Knowledge Management in the GEF Partnership https://www.gefieo.org/content/dam/partners/ieo/docs/mgr/eval/KM-background-study-final-for-web.pdf (2026)

C. Methodological Notes

C.1. Sample Selection Criteria and Notes on Analytical Methods

LEVEL OF SUPPORT	SAMPLE SELECTION CRITERIA AND NOTES ON ANALYTICAL METHODS
Project	**Statistical analyses** of the results of the LLM analyses were performed using a 95 percent confidence interval using the following tests: Chi Square with standardized residuals; t-test and Wilcoxon Rank-Sum; two-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis with Tukey's Honest Significant Difference and Dunn's test for post-hoc tests; and matching regression. Only results with $p<0.05$ on both the parametric and non-parametric tests were considered statistically significant, and reported only if consistent with other evidence sources and analyses. **Keyword analysis** was used initially to identify purposive samples for in-depth human review prior to LLM analysis. Two sets of projects were reviewed, based on natural breaks in the data: those with 4 or more policy coherence-related keywords and those with 1 to 2 keywords. The set of keywords used to filter for the samples was derived from an initial portfolio review during the evaluation's scoping phase. Machine learning was later used on the larger portfolio to assess how predictive the keywords were in identifying projects that support policy coherence, and to generate a set of keywords that tended to be associated with such projects using text in the projects component dataset. **Case studies** were selected to ensure diversity in regions and sectoral focus. Diversity in GEF Agencies was also a consideration, though this ultimately depended on the number of projects in each country that met the following criteria: 1) support for policy coherence, 2) completed for at least one year, and 3) ideally implemented in GEF-6 or later. Projects that met these criteria were identified as "anchor projects". Countries that had at least one potential anchor project were primarily selected for field visits based on opportunities for synergies with other IEO missions. Within the selected case study countries, other projects thematically or geographically linked to anchor projects, but which may not have met these criteria, were also covered in less depth, to provide more context on country engagement with GEF support. Anchor projects and their linked projects were treated as a "project cluster".
Program	**IPs** with precursors in GEF-6 and GEF-7 were selected for review to enable comparison across GEF phases. **IP child projects** with 1 to 2 policy coherence-related keywords were selected to assess for instances of missed opportunities, with the assumption that projects with a higher number of keywords would already have stronger policy coherence support.

C.2. LLM Analyses Benchmarking Results

LLM analyses were done iteratively to compare model performance as well as to refine the algorithm based on feedback from expert human reviewers. Below is an assessment of the performance of the final algorithm used to generate the results reported in this document.

1. Benchmarking LLMs for classifying projects supporting policy coherence

1.1. Sample size calculation

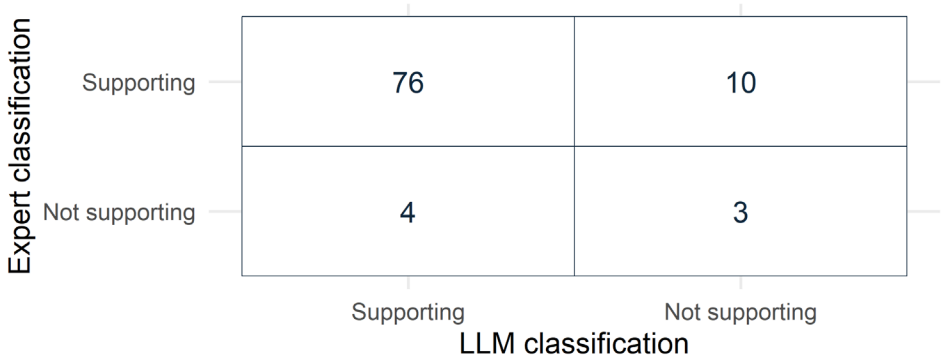
- To estimate the sample size for manual verification of the LLM classification, Cochran's formula was applied for a finite population of 2,830 projects. We conservatively assumed that the probability that a project supports policy coherence is 50 percent and used a 95 percent confidence level. With a margin of error of 10 percent, the resulting required sample size is 93 projects.

1.2. Comparison between LLM and human expert classification

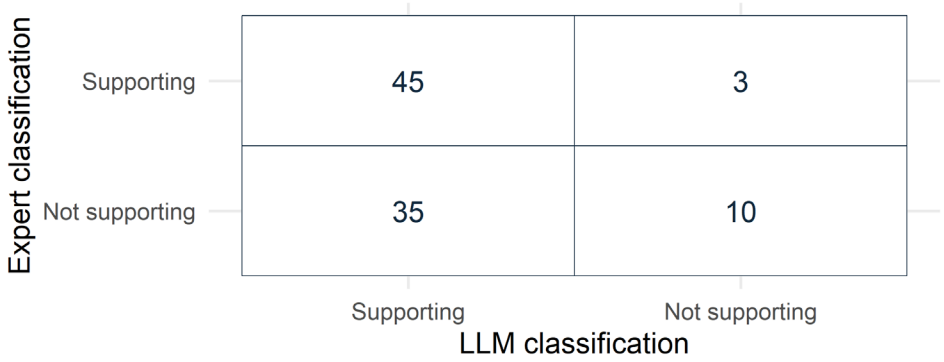
- Ninety-three projects were randomly selected for human expert verification of whether they support policy coherence or not. Through this process, two tiers of policy coherence support were defined: broad and strict. Broad policy coherence uses the same definition as the LLM classification. Projects supporting broad policy coherence include those that aim to mainstream environmental concerns into non-environmental sectors. In addition, projects that support broad policy coherence aim to align with and report under multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), which often requires intersectoral coordination and the review of existing policies.
- By contrast, projects supporting strict policy coherence ensure a more integrated approach that goes beyond mainstreaming environmental concerns and MEA reporting. Projects that support strict policy coherence must aim for structural and systemic policy reform by integrating environmental objectives into the core decision-making processes and sectoral policies of institutions. Under this strict definition, projects must go beyond simple policy enforcement by the Ministry of Environment and demonstrate integrated mainstreaming of environmental concerns into budgeting, impact assessments, legislative drafting, strategic planning, and broader sectoral plans, often involving intersectoral coordination and review of existing policies.
- A confusion matrix comparing the classifications of a human expert and the LLM for projects that broadly support policy coherence is shown in Figure 1. In the validation sample of 93 projects, the LLM classified 80 projects—86 percent—as supporting policy coherence. The precision of the LLM is 95 percent, meaning that among all projects the LLM classified as supporting policy coherence, 95 percent are confirmed as such by the expert. The recall is 88 percent, meaning that the LLM correctly identifies 88 percent of all projects that the expert judges to broadly support policy coherence.
- Bootstrapping also yields a net bias of negative 6.5 percent (with a 95 percent confidence interval between negative 14 to 1 percent), suggesting that the LLM tends to underclassify projects as supporting policy coherence relative to expert judgment. Taking the bias into

account, the plausible range for the true share of projects supporting policy coherence spans from 85 percent (86 percent − 1 percent) to 100 percent (86 percent + 14 percent).

- Figure 1. Confusion matrix between projects classified as supporting broad policy coherence by a human expert and those classified by LLM



- A confusion matrix comparing projects classified as supporting strict policy coherence by a human expert and by the LLM is shown in Figure 2. In this case, the precision rate is 56 percent and the recall rate is 93 percent.
- In this case, the LLM still classified 86 percent of projects as supporting policy coherence. Bootstrapping yields a net bias of 34 percent with a 95 percent confidence interval between 24 to 45 percent, indicating that the LLM statistically significantly overestimates the true share of policy-coherent projects. Accounting for this bias, the true share most plausibly ranges between 41 and 62 percent.
- Figure 2. Confusion matrix between projects classified as supporting strict policy coherence by a human expert and those classified by LLM



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2. Benchmarking LLMs in classifying projects that achieved policy coherence targets

2.1. Sample size calculation

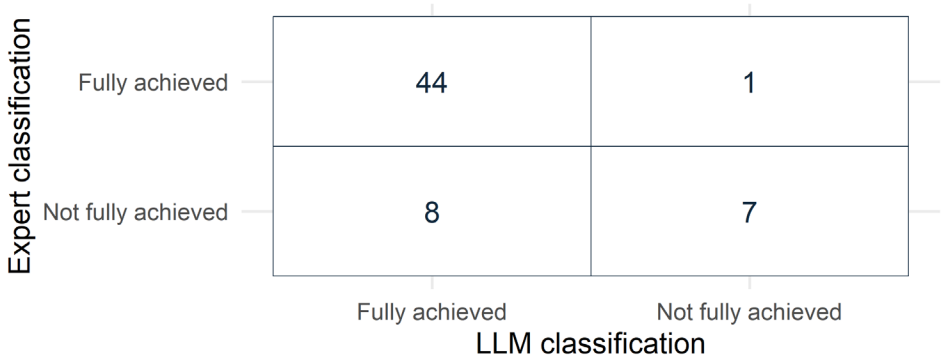
- To assess whether projects that aimed to support policy coherence actually achieved this objective, projects that met the following criteria were identified and reviewed with an LLM:
- The project is in GEF-5 or GEF-6.
- The project is classified as having an intent to support policy coherence.
- The project has policy coherence–supporting intended outputs.
- The project has a terminal evaluation available.
- The terminal evaluation includes at least one table discussing policy coherence achievements.
- A total of 474 terminal evaluations met the LLM screening criteria and were classified to determine whether the projects achieved any of their policy coherence goals.
- A total of 474 terminal evaluations met the LLM screening criteria and were classified to determine whether the projects achieved any of their policy coherence goals. Using Cochran's formula, a sample of 80 projects was identified for review, based on the assumption that 50 percent of projects achieved their goals, a 95 percent confidence level, and a margin of error of 10 percent.
- However, if we instead assume a 77 percent success rate (the share of projects that the LLM classified as fully achieved), a sample of 60 projects is sufficient for the classification.

2.2. Comparison between LLM and human expert classification

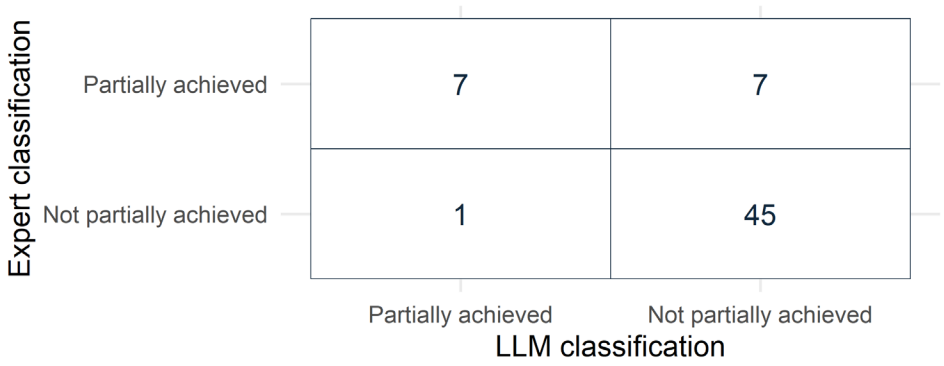
- First, the human expert reviewed whether the 80 projects genuinely intended to support policy coherence. Of the 80 projects in the sample, 79 were correctly classified as having such an intent.
- Second, the human expert validated the LLM's achievement classifications using the results framework tables from each terminal evaluation. Of the 80 projects, 60 terminal evaluations contained a results framework table. For the remaining 20 projects, the LLM derived its achievement classifications from other tables within the terminal evaluation. Because comparable results framework information is not available for these 20 projects, they are omitted from the rest of the verification process.
- Consistent with the LLM's approach, the human expert classified a project as having achieved its policy coherence objective if at least one indicator contributing to policy coherence was successfully met. The confusion matrix for fully achieved targets is shown in Figure 3.
- In the validation sample of 60 projects, the LLM classified 44 projects—73 percent—as having fully achieved a policy coherence–supporting target. The precision of the LLM is 85 percent, meaning that among all projects the LLM classified as achieving a policy coherence target, 85 percent are confirmed as such by the expert. The recall is 98 percent, meaning that the LLM

correctly identifies 98 percent of all projects that the expert judges to have fully achieved a policy coherence–supporting target.

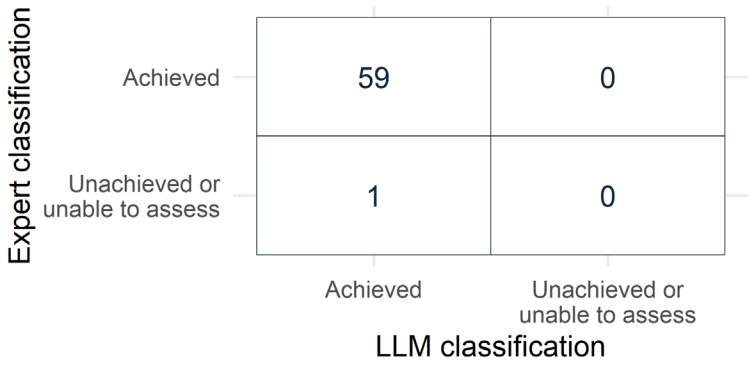
- Bootstrapping also yields a net bias of 12 percentage points (with a 95 percent confidence interval between 3 and 22 percentage points), suggesting that the LLM tends to overclassify projects as fully achieving a policy coherence–supporting target. Taking this bias into account, the plausible range for the true share of projects fully achieving a policy coherence–supporting target spans from 51 percent (73 percent − 22 percentage points) to 70 percent (73 percent − 3 percentage points).
- Figure 3. Confusion matrix between projects classified as fully achieving policy coherence supporting targets between the human expert and the LLM



- Policy coherence was classified as partially achieved when the results framework table provided evidence of progress or intermediate steps toward policy coherence objectives. The confusion matrix for partially achieved targets is shown in Figure 4.
- In the validation sample of 60 projects, the LLM classified 7 projects—12 percent—as partially achieving a policy coherence–supporting target. Because of the low number of true positives, the recall rate is 50 percent while the precision rate is 88 percent.
- Bootstrapping also yields a net bias of negative 10 percentage points (with a 95 percent confidence interval between negative 20 and negative 2 percentage points), suggesting that the LLM underestimates the number of projects partially achieving policy coherence supporting targets. Taking this bias into account, the plausible range for the true share of projects partially achieving a policy coherence–supporting target spans from 14 percent (12 percent + 2 percentage points) to 32 percent (12 percent + 20 percentage points).
- Figure 4. Confusion matrix comparing projects classified as partially achieving policy coherence–supporting targets by the human expert and by the LLM



- To simplify the classification, Figure 5 groups projects that fully or partially achieved their policy coherence–supporting targets into a single "Achieved" category. In the sample of 60 projects, the LLM did not identify any project as unachieved or unable to assess, whereas the human expert identified one project as unable to assess. The resulting recall is 100 percent and the precision is 98 percent.
- The LLM estimated that 98 percent of projects—59 out of 60—achieved some level of policy coherence–related targets. Bootstrapping yields a net bias of 2 percentage points (with a 95 percent confidence interval between 0 and 5 percentage points), suggesting that the LLM substantially overestimates the number of projects that achieved policy coherence–supporting targets to some degree. Taking this bias into account, the plausible range for the true share of projects that achieved policy coherence–supporting targets spans from 96 percent (98 percent − 2 percentage points) to 98 percent.
- Figure 5. Confusion matrix comparing projects classified as achieving policy coherence–supporting targets to some degree by the human expert and by the LLM.



References

- Cochran, W. G. (1977). Sampling Techniques (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

D. Project Portfolio Review Tools

D.1. Design

D.1.1. Portfolio analysis template

1. Initial Screening and Supporting Evidence

Answer the questions on this page using information from the project's objectives, components/ activities, outputs and outcomes.

* 1. Your Name

* 2. Project Information

GEF ID

Project Title

* 3. Does the project intend to enhance policy coherence?
(e.g. check for engagement of non-environment sector agencies/ ministries or mention of different environmental sectors linked to government decision-making, plans/ strategies, or policy implementation)

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ UA

Summarize in a few sentences and copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

* 6. Does the project work in one of the following sectors? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Fisheries
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Forest use
- ☐ Water use
- ☐ Energy production and use
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ UA

2. POLICY COHERENCE

POLICY COHERENCE, as defined for this review, refers to the synergy, alignment or, at minimum, non-contradiction of the objectives of non-environmental sector policies with environmental objectives or among the objectives of different environmental sectors. Policy coherence often has to first occur among units within the same level of government (e.g. national, municipal). This type of policy coherence is also known as horizontal coherence. Other types of policy coherence (vertical, temporal, political) are considered secondary and incidental to horizontal coherence first being achieved, for the purposes of this review.

" Policy" may refer to any of a range of policy instruments, such as national strategies, laws, regulations, implementing guidelines, etc. Examples of "policy-related activities" that the GEF may support include: policy analysis; technical studies as inputs to policy; stakeholder consultations as inputs to policy; development and/ or implementation of policy instruments such as laws/ legislation, plans or strategies (intended to be officially adopted by government, not just by a temporary project steering committee), regulations, implementing guidelines, taxes & subsidies; awareness-raising and training on policy implementation or cross-sectoral government agency collaboration.

To be considered a policy coherence-related activity, the outcome of the activity must be intended to become part of normal government operations. It must not be intended solely for implementation during the project as a pilot, or with no clear intention for broader adoption by any government body.

7. With which kind of sector(s) does the project aim to make environmental policy objectives more coherent/ integrated ? Check all that apply.

- [ ] Non-environment sectors
- [ ] Other environment sectors
- [ ] UA

8. At which level(s) of government is the project aiming for (horizontal) policy coherence? Check all that apply.

- [ ] Regional (with adjacent countries)
- [ ] National
- [ ] Sub-national (e.g. state, province)
- [ ] Local (e.g. municipal, city, village)
- [ ] UA
- [ ] Other

Copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

9. In which of these areas are policy objectives intended to be coherent? Check all that apply.

- [ ] Management of natural resource (may be found in multiple non-contiguous locations) *e.g. fisheries, water, forest*
- [ ] Management of an ecosystem type (usually found in multiple non-contiguous locations within the same country or region) *e.g. drylands, coastal areas, tropical forest*
- [ ] Regulation of activities along a product chain/ life cycle (production-processing-supply-distribution-use-disposal –> project is working to align at least two areas of the chain) *e.g. soy, palm oil, DDT / other chemical, electric vehicles, gold*
- [ ] Regulation of activities within a subnational administrative unit *e.g. city, district, province/ state*
- [ ] Regulation of activities within a specific ecological unit (named as the project's target area) *e.g. river, watershed, sea*
- [ ] Other [no need to check if policy is only applicable at national level]
- [ ] UA

Copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

10. Which non-environment sectors are expected to be coherent with environmental objectives? Check all that apply.

- [ ] NONE
- [ ] Agriculture
- [ ] Fisheries
- [ ] Tourism
- [ ] Forest use
- [ ] Water use
- [ ] Energy production and use
- [ ] Transport
- [ ] Chemical use (e.g. mercury, DDT, POPs)
- [ ] Waste management (e.g. sewage, organic pollution, chemical pollution)
- [ ] Other
- [ ] UA

Copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

11. Which environmental objective(s) does the project explicitly aim to make coherent through policy? Check all that apply.

- [ ] NONE
- [ ] Biodiversity conservation (species and/or ecosystems)
- [ ] Climate change mitigation
- [ ] Climate change adaptation
- [ ] Sustainable land & water management
- [ ] Sustainable forest management
- [ ] Chemicals & waste management
- [ ] Transboundary water management
- [ ] Other
- [ ] UA

Copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

12. What kind of policy coherence does the project aim for? Check all that apply.

- [ ] **harmonization** of conflicting sectoral objectives/ mandates and activities (e.g. harmful subsidies) through government-implemented laws, strategies, plans, guidelines, regulations, etc.
- [ ] **mainstreaming** environmental concerns into another ministry/ sector agency's policies so that its activities also meet environmental objectives (e.g. biodiversity-sensitive tourism)
- [ ] **creation of synergies**, reduction of implementation costs and/or mitigation of trade-offs by simultaneously meeting objectives of environmental and other sector agencies/ ministries; "win-win" (e.g. chemical waste management for environmental and human health)
- [ ] Other (e.g. compromising to minimize trade-offs across sectors)
- [ ] UA

Summarize in a few sentences and copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

13. Apart from horizontal policy coherence, does it also support vertical coherence (with global/ regional agreements and/or with national/sub-national governments)? Check all that apply. [By default, horizontal coherence at national level is the point of reference]

- [ ] Yes, with higher-level governing bodies
- [ ] Yes, with lower-level governing bodies
- [ ] No
- [ ] UA

Summarize in a few words and/or copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

14. What kind(s) of policy coherence-related activities did the project support? Check all that apply.

- [ ] Support to increase institutional capacity for developing more coherent policies *e.g. training for long-term intersectoral coordination and collaboration, development of data/ information-sharing platforms for integrated decision-making, support for interagency/ intersectoral interactions/ mechanisms to coordinate and collaborate on activities*
- [ ] Support to develop specific coherent policy instrument and its implementation *e.g. research/ analysis to identify policy gaps/ issues/ solutions, development/ approval of intersectoral policy/ law / regulations/ plan/ strategy/ guidelines/ other policy coherent instrument, implementation/ enforcement of intersectoral policy/ law / regulations/ plan/ strategy/ other policy coherent instrument*
- [ ] Other
- [ ] UA

Summarize in a few words and/or copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

15. Which policy coherence-related activities did the project support? Check all that apply.

- [ ] Research/ analysis (e.g. to identify policy gaps, issues and solutions)
- [ ] Capacity-building of stakeholders (e.g. awareness-raising about specific intersectoral policy or need for policy coherence, training for long-term intersectoral coordination and collaboration)
- [ ] Development of data/ information-sharing platforms for integrated decision-making
- [ ] Multisectoral stakeholder engagement/ consultation for policy inputs
- [ ] Support for interagency/ intersectoral interactions/ mechanisms (e.g. for integrated decision-making, coordinated policy implementation, collaboration for synergistic activities)
- [ ] Development/ approval of intersectoral policy/ law / regulations/ plan/ strategy/ guidelines/ other policy coherent instrument
- [ ] Implementation/ enforcement of intersectoral policy/ law / regulations/ plan/ strategy/ other policy coherent instrument
- [ ] Policy evaluation (e.g. impacts of coherence vs non-coherence, leakage)
- [ ] Other

Summarize in a few sentences and copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

16. Does the project have indicators that track policy coherence-related outcomes? (see Results Framework)

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ UA

Copy-paste details of policy coherence-related indicators below.

D.1.2. Final LLM prompts for defining portfolio of policy coherence projects

Level 1

Input

- Input: Each project's title, components, objective, intended outcomes, and intended outputs. [source: Project Components dataset]

Prompt

- **Policy**
- You are an expert in policy coherence well-versed in activities of different stages of the policy cycle that can better streamline, mutually reinforce, or reduce conflicts in public policy objectives.
- Does the text describe policy development, adoption, implementation or other related activities in the public policy cycle? Criteria (any of the following is sufficient):
- References to local, national or international policy action (e.g., alignment with the Paris Agreement, reforming subsidies, amending conflicting policies).
- Evidence of government-led policy activities, such as: Policy analysis or technical studies as inputs to policy, stakeholder consultations linked to policy development, creation or implementation of policy instruments (e.g. laws, legislation, strategies, regulations, taxes, subsidies, guidelines), awareness-raising or training for policy implementation, cross-sectoral government agency collaboration, evaluation of policy impacts.
- Do NOT count mainstreaming into the private sector or end users unless it occurs through a government policy or requirement.
- Mark TRUE if policy coherence is explicitly discussed or clearly implied in the text. Mark FALSE if it is not discussed. Mark UA if it is unclear or you are not able to assess.
- **Environmental integration**
- You are an expert in policy coherence well-versed in activities of different stages of the policy cycle that can better streamline, mutually reinforce, or reduce conflicts in public policy objectives.
- Does the text describe integrating or aligning environmental objectives with non-environmental sector policy objectives (e.g. agriculture, energy, transport, water, fisheries, tourism, infrastructure, waste management, manufacturing), or aligning multiple environmental objectives (e.g climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, land degradation neutrality, chemical pollution reduction) within the same policies? Criteria (any of the following is sufficient):
- Aligning policies, incentives, regulations, or standards across sectors so that environmental protection efforts are consistent and mutually supportive.
- Creating synergies where both environmental and socioeconomic objectives are explicitly targeted through the same policy actions.
- Reducing or mitigating trade-offs between environmental and socioeconomic policy objectives, or between environmental sectors.

- Explicit mention of mainstreaming, harmonization, integration, coordination, or synergy of environmentally beneficial objectives or activities with policy-related activities in non-environmental sectors such as: agriculture, energy, transport, water, fisheries, tourism, infrastructure, waste management, manufacturing, etc.
- Examples: sustainable forest management (SFM), climate-adaptive systems, integrated development planning, integrated water resource management, integrated coastal management, marine spatial planning, sustainable land management, multi-agency wildlife law enforcement, and integrated data collection, decision-making and reporting for multilateral environmental agreements such as the Paris Agreement.
- Mark TRUE if policy coherence is explicitly discussed or clearly implied in the text. Mark FALSE if it is not discussed. Mark UA if it is unclear or you are not able to assess.

Classification

- Projects that are PC level 1 BOTH involves policy and environmental integration.

Level 2

Input

- In round 1, output from Level 1 classification, which are text exerpts that involves policy and environmental integration are used as an input.
- For projects that did not pass round 1, their project's title, components, objective, intended outcomes, and intended outputs are used as an input in the second round.

Prompt

- You are given a text excerpt describing policy-related activities. Your task is to identify and extract the exact phrases from the text that are targeted by the policy-related activities. Only populate a field if the sector is explicitly mentioned or clearly implied. Copy and paste the exact phrase from the input text — do not paraphrase or summarize.
- Sectors to identify:
- **env**: Whether the text contains an ENVIRONMENTAL component (e.g. forests, land cover, soil quality, ocean health, river health, air quality, water quality, biodiversity, ecosystems, climate change, greenhouse gases, sustainable use of natural resources) addressed by policy-related activities
- **non_env**: Whether the text contains a NON-ENVIRONMENTAL sector (economic and social sectors that primarily aim to extract economic and social benefits from natural resources such as fossil fuels, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, tourism, transportation, chemical use, water use, planning, gender, local government — OR government functions that oversee all sector policies such as finance and planning) addressed by the policy-related activities
- **fossil_fuel_energy**: Whether the text mentions reducing dependency on fossil fuels such as subsidies to increase renewable energy use and activities to reduce fossil fuel use
- **agriculture**: Whether the text mentions the agriculture sector

- **fisheries_aquaculture**: Whether the text mentions the fisheries or aquaculture sector
- **forestry**: Whether the text mentions the forestry sector
- **mining**: Whether the text mentions the mining sector
- **infrastructure**: Whether the text mentions the infrastructure sector, including buildings, roads and housing
- **transport**: Whether the text mentions the transport sector including urban transport and shipping
- **water_use**: Whether the text mentions water use including water utilities
- **chemical_use**: Whether the text mentions the use of hazardous chemicals in industries such as agriculture, health, mining, and infrastructure
- **waste_pollution_management**: Whether the text mentions waste/ pollution management including treatment and disposal of hazardous chemicals and inorganic and organic waste
- **planning**: Whether the text mentions planning (e.g. land use planning, development planning, sub-government level planning such as city, municipality, district, province). Do not include legislation, laws, and regulations.
- **gender**: Whether the text mentions policy-related activities that account for gender differences and equity
- **subsidies**: Whether the text mentions policy-related activities that explicitly address subsidies harmful to the environment, such as inorganic pesticides and fertilizers, fisheries, fossil fuels
- **local_gov**: Whether the text mentions policy-related activities that involve local governments such as provinces, cities and municipalities. Do not include involvement at the national or international level.

Classification

- A project is classified as involving the non-environmental sector when non_env, fossil_fuel_energy, agriculture, fisheries_aquaculture, forestry, mining, infrastructure, transport, water_use, chemical_use, waste_pollution_management, planning, gender, subsidies, 0R local gov is involved.
- Projects that are PC Level 2 involves BOTH the environmental and non-environmental sector.

Level 3

Input

- Input: Each project's intended outcomes, and intended outputs. [source: Project Components dataset]

Prompt

- Same as Level 1

Classification

- Projects are classified as TRUE for PC Level 1 when at least one statement for that project involves both policy and environmental integration.
- Projects are classified as UA for PC Level 1 when no statement involves both policy and environmental integration, but least one statement is UA.
- Projects are either classified as TRUE OR FALSE for Level 2 (no UA).
- Projects are classified as TRUE for PC Level 3 when at least one outcome or output for that project involves both policy and environmental integration. The project must also be TRUE for PC Level 1 and Level 2.
- Projects are classified as UA for PC Level 3 when no outcome or output involves both policy and environmental integration, but least one outcome or output is UA.The project must also be TRUE or UA for PC Level 1 and Level 2.

D.1.3. Portfolio review of top 5 recipient countries

This guide outlines the methodology and process for reviewing GEF projects in a particular country, focusing on policy coherence across sectors. The review encompasses projects from GEF-5 to GEF-8 that have cleared CEO endorsement, excluding programs, Enabling Activities (EAs), and Small Grants Programme (SGP) projects.

The dataset provided has already been filtered to include projects with at least one relevant keyword in their title or results framework. A data dictionary is available as an annex for your reference. The keywords used are as follows:

- polic* (e.g., policy, policies)
- regulation(s), regulatory
- harmoni* (e.g., harmonize, harmonization)
- synerg* (e.g., synergy, synergies)
- intersectoral, inter-sectoral
- cross-sectoral
- integrated *** management (e.g., integrated land management, integrated watershed management)
- governance framework(s)
- coordination
- national strategy/strategies

Step 1: Initial Screening

Perform screening using information available from the project documents(s) from the design stage, e.g., Project Document, PAD, CEO Endorsement Request.

First, if the project primarily focuses on preparing reports for international conventions (e.g., National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans [NBSAPs], National Adaptation Plans [NAPs], Nationally Determined Contributions [NDCs]), exclude it from further review.

Second, determine if the project supports any policy-related objectives, components, or activities. If the project does not meet this criterion, exclude it from further review.

Use *Box 1* below for guidance on what constitutes policy-related activities.

Box 1: *"Policy" may refer to any of a range of policy instruments, such as national strategies, laws, regulations, implementing guidelines, etc. Examples of "policy-related activities" that the GEF may support include: policy analysis; technical studies as inputs to policy; stakeholder consultations as inputs to policy; development and/ or implementation of policy instruments such as laws/ legislation, plans or strategies (intended to be officially adopted by government, not just by a temporary project steering committee), regulations, implementing guidelines, taxes & subsidies; awareness-raising and training on policy implementation or cross-sectoral government agency collaboration.*

Third, assess whether the project aims to enhance coherence or integration of environmental policy objectives with policies in non-environmental sectors and/or across different environmental sectors. If the project does not aim to enhance policy coherence, exclude it from further review.

Use the *Box 2* below for examples and keywords to assist in this assessment.

Box 2: *"Policy coherence," as defined for this review, refers to the synergy, alignment or, at minimum, non-contradiction of the objectives of non-environmental sector policies with environmental objectives or among the objectives of different environmental sectors. Policy coherence often has to first occur among units within the same level of government (e.g. national, municipal). This type of policy coherence is also known as horizontal coherence. Other types of policy coherence (vertical, temporal, political) are considered secondary and incidental to horizontal coherence first being achieved, for the purposes of this review.*

To be considered a policy coherence-related activity, the outcome of the activity must be intended to become part of normal government operations. It must not be intended solely for implementation during the project as a pilot, or with no clear intention for broader adoption by any government body.

The kinds of policy coherence that a project aims for include:
1. **harmonization** of conflicting sectoral objectives/ mandates and activities (e.g. harmful subsidies) through government-implemented laws, strategies, plans, guidelines, regulations, etc.

2. **mainstreaming** environmental concerns into another ministry/ sector agency's policies so that its activities also meet environmental objectives (e.g. biodiversity-sensitive tourism)

3. creation of **synergies**, reduction of implementation costs and/or mitigation of trade-offs by simultaneously meeting objectives of environmental and other sector agencies/ ministries; "win-win" (e.g. chemical waste management for environmental and human health)

4. other types of policy coherence (e.g., **compromising** to minimize trade-offs across sectors)

Policy coherence activities may include ***support to increase institutional capacities for developing more coherent policies*** *(e.g. training for long-term intersectoral coordination and collaboration, development of data/ information-sharing platforms for integrated decision-making, support for interagency/ intersectoral interactions/ mechanisms to coordinate and collaborate on activities),* ***support to develop specific policy instrument and its implementation*** *(e.g. research/ analysis to identify policy gaps/ issues/ solutions, development/ approval of intersectoral policy/ law / regulations/ plan/ strategy/ guidelines/ other policy coherent instrument, implementation/ enforcement of intersectoral policy/ law / regulations/ plan/ strategy/ other policy coherent instrument), and/or other activities.*

Step 3: Collect Data from Eligible Projects

For projects meeting the above criteria, record the following details:

1. Sectors Involved:
    a. Using project document(s) from the design stage, identify all sectors explicitly involved in policy coherence activities (e.g., Agriculture, Chemical & Waste Management, Forestry, Health, etc.).
    b. Use the data collection instrument to mark the sectors involved.

c. Indicate whether the project involves coherence activities with foreign governments.

2. Vertical Coherence:

> ***Box 3:*** *Examples of environmental sectors include biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, chemicals & waste management, sustainable land & water management, transboundary water management.*
>
> *Examples of non-environmental sectors include agriculture, fisheries, tourism, forestry, energy production and use, transport.*

   a. Based on project document(s) from the design stage, indicate whether the project includes activities aimed at fostering vertical coherence (coordination across different levels of government, such as with global/regional agreements and/or with national/sub-national governments).

3. Completed Projects (i.e., "Project Implemented" and "Financially Closed" projects with Terminal Evaluations or TEs):
   a. Record contributing factors/contextual drivers: Elements that positively influence policy coherence outcomes based on each project's TE.
   b. Record hindering factors/contextual drivers: Challenges or barriers to achieving policy coherence outcomes based on each project's TE.

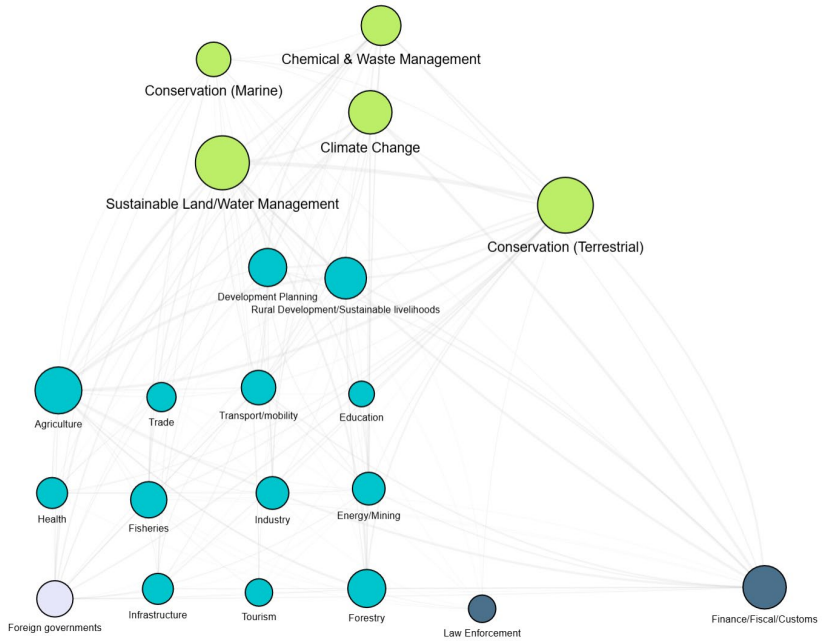
4. Additional Notes:
   a. Document any other notable information (from project documents and/or TE), such as the names of ministries and/or agencies involved, unique project characteristics and/or innovations.

Country	All projects	Projects with at least one keyword	Projects supporting policy coherence
Brazil	46	39	33
China	99	92	33*
India	47	38	35
Indonesia	67	52	36
Mexico	47	42	29

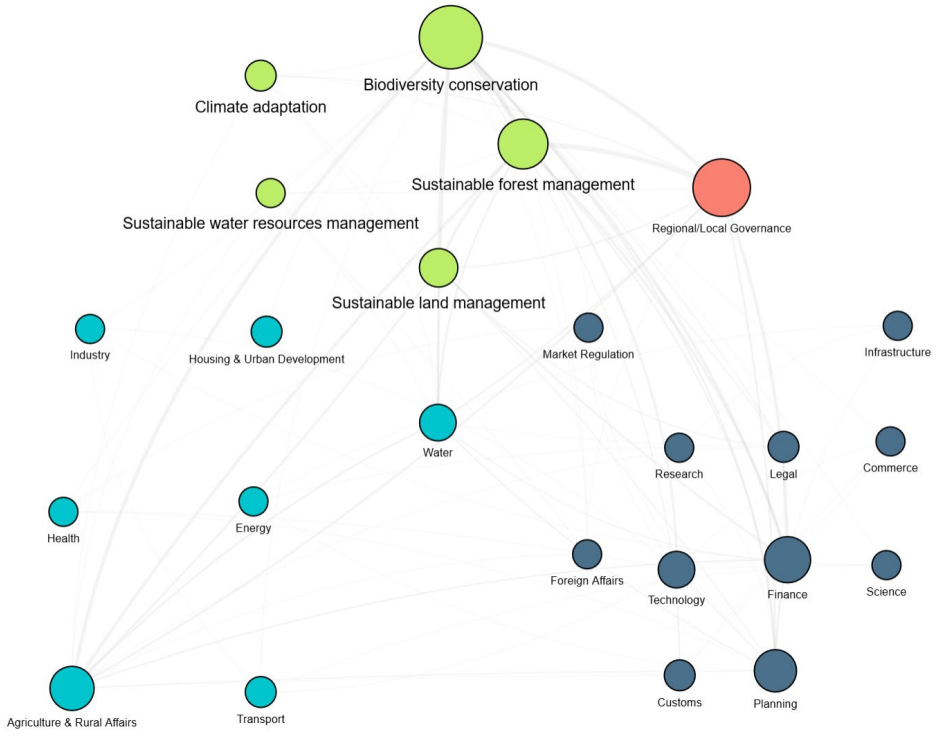
*only projects with at least 4 keywords due to the much higher number of projects and limited time to review

RESULTS

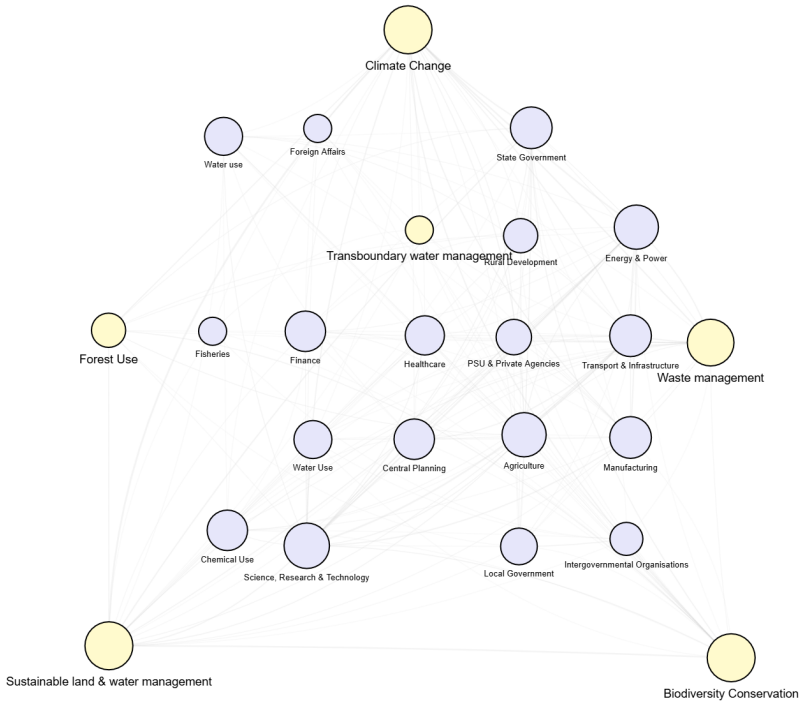
After projects were mapped to specific sectors, network analysis was conducted for each country portfolio to identify sectoral agencies that most frequently work together in GEF projects that support policy coherence. The following graphs show a rough illustration of these interactions. The size of the nodes (circles) indicates the number of projects that address that sector, while the thickness of the edges (lines) represents the number of projects in which the sectoral agencies worked together. Environmental sectors are colored green. [Original graphs are interactive]



Brazil (n=33): High network density indicating very strong and recurrent multisectoral linkages across 21 sectors

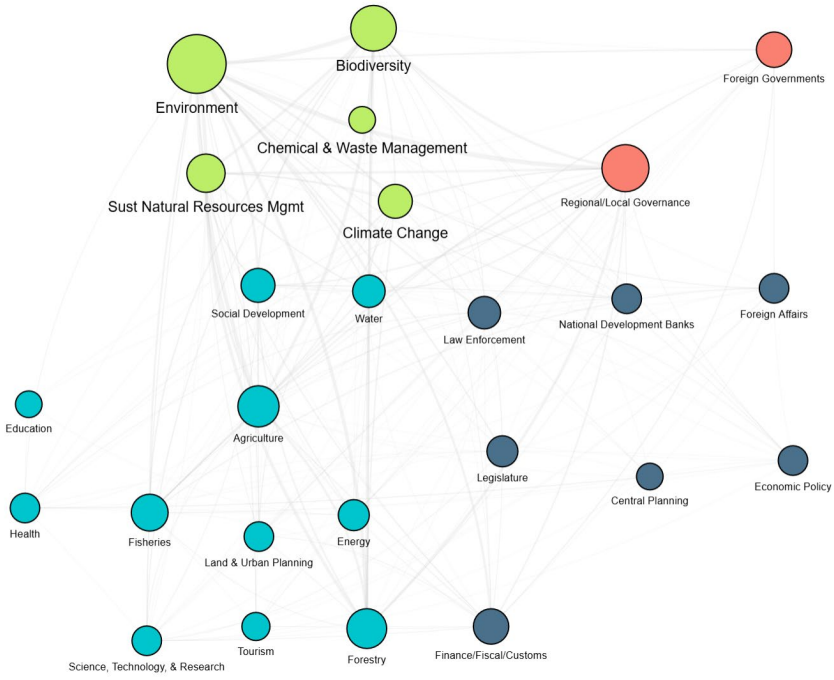


China (n=33): Broad network with more concentrated strong ties, indicating a core group of ministries responsible for most recurrent links along with local governments



India (n=35): 23 sectors and 181 connections across 35 projects indicating many recurring cross-sector links

Indonesia (n=36): 70 distinct sector pairs, with 32 pairs unique to a single project, indicating breadth but more "one-off" combinations; lower density shows a smaller core of strong ties



Mexico (n=29): 25 sectors, 202 edges, and on average >5 sectors per project, with some projects engaging up to 13 sectors, indicating high multisectorality

D.2. Results

D.2.1. Portfolio analysis template

3. POLICY COHERENCE - COMPLETED

17. To what extent has the project achieved its policy coherence-related objectives? (e.g. see Results Framework)

- ◯ NA - Ongoing project
- ◯ Horizontal policy coherence achieved in at least one area (evidence of policy coherence in operation/ formalized in at least one area/ activity supported by the project)
- ◯ Partial policy coherence achieved (steps taken but still no evidence of coherence in operation/ formalized)
- ◯ No horizontal policy coherence achieved
- ◯ UA

Summarize in a few sentences and copy-paste relevant text to support your answer.

18. Does the terminal evaluation mention any factors and contextual drivers specifically affecting policy coherence outcomes?

- ◯ NA (ongoing project)
- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ UA

19. What factors and contextual drivers are mentioned that CONTRIBUTED to policy coherence outcomes and how.

20. What factors and contextual drivers are mentioned that HINDERED policy coherence outcomes and how.

D.2.2. Final LLM prompts for assessing outcome achievement

Input

- Text from results framework table in terminal evaluations.

Intermediate Output

- For each target in the results framework table, identify whether the target is:
- **achieved** if the project has fully met or exceeded its target.
- **underachieved** if the project has partially met its target but not fully.
- **yet achieved** if the activity is still ongoing and has not yet reached its target.
- **negative** if the project has led to status worse than the baseline.
- **not achieved** if the project has not led to change.
- **unclear** if the achievement description is EXACTLY the same as the target and might be a description of the target itself.
- After a project's results framework has been extracted and its achievement for each target has been classified, each project's target is then matched with text that justifies that the project is PC Level 1 (portion of the projects that involves both policy and environmental integration).

Project-level Output

- A project is considered **achieved** if at least one of its PC targets are **achieved**.
- A project is considered **partially achieved** if at least one of its PC targets are **underachieved** or **yet achieved**.
- A project is considered **unachieved** if at least none of its PC targets are **achieved**, **underachieved** or **yet achieved**. It also includes targets **negative** or **unclear**. Note that after manual review, projects classified as **negative** by AI have outcomes are are not different than the baseline.

E. List of organizations interviewed

E.1. Corporate Level

Stakeholder	Teams Interviewed
World Bank	GEF Coordination Unit
IADB	Climate Change and Sustainable Development Sector
ADB	GEF Coordination Unit
UNEP	GEF Coordination Unit; Carbon13 and IQCircular; Law Division
UNDP	Latin America and the Caribbean; Asia; Nature, Climate, Energy, and Waste; BIOFIN; Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)/ Poverty-Environment Action for SDGs (PEA)/ Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI)
Conservation International	Global Policy Team
FAO	Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment (OCB); Policy, legal and governance component of GEF-8; Agri-food Economics and Policy Division
GEF Agencies Focus Group Discussion (21 MAY 2024)	FECO, UNIDO, IADB, CI, FAO, WWF-US, World Bank, UNEP, DBSA, EBRD, CAF
GEF Secretariat	Management Team; Regional Coordinators; Programming Leads; Knowledge Management and Learning Lead
Expanded Constituency – Caribbean (20 MARCH 2024)	Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago
Expanded Constituency – Central Africa (01 MAY 2025)	Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and São Tomé and Principe
GEF Focal Points	Brazil, China, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, Mexico and GEF focal points of countries visited for case studies (see below)

E.2. Field-based Case Studies

COUNTRY	TYPE OF STAKEHOLDER	INSTITUTION
Azerbaijan	National Government	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Environmental Policy Division
Azerbaijan	Project Management Team	National Coordinator
Azerbaijan	Project Management Team	Project consultants (education and training, gender, amelioration)
Azerbaijan	National Government	National Hydrometeorological Service
Azerbaijan	National Government	Azelab LLC
Azerbaijan	National Government	National Geological Service
Azerbaijan	National Government	State Water Resources Agency
Azerbaijan	Non-GEF Donor Project	EUWI+
Georgia	National Government	GEF Focal Point
Georgia	GEF Agency	UNDP Country Office, Energy and Environment
Georgia	Project Management Team	IFAD project management team
Georgia	National Government	Rural Development Agency
Georgia	National Government	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Water Department
Georgia	National Government	National Environmental Agency, Environmental Pollution Department
Georgia	National Government	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Melioration Department
Georgia	National Government	National Environmental Agency, Geology Department
Georgia	IPLC	Karaleti village farmers (compost and vermiculture demo plot), Gori municipality
Georgia	IPLC	Dzevera woman business owner (windbreak nursery beneficiary - non-GEF), Gori municipality
Georgia	IPLC	Ergneti village farmers (apple orchard demo plot), Gori municipality
Georgia	National Government	National Wildlife Agency
Georgia	IPLC	Ruisi village farmers and Bediani orphanage (drip irrigation demo site), Kareli municipality

COUNTRY	TYPE OF STAKEHOLDER	INSTITUTION
Georgia	NGO	Environment and Development
Georgia	IPLC	Bareti village farmers (drip irrigation beneficiary), Tsalka municipality
Georgia	National Government	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Land Resources Protection Division
Georgia	NGO	Elkana
Georgia	Private Sector	Hotel WhyMe
Georgia	Private Sector	Poultry Georgia
Georgia	National Government	Environmental Supervision Department
Georgia	Private Sector	Ministry of Education contractor
Georgia	Project Management Team	UNDP project management team
Jordan	National Government	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
Jordan	National Government	Ministry of Environment (Rio committees representatives)
Jordan	Project Management Team	RIO Project Manager
Jordan	Project Management Team	BITS Project Manager
Jordan	GEF Agency	UNDP Country Office
Jordan	National Government	Ministry of Water and Irrigation - Drought Unit
Jordan	NGO	Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
Jordan	National Government	Ministry of Agriculture - Rangeland Management Unit
Jordan	Local Government	Petra Development and Tourism Authority - Commissioner of Infrastructure and Director of Environment and Climate Change
Jordan	Private Sector	Crowne Plaza Hotel
Jordan	IPLC	Al Jawharah Association
Jordan	Local Government	Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority - Commissioner of Environment and Public Safety
Jordan	Local Government	Aqaba Marine Reserve Management Staff
Jordan	Local Government	Wadi Rum Protected Area Management Staff
Jordan	IPLC	Wadi Rum Local Advisory Committee member

COUNTRY	TYPE OF STAKEHOLDER	INSTITUTION
Jordan	IPLC	Disi Women Association
Jordan	NGO	Dibbeen Reserve Management Staff
Jordan	IPLC	Dibbeen pottery and embroidery beneficiaries
Jordan	NGO	Royal Botanic Garden
Jordan	NGO	Jordan Environmental Union
Jordan	National Government	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
Jordan	National Government	GEF Focal Point
Jordan	National Government	Ministry of Local Administration
Philippines	GEF Agency	UNDP Country Office
Philippines	GEF Agency	ADB
Philippines	National Government	DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau
Philippines	Project Management Team	IWT Project Coordinator
Philippines	Project Management Team	IWT Project Activity Leads
Philippines	Project Management Team	DA/ IWT Policy Consultant
Philippines	National Government	DA-Bureau of Soil and Water Management
Philippines	Local Government	City Agriculturist's Office - Malaybalay
Philippines	Local Government	City Environment and Natural Resources Office - Malaybalay
Philippines	Local Government	Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office - Bukidnon
Philippines	National Government	Community Environment and Natural Resources Office - Valencia
Philippines	Local Government	Provincial Agriculturist's Office - Bukidnon
Philippines	IPLC	Barangay Silae demo and replication farmers
Philippines	Regional Office of National Government	DENR Enforcement Division
Philippines	Regional Office of National Government	Lipata Port Authority
Philippines	Regional Office of National Government	Department of Justice prosecutor

COUNTRY	TYPE OF STAKEHOLDER	INSTITUTION
Philippines	Regional Office of National Government	Nasipit Port Authority
Philippines	Regional Office of National Government	Philippine Coast Guard - Caraga
Philippines	Local Government	City Agriculturist and Veterinarian's Office - Butuan
Philippines	Regional Office of National Government	Philippine National Police - Caraga Region
Philippines	Regional Office of National Government	National Bureau of Investigation - Caraga Region
Philippines	Regional Office of National Government	Community Environment and Natural Resources Office - Bayugan
Philippines	Local Government	Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office - Agusan del Sur
Philippines	IPLC	Manobo tribe - Esperanza
Philippines	NGO	Bukluran (written response)
Philippines	NGO	People's Action for Inclusive Development (PAFID)
Philippines	NGO	Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP)
Philippines	Non-GEF Donor	USAID Sibol
Philippines	Non-GEF Donor	USAID Wildlife Protect
Philippines	National Government	Philippine Ports Authority
Philippines	Multistakeholder Group	GEF NSC
Philippines	National Government	DENR - Foreign-Assisted Special Projects
Philippines	National Government	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
Uruguay	National Government	GEF Focal Point Office
Uruguay	National Government	Ministry of Environment, Legal Team
Uruguay	National Government	ASSE (Administración de los Servicios de Salud del Estado)
Uruguay	Project Management Team	Project Coordinator
Uruguay	National Government	Ministry of Public Health, dental amalgam project focal point
Uruguay	GEF Agency	UNDP Country Office

COUNTRY	TYPE OF STAKEHOLDER	INSTITUTION
Uruguay	Private Sector	Amborgana
Uruguay	Private Sector	SEMM (Sistema de Emergencia Médico Móvil)
Zambia	GEF Agency	World Bank ZIFLP TTLs - Environment and Agriculture
Zambia	GEF Agency	UNEP Global Chemicals & Waste and Planet Gold Team
Zambia	Project Management Team	UNEP Policy Coherence MSP Implementation Team
Zambia	National Government	Zambia OFPs (current and former)
Zambia	National Government	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment - Department of Forestry
Zambia	National Government	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment - former Climate Change Secretariat/ Ministry of National Development Planning
Zambia	CSO/ Executing Agency	ICCF Zambia
Zambia	Project Management Team	ZIFLP project team
Zambia	Local Government	Eastern Province Multisectoral Team
Zambia	Local Government	Lundazi/ Lumezi District Multisectoral Team
Zambia	IPLC	Lundazi District - CFMG, CRB, Agricultural cooperatives
Zambia	IPLC	Lundazi District - Women and Youth
Zambia	National Government	Luwambe Camp Wildlife Rangers
Zambia	IPLC	Lumezi District Chitungulu Community Resource Board Secretariat
Zambia	IPLC	Lumezi District Chitungulu Poultry Cooperative
Zambia	Local Government	Mwambe District Multisectoral Team
Zambia	IPLC	Mwambe District - Ngulate CFMG and Women's Cooperative
Zambia	National Government	Zambia Parliamentary Caucus on Environment and Climate Change - Co-Chair
Zambia	National Government	Ministry of Justice – Planning Department
Zambia	National Government	Ministry of Finance and Planning – Development Planning Department
Zambia	National Government	Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock – Department of Agriculture

COUNTRY	TYPE OF STAKEHOLDER	INSTITUTION
Zambia	National Government	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development – Physical Planning Department
Zambia	National Government	Zambia Environmental Management Authority – Minamata Focal Point
Zambia	National Government	Cabinet Office - Policy Analysis Coordination (PAC) Division
Zambia	National Government	Ministry of Land and Natural Resources – BD Focal Point
Zambia	National Government	Ministry of Mines and Minerals - Environment & Safety Department and Geological Survey Department
Zambia	CSO/ Executing Agency	Artisanal Gold Council (email interview)

F. List of projects covered in field-based case studies

Country	GEF ID	Project Title	GEF Agency	Focal Area	GEF Grant (USD)	Cofinancing (USD)	Start Year	End Year
Azerbaijan and Georgia	1375	Reducing Transboundary Degradation in the Kura-Aras Basin	UNDP	International Waters	2,900,000	11,724,427	2009	2017
Azerbaijan and Georgia	6962	Advancing IWRM Across the Kura River Basin through Implementation of the Transboundary Agreed Actions and National Plans	UNDP	International Waters	5,329,452	194,881,670	2016	2022
Georgia	5147	Enhancing Resilience of Agriculture Sector in Georgia	IFAD	Climate Change	5,300,000	27,500,000	2015	2021
Jordan	5570	Mainstreaming Rio Convention Provisions into National Sectoral Policies	UNDP	-	996,000	1,132,485	2014	2020
Jordan	2083	National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) Environmental Management	UNDP	Multi-focal Area (Enabling Activity)	200,000	-	2003	2010
Jordan	11616	Restoring Forest Ecosystem Functions Through Community-Based Management in the Royal Botanic Garden of Jordan	UNDP	Biodiversity	744,521	120,000	2025	ongoing
Jordan	4586	Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation in Tourism Sector Development in Jordan	UNDP	Biodiversity	2,700,000	22,710,343	2013	2019

Country	GEF ID	Project Title	GEF Agency	Focal Area	GEF Grant (USD)	Cofinancing (USD)	Start Year	End Year
Jordan	2251	Mainstreaming Marine Biodiversity Conservation into Coastal Management in the Aqaba Special Economic Zone	UNDP	Biodiversity	950,000	7,300,000	2011	2017
Jordan	1438	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Dibeen Nature Reserve	UNDP	Biodiversity	1,000,000	1,020,000	2002	2009
Jordan	355	Conservation of the Dana and Azraq Protected Areas	UNDP	Biodiversity	6,300,000	459,170	1992	2006
Jordan	235	Final Consolidation and Conservation of Azraq Wetlands and Dana Wildlands by RSCN to Address New Pressures	UNDP	Biodiversity	1,949,000	750,000	1997	2012
Jordan	11424	Support and Build a More Sustainable Blue Economy in Aqaba through Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Effective Management of the First Marine Reserve	UNDP	Biodiversity	1,776,484	20,400,000	2025	-
Philippines	9658	Combating Environmental Organized Crime in the Philippines	ADB	Biodiversity	1,834,862	1,325,757	2017	2023
Philippines	5767	Implementation of SLM Practices to Address Land Degradation and Mitigate Effects of Drought	UNDP	Land Degradation	870,900	5,803,154	2015	2021

Country	GEF ID	Project Title	GEF Agency	Focal Area	GEF Grant (USD)	Cofinancing (USD)	Start Year	End Year
Philippines	5826	Strengthening National Systems to Improve Governance and Management of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Conserved Areas and Territories	UNDP	Biodiversity	1,751,484	5,025,239	2015	2020
Uruguay	4998	Environmentally sound lifecycle management of mercury-containing products and their wastes	UNDP	Chemicals & Waste	1,237,800	2,947,760	2013	2021
Uruguay	10936	Accelerate implementation of dental amalgam provisions and strengthen country capacities in the environmental sound	UNEP	Chemicals & Waste	2,000,000	11,334,280	2022	ongoing
Zambia	9213	Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Project	World Bank	Multi-focal (Biodiversity / Climate Change / Land Degradation)	8,050,458	55,200,000	2017	2024
Zambia	11101	Eastern Province Jurisdictional Sustainable Landscape Program	World Bank	Land Degradation	2,000,000	22,000,000	2023	ongoing
Zambia	9276	Development of National Action Plans for Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining in Africa	UNEP	Chemicals & Waste	4,000,000	50,000	2016	2022
Zambia	10837	Global Opportunities for Long-term	UNEP	Chemicals & Waste	2,703,750	22,356,864	2023	ongoing

Country	GEF ID	Project Title	GEF Agency	Focal Area	GEF Grant (USD)	Cofinancing (USD)	Start Year	End Year
		Development of ASGM in Zambia						
Zambia	9882	Enhancing Legislative, Policy and Criminal Justice Frameworks for Combating Poaching and Illegal Wildlife Trade in Africa	UNEP	Biodiversity	1,105,000	1,105,000	2017	2025
Zambia	10920	Policy Coherence for Environmental Benefits	UNEP	Biodiversity	2,000,000	2,215,000	2023	ongoing