

32nd LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting

June 23, 2022

Washington, D.C.

LDCF/SCCF ANNUAL EVALUATION 2022

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations	ii
Executive Summary.....	iii
Background	1
Methodology.....	2
Findings	3
Conclusions	12
References	13
Annex A: List of projects reviewed	14
Annex B: List of Interviewees.....	19

ABBREVIATIONS

CAF	Development Bank of Latin America
CEO	chief executive officer
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
LDCF	Least Developed Country Fund
MTR	midterm review
PIF	project identification form
SIDS	Small island developing states
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
TE	terminal evaluation
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This year's Least Developed Countries Fund/Special Climate Change Fund (LDCF/SCCF) Annual Evaluation Report (AER) presents a special analysis on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on project design, implementation, and results covering LDCF and SCCF projects under design or implementation between March 2020 and December 2021. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant challenge for LDCF and SCCF projects, requiring modifications to design and implementation processes as well as evaluation. AER 2022 presents emerging evidence on how projects are responding to the pandemic and supporting COVID-19 recovery in countries, based on a review of 53 LDCF and SCCF projects, of which 19 are at the project identification stage, 15 are at the midterm stage, and 19 projects have terminal evaluations (TEs). To provide further evidence and context, the evaluation selected three projects for stakeholder interviews: one at PIF, one at midterm, and one at terminal evaluation stage.
2. The evidence available thus far points to the impact of the GEF partnership's active response from the start of the pandemic. All project identification forms (PIFs) submitted during the pandemic discussed COVID-19 implications, in line with guidance from the GEF Secretariat, and all midterm reviews (MTRs) and TEs covering a period of project implementation during the pandemic included some discussion of the impacts. Several projects note the relevance of LDCF/SCCF interventions in the recovery process, and ongoing and completed LDCF and SCCF projects have been able to make concrete contributions toward COVID-19 pandemic recovery, through support to livelihoods, hygiene, food security, and public awareness, among other interventions.
3. Impacts of COVID-19 as well as contributions to COVID-19 recovery were noted at the design, implementation, and project closure stages. At the PIF stage, the biggest disruption was difficulty in conducting stakeholder consultations. During implementation, a subset of projects noted the need to halt operations, while the majority of projects noted delays as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Risks to sustainability due to the COVID-19 pandemic mainly related to economic impacts; the inability to complete activities during implementation that would have supported sustainability was also a contributing factor.

BACKGROUND

1. The Least Developed Countries Fund/Special Climate Change Fund (LDCF/SCCF) Annual Evaluation Report (AER) presents performance ratings, trends in gender, and innovative aspects of the cohort of LDCF/SCCF projects included in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Annual Performance Report (APR). Additionally, the AER includes a summary of the GEF Management Action Record tracking of the level of adoption of LDCF/SCCF Council decisions. To align with the changes in reporting on the APR and the MAR which are moving to a biennial reporting schedule and thus are not being presented to GEF Council in June 2022, this year's AER instead presents a special analysis on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on project design, implementation, and results covering LDCF and SCCF projects under design or implementation between March 2020 and December 2021.

2. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, a review of the impacts of the pandemic on projects, as well as the measures adopted to address the impacts, can provide useful lessons moving forward. AER 2022 presents a review of 53 LDCF and SCCF projects, of which 19 are at the project identification stage, 15 are at the midterm stage, and 19 projects have terminal evaluations (TEs). This sample comprises all projects for which project identification forms (PIFs), midterm reviews (MTRs), or terminal evaluations were submitted between March 2020 and December 2021, with the following exceptions:

- Five PIFs submitted between March 4 and March 23, 2020, which did not discuss the COVID pandemic (presumably because it had not yet impacted the project implementation areas when the PIFs were written); and
- Any MTRs and TEs submitted during the period but not covering a period of implementation impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (for instance, TE was submitted to the portal in April 2020, but project closure was December 2019).

3. Aside from the exceptions noted above, all project PIFs submitted during the pandemic discussed COVID-19 implications, in line with guidance from the GEF Secretariat, and all MTRs and TEs covering a period of project implementation during the pandemic included some discussion of the impacts. Projects reviewed are listed in annex A. To provide further evidence and context, the evaluation selected three projects for stakeholder interviews: one at PIF, one at midterm, and one at terminal evaluation stage. These projects were not selected to be representative; rather, they were chosen to provide illustrative examples of trends identified through portfolio review. The three projects were deliberately selected in different regions, with different GEF Agencies and trust funds to provide evidence on experiences in multiple contexts.

4. The results of the review also reflect the steps taken by the GEF Secretariat and Agencies to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on project design, implementation, and results. One of the first steps taken by the GEF Secretariat was to issue automatic extensions to business standards on deadlines for submission for chief executive officer (CEO) endorsement and approval, first on March 21, 2020, and subsequently on June 1, 2020, for an additional three months (GEF 2020b). In December 2020, in the 59th GEF Council Meeting it was

also decided that the GEF CEO may grant extensions to cancellation deadlines for all project types for a total of up to 24 months, upon request from the operational focal point (for national projects) or the GEF Agency (for regional/global projects) (GEF 2021).

5. In addition to these deadline extensions, the December 2020 work program for the LDCF discusses efforts to work with GEF Agencies on COVID-19 response in 2020 on the development of informal guidance for project design and preparation. This guidance, *Project Design and Review Considerations in response to the COVID-19 Crisis and the Mitigation of Future Pandemics*, issued by the GEF Secretariat on September 25, 2020, explained that the GEF expected “all new PIFs and CEO endorsements to demonstrate a strategy or action framework for the COVID-19 pandemic. This should include an analysis of emergent ‘risks’ and ‘opportunities’ relative to the specific context for the project” (GEF 2020a). The December 2020 work program and all subsequent work programs have included an annex with project-level descriptions of information included in PIFs related to this requirement for all PIFs submitted to Council for entry into the work program.

6. Regarding projects under implementation, the guidance provides some preliminary suggestions such as tracking of impacts of COVID-19 on cofinancing and examination on a case-by-case basis of the risks presented to projects. The *2020 Annual Monitoring Report* presents a project risk analysis for LDCF and SCCF projects showing that risk levels for projects under implementation in FY 2020 were comparable to risk levels in FY 2019. This indicated that risks related to COVID-19 were not raising the overall portfolio risk level (GEF 2021).

7. This review of discussions of COVID-19 in project PIFs, MTRs, and TEs provides information on some of the preliminary metrics proposed for tracking of COVID-19 impacts and response in the GEF Secretariat’s informal guidance. The review also confirms the impacts of the issuance of this informal guidance. For example, all project PIFs submitted from April 2020 onwards included these considerations in their design, even before it was required.

METHODOLOGY

8. Nineteen PIFs discussing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the design process, or the implications for project design, were reviewed. Descriptions of the impacts of COVID-19 were inductively coded into themes. Through this process, all mentions of COVID-19 were reviewed and grouped into nonexclusive categories. After reviewing all mentions, these categories were refined and finalized, and mentions were rapidly re-reviewed to ensure consistency in categorization. The main categories emerging from this exercise were discussions of impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country context, impacts on the project design process, and the design team’s response to COVID-19 in the actual project design. While some categories reflect challenges or negative impacts on the country context or the design process, others demonstrate adaptive management and incorporation of COVID-19 considerations.

9. Impacts on performance were screened for 15 MTRs and 19 TEs. Descriptions of the impacts of COVID-19 on project performance were also coded into themes, with the main emerging themes being discussion of modifications to the evaluation process, impacts of the

COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation process, and impacts of COVID-19 on results and sustainability.

10. Relevant documents from the 28th-31st LDCF/SCCF Council were reviewed. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed for key informant interviews, with question tailored to each stage in the project cycle (PIF, MTR, or TE). An interview was also conducted with a member of the GEF Secretariat on the process of applying COVID-19 guidance to projects. A list of interviewees is included as annex B.

Limitations

11. The portfolio reviewed includes all evaluations available as of December 2021 for LDCF and SCCF projects covering a period of the pandemic, and all PIF submissions from March 2020 onward. However due to the relatively small size of the overall LDCF and SCCF portfolios, this study's findings are based on a small sample of projects. In particular, at each stage (PIF, MTR, and TE), the number of projects for review is small. The analysis is limited to the content of the project PIF, MTR, and TE reports reviewed. Thus, it is possible that projects were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic or responded to it in ways that are not covered by the documents reviewed. As more performance documents become available for projects implemented during the pandemic, and when validated ratings become available, a clearer picture of impacts of COVID-19 on implementation and results will emerge. This study provides emerging evidence and may be used to inform future inquiries into the impacts of COVID-19 on the project cycle.

12. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and their timing varied by region, country, and even within countries. On January 31, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, and on March 11, 2020, declared COVID-19 a pandemic.¹ In some regions, such as in parts of the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the COVID-19 pandemic led to restrictions on movement at the onset of the pandemic stage in March 2020 both between and within countries. In other regions and countries, such as many small island developing states (SIDS), early containment measures and geography prevented the spread of the virus, allowing for fairly normal movement within countries, but restricting international travel. For this reason, projects in different countries and at different stages of implementation were impacted differently. This study reviews submissions to the GEF from March 1, 2020, onward, given the ramping up of concern and attention in the beginning of March 2020. At this time, the limited number of projects with performance documents available makes it difficult to separate trends by region or by stage of design or implementation at which a project was impacted. Such analysis may be useful to conduct in future as more MTRs and TEs covering implementation during the pandemic become available.

FINDINGS

13. Impacts of COVID-19 as well as contributions to COVID-19 recovery were noted at the design, implementation, and project closure stages. At the PIF stage, the biggest disruption was

¹ Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, <https://www.cdc.gov/museum/timeline/covid19.html>, accessed April 2022.

difficulty in conducting stakeholder consultations. During implementation, a subset of projects noted the need to halt operations, while the majority of projects noted delays as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Risks to sustainability due to the COVID-19 pandemic mainly related to economic impacts; the inability to complete activities during implementation that would have supported sustainability was also a contributing factor. At closure, evaluations of completed projects was a challenge, and efforts were made to address these through a variety of approaches. Detailed findings are outlined below.

Impacts of COVID on project design and design process

14. **All project PIFs submitted from late March 2020 onwards incorporated information on the impacts of COVID-19 on either the project design or the design process in some form.** This is notable as specific guidance from the GEF Secretariat was not circulated until September 2020 and was mainly applied to project PIFs before their submission to Council for inclusion in the work program. Thus, this review shows that from a very early stage the GEF partnership was addressing COVID-19-related concerns in project design. Increased relevance of the project in the context of COVID-19, and consideration of COVID-19 risks were the most common contexts in which COVID-19 was discussed in PIFs, though the impact of COVID-19 on the country/region, and effects on the design process were also discussed in the majority of PIFs. A summary of the most common categories of impacts is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Impacts of COVID-19 on projects at PIF stage

Impacts	Number of projects noted	Details	Number of projects noted
PIF includes discussion of impacts of COVID-19 in country/region	13	COVID-19 has negatively impacted economy in country	10
		COVID-19 has compounded adaptation issues addressed by the project	4
Stakeholder consultation impacted by COVID-19	12	Some or all planned consultation delayed to project preparation grant phase	11
		Design informed by early field missions conducted pre-pandemic	1
Design documents indicate that COVID-19 increases relevance of project	16	Project supports efforts to build back better/greener after pandemic	10
		Project supports government COVID-19 response	4
		Project supports livelihoods/income generation, which will help in COVID-19 recovery	5
		Project supports health/hygiene, which is important in context of COVID-19	2

		Project provides cost-effective solutions, of increased importance in COVID-19 era	1
COVID-19 pandemic risks included in risk management framework	19	Risk that pandemic might lower priority of adaptation in country	5
		Travel restrictions will impact execution	10
		Technical expertise is not readily available due to the pandemic	8
		PIF notes COVID-19 protocols have been/will be deployed	11

Note: $n = 19$. Categories are nonexclusive.

15. **The most frequently mentioned disruption to the design process was difficulty in conducting stakeholder consultations**, with 12 of 19 projects noting challenges in reaching community-level stakeholders. The most common solution described in PIFs to address this challenge was delaying some stakeholder consultations to the project preparation grant (PPG) stage. In the case of the LDCF and GEF multitrust fund project Climate Security and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Central Regions of Mali for Peacebuilding (GEF ID 10687, United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]), a household survey was also initiated during the PPG phase to gather details which would otherwise have been collected by the project design team during field visits, with data collection support from the Mopti Regional Directorate of Planning, Statistics, Informatics, Land Development and Population.

16. **LDCF/SCCF project implementing partners in regions with security issues had experience dealing with disruptions to project formulation, comparable to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.** Stakeholders involved in the design of the project in Mali noted that they may have been more able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic due to the early consideration of security concerns in the Mopti region of the country. For example, the project was already prepared for the possibility of travel restrictions impacting the project design process. Due to the insecurity in Mali and in the Mopti region, the international consultant hired to lead the design process could not travel to Mali, the national consultant took on a more leading role in coordinating consultations within the country.

17. **In line with guidance from the GEF Secretariat, all PIFs submitted included COVID-19-related risks in their risk frameworks.** Risks discussed included travel restrictions and their impact on implementation, lesser availability of technical expertise during implementation, and the risk that adaptation may become a lower priority in the context of the pandemic, thus affecting resource allocation. Mitigation measures discussed included COVID-19 protocols which had been or were planned to be deployed. These encompassed social distancing protocols, use of outdoor meetings, supply of sanitizers and mask, and use of remote meetings when possible.

Planned contributions to COVID-19 recovery in project designs

18. **The majority of projects (16 of 19) discussed the relevance of the project to COVID-19 recovery efforts, in terms of how activities would inherently be beneficial.** Ten of the 19 projects explicitly noted that project contributions were designed toward building back better/greener. Support to livelihood generation was one of the most frequently cited mechanisms for providing support to COVID-19 recovery, with five projects mentioning that their support in this area would have benefits for COVID-19 recovery. Three projects also noted support to hygiene issues such as access to clean water, which would help reduce the spread of COVID-19. In some cases, PIFs discuss specific modifications to the project design to integrate COVID-19 recovery support into activities. For example, the PIF for the multitrust fund (LDCF and GEF) project Adapting to Climate Change and Enabling Sustainable Land Management through Productive Rural Communities in Timor-Leste (GEF ID 10713, United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP]) discussed plans to integrate measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic into training activities on topics such as water management, sanitation, hygiene, and resilience against zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19. Stakeholders involved in the project in Mali noted that elements of the original project design such as improving access to water, access to markets and conflict resolution mechanisms to increase connectivity would also support COVID-19 recovery.

Discussion of COVID-19 in project performance documents

19. Information on the evaluation modality used to accommodate the COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions was provided in 28 of the 34 projects reviewed. In 9 cases, evaluations report that data collection was entirely virtual with no physical field mission conducted by an evaluator due to restrictions on movement, while in 19 cases a mixed-modality approach was employed, with virtual interviews replacing some work which would otherwise have been conducted in the field, and with members of the evaluation team (either international or locally based) conducting some field verification. None of the evaluations noted that data collection occurred as it normally would have without the COVID-19 pandemic, although six projects did not discuss impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the evaluation process. Table 2 includes information on evaluation process modifications made as a result of the pandemic.

Table 2: Evaluation methods used to accommodate COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions

Evaluation process modifications	Projects noted (n = 34)	Details	MTR (n = 15)	TE (n = 19)
	28	No field verification conducted; evaluation entirely virtual	3	6
		Mixed modality employed (virtual interviews replacing some field work, field work conducted by local consultants when possible)	9	10

20. Where a mixed modality was employed with a combination of virtual and field data collection, limitations on the field data collection were noted in eight cases. These limitations included constraints on the number of people that could be gathered for focus groups, or areas to which evaluators could travel. Interviews with stakeholders from the SCCF project Adaptation to Climate Impacts in Water Regulation and Supply for the area of Chingaza-Sumapaz-Guerrero project in Colombia (GEF ID 4610, Inter-American Development Bank [IDB]) and the LDCF project Climate Adaptation in Wetlands Area (CAWA) implemented in Lao PDR (GEF ID 5489, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO]) shed light on some of the challenges involved in the evaluation process. In the case of the project in Colombia, the evaluation was conducted completely virtually, with evaluators not being able to travel to the country. Stakeholder interviewed noted that while the situation was challenging, close coordination with the executing agency helped with the completion of data collection. The project was extended in part to accommodate the completion of the terminal evaluation, as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the country near the period of project completion. In the case of the CAWA project in Lao PDR, a locally based consultant was able to conduct the MTR, avoiding the delays that would have resulted from waiting to fly in an internationally based consultant.

Impacts on project implementation and results

21. **Eighty-two percent of all projects noted delays or the exacerbation of delays as a result of the pandemic (28 of 34), and half the projects noted risks to future sustainability. In some projects, some or all field activities came to a halt.** Six MTRs and five TEs reported these delays (table 3). Project extensions were approved for 10 projects, 8 at the terminal evaluation stage and 2 at midterm, while extension of end date was also recommended for an additional 5 projects at midterm. Aside from travel restrictions to avoid the spread of the virus, supply chain disruptions and staffing issues were other causes of delays related to COVID-19 noted in evaluations.

22. Stakeholders from the two projects selected for interviews which were under implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic reported that field-based work came to a stop, though at different points in the pandemic and in the implementation of these projects. For the SCCF project in Colombia, activities in the field came to a halt between May and August of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic reached Colombia. As the project had been set to close

that year, the project end date was extended in order to close out activities. IDB also supplied additional cofinancing to the project in Colombia to extend the contract of the project executing agency in order to complete activities and hand off in order to avoid a negative impact on results.

23. The LDCF CAWA project in Lao PDR was initially able to continue with activities through 2020 but was also forced to stop field work from April to November 2021, when later waves of COVID-19 reached the region. Stakeholders from both the LDCF CAWA project and the SCCF project in Colombia noted that a decentralized approach to implementation involving local communities and district-level government in the field-based adaptation work helped in resuming activities. For example, the project in Colombia relied on local communities to conduct adaptation measures in the project areas. When restrictions on movement between and within countries and even within districts was limited, community members were still able to continue work as it did not require travel. In the case of the project in Lao PDR, the project design had been modified (pre-pandemic) to coordinate with district and provincial-level governments, which helped reduce COVID-19 impacts as district and provincial-level stakeholders had more ability to operate in the project areas than national-level stakeholders would have had. Stakeholders from both projects also noted that during periods where field work was shut down, the work of extending contracts to accommodate a shift in timelines was extensive. While only one project evaluation, the MTR for the LDCF project Building Climate Change Resilience in the Fisheries Sector in Malawi (GEF ID 5328, FAO) noted the increased administrative costs created by delays due to COVID-19, information from these key informant interviews on the additional work caused by closure of activities and extension of timelines sheds light on the impacts on project efficiency of COVID-19.

Table 3: Impacts of COVID-19 on project implementation and results

Impacts	MTR (n = 15)	TE (n = 19)
Implementation was halted for some time	6	5
Implementation modified (other than delays to activities)	4	3
Project end date was extended	2	8
Project implementation impacted by supply chain disruption	3	1
Cofinancing lower than expected	2	0
Activities were cancelled	3	7
Activities were added	2	0
Oversight was impacted/limited	3	5
Risks to sustainability increased as a result of COVID-19	8	9

Note: n = 34.

24. In terms of disruptions or challenges in implementation related to COVID-19, training, consultation, and capacity development were among those activities most frequently noted as being impacted. Evaluations provided examples of how project activities were modified in order to continue operations. Modifications often involved changing the format of activities from in person to virtual, as was done in the case of the LDCF project Strengthening Agro-climatic Monitoring and Information Systems to Improve Adaptation to Climate Change and Food Security in Lao PDR (GEF ID 5462, FAO), where trainings were conducted virtually rather than in person.

25. **Risks to sustainability arising from the COVID-19 pandemic were noted in half the projects.** Risks to sustainability related to COVID-19 were frequently due to the economic impact of the pandemic, which affected financial sustainability. However, in some cases risks to sustainability resulted from the cancellation of activities that were important for supporting sustainability. For example, the LDCF project Community Disaster Risk Management in Burundi (GEF ID 4990, UNDP) installed a community-based early warning system (EWS), but the planned training to the target households was not delivered, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This presented a risk to the uptake of the system and thus its sustainability.

26. Other impacts of COVID-19 include challenges or limitations on project oversight, noted in roughly one-quarter of the projects reviewed. This typically involved fewer meetings than planned of project steering committees or cancellation of oversight missions/travel. While one of the considerations noted in *Project Design and Review Considerations in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis and the Mitigation of Future Pandemics* developed by the GEF Secretariat was the impact of the pandemic and resulting economic condition on cofinancing, only two projects noted receiving less cofinancing than expected as a result of the pandemic. Interviews with stakeholders for the IDB project in Colombia demonstrate that in some cases projects may be receiving more cofinancing than expected as implementing partners inject resources. As noted above, IDB addressed the additional costs of extending the project and contracts with the executing agency by providing additional cofinancing.

27. Some evaluation recommendations also demonstrate how projects can respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations related to COVID-19 response were presented in 10 of the 15 MTRs. As noted above five of the MTRs recommended project extension as a result of COVID-19 reductions. Another recommendation was expediting activities requiring physical presence during periods when the rate and risk of infection were low, as was recommended in the LDCF project Building Climate Change Resilience in the Fisheries Sector in Malawi (GEF ID 5328, FAO). Three projects recommended ongoing monitoring of COVID-19 and the creation of mitigation measures, and extended this recommendation to future programs as well: the GEF and SCCF-funded Andes Adaptation to the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources Project (GEF ID 5384, Development Bank of Latin America [CAF]), the LDCF project Adaptation to Climate Change Induced Coastal Risks Management in Sierra Leone (GEF ID 5902, UNDP), and the LDCF project on Strengthening the Resilience of Rural Livelihoods and Sub-national Government Systems to Climate Risks and Variability in Benin (GEF ID 5904, UNDP).

28. Finally, in some cases recommendations were made for changes in strategy or project design to incorporate COVID-19. For example, the evaluation for the LDCF project Adaptation of

Small-scale Agriculture (GEF ID 4453, International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD]) included an annex outlining a proposed COVID-19 project round, provided funds become available for an extension of the project focused on COVID-19 response. The evaluation recommended defining a strategy to mainstream nutrition into the project design and to prepare Lesotho's food system for COVID by identifying key areas for interventions to ensure that agricultural value chains can restart and continue to function. The MTR for the LDCF project Adapting Afghan Communities to Climate-Induced Disaster Risks (GEF ID 6914, UNDP) recommended replacing regional meetings with virtual international workshops. The multitrust fund project Enhancing Sustainability and Climate Resilience (GEF ID 9199, UNDP) included a recommendation that the project incorporate changes to the government of Bhutan's five-year plan (prompted by COVID-19) into the project.

Contributions to COVID-19 recovery in ongoing and completed projects

29. Many of the adaptation interventions covered in the review lend themselves naturally to supporting the recovery from COVID-19. Examples include the use of disaster preparedness and livelihood interventions introduced by LDCF/SCCF in response to the pandemic, and the opportunity to produce educational materials incorporating COVID-19 response. Though not presented in the project evaluations, informant interviews for the projects in Colombia and Lao PDR revealed valuable contributions from the projects toward recovering from the impacts of COVID-19. In both cases, interviewees pointed to increased food security as a result of project interventions, especially relevant given the economic impacts of the pandemic in the project areas. Eight of the 34 project evaluations, 2 at MTR stage and 6 at TE stage, presented examples of project contributions to COVID-19 recovery. These examples show that even projects that were very near completion when the COVID-19 pandemic began, such as the LDCF Community Resilience to Climate and Disaster Risk in Solomon Islands Project (GEF ID 5581, World Bank), were able to demonstrate contributions toward COVID-19 recovery. These examples are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Examples of ongoing and closed project contributions to COVID-19 recovery

Strengthening the Resilience of Rural Livelihoods and Sub-national Government System to Climate Risks and Variability in Benin (GEF ID 5904, UNDP; LDCF; MTR stage)
❖ Raised community awareness on COVID-19, its effects, and prevention and protection measures through communication channels. ❖ Provided support to communities to acquire the means and mechanisms to combat the spread of COVID-19. ❖ Constructed drinking troughs to settle livestock and limit the spread of COVID-19 related to the displacement of livestock farmers. ❖ Trained beneficiaries on technical production routes and the setting up of perimeters developed considering the COVID-19 pandemic.
Adapting Afghan Communities to Climate-Induced Disaster Risks (GEF ID 6914, UNDP; LDCF; MTR stage)
❖ Prepared COVID-19 waste management guidelines.

Building Adaptive Capacity to Catalyze Active Public and Private Sector Participation to Manage the Exposure and Sensitivity of Water Supply Services to Climate Change in Sierra Leone (GEF ID 4599, UNDP; LDCF; TE stage)
❖ Installed boreholes and solar pumping systems to provide water to local schools, promoting hand washing.
Integrating Community-based Adaptation into Afforestation and Reforestation Programmes in Bangladesh (GEF ID 4700, UNDP; LDCF; TE stage)
❖ Introduced a climate-resilience-livelihoods approach called the Forest, Fruit, Fish, and Vegetable (3FV) model in degraded lands and in homesteads, which has proven to be a source of sustenance for local communities during COVID-19. ❖ Altered project budget to increase funding for climate-resilient livelihood interventions so that residents could benefit during the COVID-19 pandemic. ❖ Project provided cash transfer, food, and other emergency support to vulnerable communities on remote islands during the COVID-19 pandemic. ❖ Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP) volunteers were taken off the project to undertake COVID-19 precaution measures within the cyclone shelters of the project sites, which coincided with passing of Cyclone Amphan in May 2020.
Integrating Climate Resilience into Agricultural and Pastoral Production for Food Security in Vulnerable Rural Areas through the Farmers Field School Approach in Niger (GEF ID 4702, FAO; LDCF; TE stage)
❖ Altered project budget to redirect funding to strengthen the Local Investment Fund for Climate Change Adaptation (LCCA) and to create new Agropastoral Field School (APFS) during the 2020 winter season.
Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia to Support Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change (GEF ID 5318, UNDP; LDCF; TE stage)
❖ Utilized the Early Warning System (EWS) strengthened by the project to deliver COVID-19 messages to targeted communities.
Community Resilience to Climate and Disaster Risk in Solomon Islands Project (GEF ID 5581, WB; LDCF; TE stage)
❖ Helped revise the National Disaster Management Plan, clarifying the functions of the National Disaster Council (NDC) and provincial disaster officers; established six sectoral coordinating committees; and helped draft an amendment to the NDC Act to further cement institutional roles. The revised structures were used during to prepare for and respond to COVID-19.
Strengthening Capacities of Rural Aqueduct Associations ¹ (ASADAS) to Address Climate Change Risks in Water Stressed Communities of Northern Costa Rica (GEF ID 6945, UNDP; SCCF; TE stage)
❖ Strengthened disaster management, especially in the Upala and Guatuso municipalities and through communication networks local emergency committees' communication networks. The models introduced by project were used in management of COVID-19. ❖ Developed tools including videos, guides, brochures, and photo stories incorporating information on COVID-19 response. Examples include life story videos on the importance of water resources while facing a pandemic, a quick guide on steps for

proper management of the aqueduct in times of COVID-19, and an educational brochure with information on COVID-19 and measures to protect against it targeted toward children in Costa Rica.

CONCLUSIONS

30. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant challenge for LDCF and SCCF projects, requiring modifications to the design and implementation processes as well as evaluation. Emerging evidence shows that projects are adapting in response to the pandemic and supporting COVID-19 recovery in countries. As more performance documents become available for projects implemented during the pandemic, and when AERs resume reporting of performance ratings covering project implemented during the pandemic, a clearer picture of impacts will emerge.

31. The evidence available thus far points to the impact of the GEF partnership's active response from the start of the pandemic. In line with GEF Secretariat guidance, all recently approved projects included COVID-19-related risks in their risk management frameworks, and half of the ongoing and completed projects reviewed report risks to sustainability related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several projects note the relevance of LDCF/SCCF interventions in the recovery process, and ongoing and completed LDCF and SCCF projects have been able to make concrete contributions toward COVID-19 pandemic recovery, through support to livelihoods, hygiene, food security, and public awareness, among other interventions.

REFERENCES

All URLs were checked before publication or as of the access date noted.

GEF (Global Environment Facility). 2020a. "[Project Design and Review Considerations in response to the COVID-19 Crisis and the Mitigation of Future Pandemics](#)." GEF, Washington DC

_____. 2020b. "[Work Program for the Least Developed Countries Fund](#)." GEF/LDCF.SCCF.29/03/Rev.01. GEF, Washington, DC.

_____. 2021. "[FY20 Annual Monitoring Review of the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund](#)." GEF/LDCF.SCCF.30/04/. GEF, Washington, DC.

ANNEX A: LIST OF PROJECTS REVIEWED

GEF ID	GEF Phase	Fund	Agency	Stage	Project Title	Country Name	PIF Approval Date	Actual Start Date	Actual Completion Date
4434	GEF - 5	LDCF	FAO	TE	Strengthening the Adaptive Capacity and Resilience of Rural Communities Using Micro Watershed Approaches to Climate Change and Variability to Attain Sustainable Food Security	Cambodia	9/15/2011	6/9/2014	11/30/2020
4599	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	TE	Building Adaptive Capacity to Catalyze Active Public and Private Sector Participation to Manage the Exposure and Sensitivity of Water Supply Services to Climate Change in Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	1/19/2012	6/27/2014	10/9/2020
4610	GEF - 5	SCCF	IDB	TE	Adaptation to Climate Impacts in Water Regulation and Supply for the Area of Chingaza - Sumapaz - Guerrero	Colombia	11/10/2011	8/14/2014	6/30/2021
4700	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	TE	Integrating Community-based Adaptation into Afforestation and Reforestation Programmes in Bangladesh	Bangladesh	12/27/2011	5/27/2015	4/30/2021
4702	GEF - 5	LDCF	FAO	TE	Integrating Climate Resilience into Agricultural and Pastoral Production for Food Security in Vulnerable Rural Areas through the Farmers Field School Approach	Niger	8/21/2012	1/15/2015	3/31/2021
4775	GEF - 5	GEF, SCCF	FAO	TE	Promotion of Climate-smart Livestock Management Integrating Reversion of Land Degradation and Reduction of Desertification Risks in Vulnerable Provinces	Ecuador	4/12/2013	5/2/2016	10/31/2020
4880	GEF - 5	GEF, SCCF	IDB	TE	Climate Technology Transfer Mechanisms and Networks in Latin America and the Caribbean	Regional	6/7/2012	12/17/2014	10/20/2020
4990	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	TE	Community Disaster Risk Management in Burundi	Burundi	11/30/2012	10/9/2015	12/31/2020
5014	GEF - 5	LDCF	FAO	TE	Integrating Climate Resilience into Agricultural and Pastoral Production for Food Security in Vulnerable Rural Areas Through the Farmers Field School Approach.	Burkina Faso	9/13/2012	5/1/2015	8/31/2020

5124	GEF - 5	LDCF	FAO	TE	Strengthening Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation through Support to Integrated Watershed Management Programme in Lesotho	Lesotho	3/7/2013	11/1/2015	12/31/2020
5318	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	TE	Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia to Support Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change	Cambodia	5/2/2013	11/28/2014	1/19/2021
5380	GEF - 5	GEF, LDCF	UNDP	TE	Increasing Resilience of Ecosystems and Vulnerable Communities to CC and Anthropic Threats Through a Ridge to Reef Approach to BD Conservation and Watershed Management	Haiti	6/20/2013	10/29/2015	6/1/2021
5419	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	TE	Reducing the Vulnerability of Cambodian Rural Livelihoods through Enhanced sub-national Climate Change Planning and Execution of Priority Actions	Cambodia	10/24/2013	1/15/2016	3/12/2021
5435	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	TE	Promoting Climate Resilient Community-based Regeneration of Indigenous Forests in Zambia's Central Province	Zambia	11/25/2013	7/23/2015	12/31/2021
5566	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	TE	Strengthening Land & Ecosystem Management Under Conditions of Climate Change in the Niayes and Casamance regions- Republic of Senegal	Senegal	1/14/2014	10/26/2015	3/1/2021
5581	GEF - 5	LDCF	World Bank	TE	Community Resilience to Climate and Disaster Risk in Solomon Islands Project	Solomon Islands	1/22/2014	3/6/2014	5/28/2020
5723	GEF - 5	SCCF	World Bank	TE	West Balkans Drina River Basin Management Project	Regional	5/27/2014	5/9/2016	4/30/2021
6945	GEF - 6	SCCF	UNDP	TE	Strengthening Capacities of Rural Aqueduct Associations' (ASADAS) to Address Climate Change Risks in Water Stressed Communities of Northern Costa Rica	Costa Rica	10/30/2014	2/1/2016	6/30/2021
6955	GEF - 6	SCCF	FAO	TE	Strengthening the Adaptive Capacity to Climate Change in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector	Chile	10/30/2014	2/1/2017	8/30/2021
4453	GEF - 5	LDCF	IFAD	MTR	Adaptation of Small-scale Agriculture (LASAP)	Lesotho	12/5/2011	1/20/2017	
5125	GEF - 5	SCCF	FAO	MTR	Smart Adaptation of Forest Landscapes in Mountain Areas (SALMA)	Lebanon	11/15/2012	12/1/2016	
5328	GEF - 5	LDCF	FAO	MTR	Building Climate Change Resilience in the Fisheries Sector in Malawi	Malawi	3/11/2014	1/1/2017	

5384	GEF - 5	GEF, SCCF	CAF	MTR	Andes Adaptation to the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources Project (AICCA)	Regional	6/20/2013	1/3/2018	
5414	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	MTR	Enhancing National Food Security in the Context of Global Climate Change	Kiribati	7/3/2013	1/20/2016	
5462	GEF - 5	LDCF	FAO	MTR	Strengthening Agro-climatic Monitoring and Information Systems to Improve Adaptation to Climate Change and Food Security in Lao PDR	Lao PDR	1/7/2014	5/26/2017	
5489	GEF - 5	LDCF	FAO	MTR	Climate Adaptation in Wetlands Areas (CAWA)	Lao PDR	1/7/2014	5/30/2016	
5531	GEF - 5	GEF, LDCF	UNEP	MTR	Ecosystem Approach to Haiti Cote Sud	Haiti	3/21/2014	5/27/2016	
5666	GEF - 5	SCCF	UNIDO	MTR	Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation through Water Resource Management in Leather Industrial Zone Development	Pakistan	3/21/2014	3/4/2016	
5667	GEF - 5	SCCF	FAO	MTR	Climate Change Adaptation in the Eastern Caribbean Fisheries Sector	Regional	3/21/2014	1/1/2017	
5855	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	MTR	Flood Hazard and Climate Risk Management to Secure Lives and Assets in Mali	Mali	1/13/2015	10/21/2016	
5902	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	MTR	Adapting to Climate Change Induced Coastal Risks Management in Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	12/2/2015	4/25/2018	
5904	GEF - 5	LDCF	UNDP	MTR	Strengthening the Resilience of Rural Livelihoods and Sub-national Government System to Climate Risks and Variability in Benin	Benin	3/2/2016	12/11/2017	
6914	GEF - 6	LDCF	UNDP	MTR	Adapting Afghan Communities to Climate-Induced Disaster Risks	Afghanistan	12/2/2015	9/26/2017	
9199	GEF - 6	GEF, LDCF	UNDP	MTR	Enhancing Sustainability and Climate Resilience of Forest and Agricultural Landscape and Community Livelihoods	Bhutan	10/21/2015	10/30/2017	
10632	GEF - 7	SCCF	UNIDO	PIF	Using Systemic Approaches and Simulation to Scale Nature-based Infrastructure for Climate Adaptation	Global	7/22/2020		
10680	GEF - 7	LDCF	UNIDO	PIF	Promotion of Climate Adaptation Technology and Business Model Innovations and Entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	11/6/2020		

10687	GEF - 7	GEF, LDCF	UNDP	PIF	Climate Security and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Central Regions of Mali for Peacebuilding	Mali	11/8/2020		
10688	GEF - 7	GEF, LDCF	UNDP	PIF	Restoring and Enhancing the Value of Degraded Lands and Forest Ecosystems for Enhanced Climate Resilience in Benin (PIRVaTEFoD-Benin)	Benin	11/8/2020		
10691	GEF - 7	LDCF	UNDP, IUCN	PIF	Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) for Resilient Natural Resources and Agro-pastoral Communities in the Ferlo Biosphere Reserve and Plateau of Thies	Senegal	11/6/2020		
10713	GEF - 7	GEF, LDCF	UNEP	PIF	Adapting to Climate Change and Enabling Sustainable Land Management through Productive Rural Communities in Timor-Leste	Timor Leste	5/17/2021		
10727	GEF - 7	LDCF	WWF-US	PIF	Managing Watersheds for Enhanced Resilience of Communities to Climate Change in Nepal (MaWRiN)	Nepal	11/6/2020		
10745	GEF - 7	LDCF	ADB	PIF	Greater Port Vila Urban Resilience Project	Vanuatu	12/11/2020		
10771	GEF - 7	LDCF	FAO	PIF	Strengthening the Adaptive Capacity of Communities by Up-scaling Integrated Landscape Management and Restoration in South-west region of Central African Republic	Central African Republic	5/17/2021		
10775	GEF - 7	GEF, LDCF	IUCN	PIF	Securing Kiribati's Natural Heritage: Protected Areas for Community, Atoll, and Island climate resilience (Securing Kiribati)	Kiribati	5/18/2021		
10777	GEF - 7	LDCF	UNDP	PIF	Transformational Adaptation for Climate Resilience in Lake Chilwa Basin of Malawi (TRANSFORM)	Malawi	11/12/2021		
10779	GEF - 7	LDCF	UNDP	PIF	Advancing Climate Resilience of Water Sector in Bhutan (ACREWAS)	Bhutan	5/17/2021		
10789	GEF - 7	GEF, LDCF	FAO	PIF	Building Community Based Integrated and Climate Resilient Natural Resources Management and Enhancing Sustainable Livelihood in the South-Eastern Escarpments and Adjacent Coastal Areas of Eritrea	Eritrea	5/17/2021		
10792	GEF - 7	GEF, LDCF	IFAD	PIF	Adaptive Agriculture and Rangeland Rehabilitation Project (A2R2) - Somalia	Somalia	5/17/2021		
10793	GEF - 7	LDCF	FAO	PIF	Building Climate-resilient Livelihoods and Food Systems	Lesotho	5/17/2021		

10823	GEF - 7	LDCF	IFAD	PIF	Strengthening Integrated Approaches to Build Climate Resilience of Vulnerable Rural Communities and Agricultural Production Systems in the Central Region of Segou in the Republic of Mali	Mali	11/24/2021		
10861	GEF - 7	LDCF	World Bank	PIF	Integrated Economic Development and Community Resilience (IEDCR)	Solomon Islands	11/12/2021		
10883	GEF - 7	LDCF	AfDB	PIF	Co-management of Climate Extremes for Agriculture Resilience via Innovative Technologies for Irrigation in São Tomé and Príncipe	Sao Tome and Principe	11/19/2021		
10908	GEF - 7	LDCF	UNIDO	PIF	Building Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change in the Essential Oil Sector in Madagascar (ARCHE)	Madagascar	3/29/2022		

Note: ADB = Asian Development Bank; AfDB= African Development Bank; IUCN = International Union for the Conservation of Nature; UNIDO = United Nations Industrial Development Organization; WWF-US = World Wildlife Fund US.

ANNEX B: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Adaptation to Climate Impacts in Water Regulation and Supply for the area of Chingaza-Sumapaz-Guerrero (GEF ID 4610, IDB)

Alfred Grunwaldt, Lead Climate Change Specialist, Inter-American Development Bank

Patricia Bejarano, Manager, Land Use Planning, Conservation International

Climate Adaptation in Wetlands Area (CAWA) (GEF ID 5489, FAO)

Kevin Jeanes, Project Chief Technical Advisor

Mrs. Keoudone Chounlamountry, Deputy Director, District Office of Natural Resources and the Environment

Climate Security and sustainable management of natural resources in the central regions of Mali for peacebuilding (GEF ID 10687, UNDP)

Sarah Lebel, Team leader for PPG formulation, Baastel

Clotilde Goerman, Regional Technical Advisor, UNDP

GEF Secretariat

Yuki Shiga, Environmental Specialist, GEF Secretariat