

Annex 1. Management Action Record 2025 – Recommendations and Action Plans

1. Program Evaluation of the Least Developed Countries Fund ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.29/E/01](#)), December 2020 LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 2: Continue to enhance the likelihood of the sustainability of outcomes. The GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies should continue to carry out relevant actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the Council document Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments. This should entail giving more emphasis to the project and context factors identified by this evaluation as affecting the sustainability of outcomes during project design and implementation	Agreed (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.29/E/02) The Secretariat acknowledges IEO’s recommendation to continue to enhance the likelihood of sustainability of outcomes. In this regard, <i>the Secretariat will continue to carry out relevant actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the Council document Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments, as recommended by the IEO, and will continue to urge Agencies to emphasize contextual factors affecting sustainability outcomes.</i>	Not specified	Rating: Substantial In this period, the LDCF continued to implement the priorities of the GEF 8 strategy which duly integrated the IEO’s recommendation. It focused on the proposed dedicated programs, collaboration with financial institutions and whole-of-society approach, which serve as key levers for durability of adaptation outcomes. In this FY, the GEF Secretariat delivered 5 sub-regional adaptation workshops under the dedicated programs covering all the LDCs and SIDS. These workshops led to improved capacity of countries in designing effective and durable adaptation projects in collaboration with agencies, technical experts, STAP, and UNFCCC. These sessions have also led to strong ownership and engagement of countries in the projects, which is expected to translate into durable outcomes.	Rating: Substantial Ongoing GEF-8 efforts including dedicated programs, sub-regional workshops, leveraging funding, and the whole society approach are acknowledged. The IEO encourages the Secretariat to continue enhancing the likelihood of the sustainability of outcomes through actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the Council document Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments and continue to urge Agencies to emphasize contextual factors affecting sustainability outcomes.	Rating: High The LDCF continues to implement all elements of the GEF-8 climate change adaptation strategy that directly speaks to durability of design and implementation. Complementary to the successful regional workshops in the previous fiscal year that enhanced country ownership and capacity building, the GEF Secretariat is continuing to enhance stakeholder consultations in line with current GEF policies and guidelines and promoting local community involvement to improve project ownership and accountability. This is to foster partnership for inclusion and operationalize whole-of-society approach, a key principle outlined in GEF-8 strategy. It advocates for robust theories of change within the country context for durable adaptation.	Rating: High The IEO recognizes the Secretariat’s continued efforts under GEF-8 to enhance the likelihood of the sustainability of outcomes through actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the Council document Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments. This recommendation will be graduated.

			The GEF also strengthened its focus on leveraging large-scale funding from MDBs and other FIs to complement LDCF investments for long-term outcomes. These include strategic collaboration with the World Bank IDA for scaling up NBS in LDCs and partnership with the GCF and IFAD on a regional adaptation project in Great Green Wall region countries. Overall, the share of MDBs and DFIs in LDCF programming has increased in GEF 8. The whole-of-society approach was also integrated in several LDCF projects which were approved by the Council in the reporting period. These projects have included approaches to engage stakeholders across governance levels, inclusive community-based governance structures, establishment of multi-sectoral dialogues, collaboration with the private sector, and engagement of communities and civil society in decision making and implementation of adaptation activities. Such a wider societal engagement in projects would likely pave the path for greater ownership, improved		The current active portfolio of GEF-8 demonstrates progress in integrating durability principles into project design and implementation. For example, the GEF-8 LDCF project in Bhutan emphasizes capacity building through local universities to ensure long-term sustainability and fully aligns with new urban development policy. Similarly, the GEF-8 LDCF Project in Nepal includes local government representatives in project steering committees. These approaches highlight the integration of durability into the GEF-8 LDCF/SCCF portfolio	
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			monitoring and a process of learning for durable outcomes.			
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2. Evaluation of GEF Support in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations ([GEF/E/C.59/01](#)), December 2020 GEF Council Meeting

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Recommendation 2: To improve conflict-sensitive programming while also providing flexibility to Agencies and projects, the GEF Secretariat could develop guidance for conflict-sensitive programming. This guidance could address measures across the programming lifecycle, from design to implementation and closure. GEF guidance on conflict-sensitive programming could draw upon both the commonalities and innovations of the guidance that has been developed by 10 Agencies.	Agreed (GEF/E/C.59/06) The Secretariat appreciates the extensive range of innovative guidances for fragile and conflict-affected circumstances that has been developed and is being practiced by many of the Implementing Agencies. <i>The Secretariat will build upon these to develop jointly with Agencies GEF guidance on conflict-sensitive programming.</i> This will provide a framework that all Agencies can adopt during project design and across the project life cycle.	Not specified	Rating: High The Secretariat produced an Information Note for Council in June 2023, that was subsequently deliberated by Council in Feb 2024. Council endorsed the course of action described therein.	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes that the GEFSEC has produced the Information Note for the GEF Council. This undertaking is a positive step towards formally guiding the GEF partnership on fragile and conflict contexts. The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress of this action.	Rating: High The GEF Secretariat launched the GEF’s Guidance Note on Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations in November 2024 to assist GEF Agencies and other partners in the efficient planning and execution of GEF projects and programs in FCS. The guidance note has been used to provide practical guidance to design, implement and monitor the GEF projects.	Rating: High The IEO notes that the GEFSEC has developed a guidance note to support the GEF partnership in implementing conflict-sensitive programming.
Recommendation 3: To improve conflict-sensitive design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of GEF projects, the GEF Secretariat together with the Agencies should leverage existing platforms for learning, exchange, and technical assistance. These platforms are designed to effectively foster learning and exchange, build capacity, and provide specialized assistance. Since conflict sensitivity is a cross-	Agreed (GEF/E/C.59/06) The Secretariat takes note of the recommendation to leverage existing knowledge platforms to improve conflict-sensitivity. <i>The Secretariat considers this recommendation as usefully related to the present Knowledge Management evaluation, and will therefore address this through its coming advancements in Knowledge Management as</i>	Not specified	Rating: Substantial Based on the FCS paper and Council decision, the Secretariat is drafting guidance that will be circulated to Council for information after the June 2024 meeting.	Rating: Medium The IEO notes that the GEFSEC is drafting a guidance note. This is a positive step towards improving conflict-sensitive design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of GEF projects. The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress of this action.	Rating: Substantial The GEF Secretariat prepared a concept note on exchanging practices for projects in FCS in March 2025 based on the Council Decision 11/2024 . The GEF Webinar Series on exchanging practices for projects in FCS are scheduled in April and May of 2025 collaborating with the GEF Agencies and other partners per KM&L Strategy. The GEF	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes that the GEFSEC has prepared a concept note on sharing good practices for projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations. This initiative, along with the webinar series, is a positive step toward strengthening project design and implementation. The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress of this effort.

cutting issue, lessons learned should be exchanged on existing knowledge platforms supported through programs such as the Integrated Approach Pilots, Impact Programs, Global Wildlife Program, and planetGOLD, among others, as well as on the online GEF Portal.	<i>per the recommendations of that report.</i>				Secretariat will prepare a summary brief or synthesis report based on the sessions.	
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3. Third Joint GEF-UNDP Evaluation of the Small Grants Programme ([GEF/E/C.60/01](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

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Recommendation 1: (to the GEF and UNDP). As recommended in the 2015 evaluation, the SGP should conduct a consultative process towards the formulation of an updated long-term vision for the SGP. This process should begin by taking stock of the past 25+ years of programming and should serve to inform future replenishment discussions. The process should be inclusive of upgraded countries, countries participating in the SGP global programme, GEF Council and UNDP, and the final vision should be adopted by the GEF Council/Assembly. The purpose would be to ensure that the vision, mission and mandate of the SGP are clear and consensual and serve as a guiding framework for policy decisions through future GEF periods.	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23) <i>From the GEF: The Secretariat will build on the efforts and work to update and lead a consultative process towards the formulation of a longer-term vision for the SGP in close collaboration with UNDP and the SGP Steering Committee. Considering that the SGP is a community-driven and country-led programme, the GEF Secretariat will collaborate closely with UNDP and the SGP Central Programme Management Team to ensure that the consultative process adequately engages upgraded countries and countries participating in the SGP global programme, including national coordinators, national steering committees, together with other stakeholders including government representatives, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.</i> It is expected that the results of the formulation of this longer-	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: Medium In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has advanced several important steps in the roll out of the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8. Relevant to the long-term visioning exercise include the selection of FAO and CI as two additional SGP Implementing Agencies. The GEF Secretariat determined that a longer-term visioning exercise for the SGP would generate greater added value once all three agencies were on board, especially with a view to GEF-9 and to position the exercise within the wider context of GEF’s “whole of society approach”. Initial steps have been initiated to consult with all three agencies, and the exercise is expected to start in the second half of 2024 and to be concluded by December 2024 to inform the GEF-9 Replenishment discussions.	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges that the steps taken by the GEF Secretariat and will continue to track the progress of this process.	Rating: Substantial The GEF Secretariat has continued to make substantial progress engaging SGP implementing partners to deliver on the longer-term vision of SGP and the roll out of SGP 2.0. Global PIFs for SGP Tranche 2, submitted by FAO, CI and UNDP were approved at the 68th GEF Council meeting. Moreover, two additional implementing agencies were selected to implement the two SGP CSO initiatives, including the CSO Challenge Program, led by IUCN, approved at the 68th Council, and the WB, selected to lead the SGP Microfinance Initiative, currently considered to be included in the work program for approval at the 69th Council. The GEF Secretariat has facilitated broader stocktaking and visioning exercises on GEF CSO engagement and SGP, including consultations around civil society engagement and the GEF “whole of society approach, including:	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges the actions taken by the GEF Secretariat and will continue to track the progress of this process towards a longer-term vision for the SGP.

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	term vision will inform the GEF SGP Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8 and will serve as a broader SGP guiding framework for future GEF replenishment periods. <i>From UNDP:</i> UNDP accepts the recommendation and will work with the GEF and the SGP Steering Committee to conduct a consultative process towards the formulation of a long-term vision for the SGP, with a focus on growth, synergies and scaling up. ... To ensure that the vision, mission and mandate of the SGP are clear and consensual, a consultative process for an agreed vision has also been initiated among partners and stakeholders in the context of developing the SGP strategy for GEF-7 and GEF-8 replenishment. ... The SGP Steering Committee, reconvened as of July 2020 and revitalized as a multi-stakeholder governance body of the SGP comprising the GEF secretariat, UNDP and the GEF Civil Society Organization (CSO) network, could serve as				1. Organization of GEF OFF briefings on SGP 2.0 operationalization and roll out of tranche 1 and 2, including on the new SGP CSO Initiatives. 2. Facilitation of CSO consultations, including the GEF on GEF initiatives and approaches to Civil Society prior to the 67th Council (https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-06/67Council_GEF_CSO_Consultation_Concept_note_June3.pdf) 3. Organization of a dedicated session on “Expanding GEF’s Engagement and Financing to Civil Society for Global Transformation as part of the GEF-9 Technical Advisory Group Meetings in February 2025, including a stocktaking and visioning exercise, assessing current progress and exploring options to further refine and expand SGP as well engagement/ support to civil society, Indigenous peoples, local	

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	the primary mechanism for consultative and regular review of the SGP long-term vision, mandate and strategy in GEF-8 and beyond. Because the SGP is a community-driven and country-led programme, a consultative process involving national coordinators, national steering committees and other stakeholders will inform the work of the SGP Steering Committee.				communities, women, youth, including the, in GEF-9 and beyond. 4. Organization of briefings and consultations as part of GEF ECWs regular technical working group meetings with SGP implementing agencies, SGP global steering committee meetings as well as other consultative meetings with the GEF CSO network, IPAG and STAP.	
Recommendation 4: (to the Central Programme Management Team). The ways that SGP interventions are packaged, such as strategic initiatives, focal area results, innovation Programmes and Grantmakers Plus initiatives, should be simplified. A small number of thematic frameworks (e.g., landscape/seascape approach) may be adopted to steer or shape programming, incentivize innovation or address urgent and emerging issues, but the pace of change should be slow enough to allow for local adoption and	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23) <i>From the GEF:</i> The Secretariat takes note of this recommendation and will support the Central Programme Management Team, as needed, in line with UNDP’s management response to this Evaluation. <i>The Secretariat will specifically work closely with UNDP to ensure that the SGP strategy for GEF-8 is aligned with the forthcoming GEF-8 Programming Directions and Policy Agenda.</i> <i>From CPMT:</i> The Central Programme Management	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: High In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has prepared and finalized the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines for GEF-8 (soon to be posted on GEF website). In the process to finalize the guidelines, the GEF Secretariat has convened technical working group discussions with UNDP, FAO and CI to solicit their input and feedback. Discussions on the Results Framework for GEF-8 has been an integral part of these consultations. The GEF-8 SGP Results Framework, in line with the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8, has	Rating: Substantial The IEO welcomes the preparation of 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF website). The IEO will continue to monitor the adoption and application of these guidelines.	Rating: High The SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines, including the SGP results Framework developed by the GEF Secretariat were posted to the GEF website and have been widely disseminated. The Guidelines have successfully guided the three SGP Core implementing agencies in their respective formulation of SGP projects, including Tranche 1: the CEO endorsement for UNDP’s global project for 99 participating countries, approved by council in August 2024.	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes that SGP 2.0 operational guidelines have guided project formulation, governance modalities, and other activities. The IEO will continue to track actions to simplify the packaging of SGP interventions and the application of the SGP results framework at the community level.

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internalization by local communities.	Team and UNDP accept this recommendation and will work to simplify its interventions to support faster adoption and internalization by local communities. Going forward, lessons emerging from the various programming windows will be integrated into a limited number of strategic initiatives and cross-cutting frameworks.		been elaborated in in the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines. The framework aligns with the GEF-8 Core Indicators, and, for the first time, include common SGP-specific indicators to capture, monitor and report on social inclusion and livelihood outcomes. In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has also convened regular technical meetings with UNDP to ensure that the tranche 1 SGP project is aligned with the GEF-8 Programming Directions, the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8 and the recently completed Operational Guidelines and Results Framework. Furthermore, the GEF Secretariat has facilitated technical meetings with all three SGP implementing agencies to support further alignment with the GEF-8 programming directions, SGP 2.0 implementation arrangements, and the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines in the preparation of SGP 2.0 tranche two project design.		- Tranche 2: the three global PIFs submitted by FAO, CI and UNDP, approved by council in December 2024. The guidelines have further guided the SGP governance modalities at the global and national levels, resource allocation and budget structure, including grant disbursement and the framework for monitoring, evaluation and reporting, including supporting the following positive outcomes: - Increased country allocation of STAR to SGP by 20.4% (STAR resources increased from \$85M in GEF-7 to \$104M in GEF-8 (15 countries more countries that in GEF-7 decided to allocate STAR resources in GEF-8 - now 88 countries compared to 73 in GEF-7). - Expanded country coverage to 136 in GEF-8, compared to 124 countries in GEF-7. - Increased grant-non grant ratio from 62% in GEF-7 to 72% in GEF-8	

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					The application of the SGP 2.0 results framework, introduced in GEF-8, to better capture and measure important socio-economic benefits	
Recommendation 5: (to the SGP Global Steering Committee and the Central Programme Management Team). As recommended in the 2015 joint evaluation, the SGP should review and re-energize its governance at the global and national levels. This will help to avoid misunderstandings and strengthen the relationship, through revised terms of reference, improved communication, agreed operational language or more frequent meetings. At the national level, the Terms of Reference of the national steering committee should be reviewed with emphasis on building synergies with the national UNDP programmes and creating spaces for new committee members that could help in increasing the broader adoption of SGP small grant projects (such as	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23) <i>From the GEF:</i> The Secretariat welcomes this recommendation and stands ready to support UNDP and the Central Programme Management Team in line with UNDP's management response to this Evaluation that specifies their commitment to review and re-energize its governance at the national and global levels, including the GEF Steering Committee lead by the GEF Secretariat. <i>From CPMT:</i> UNDP accepts this recommendation and will work with the SGP Steering Committee to review and re-energize SGP governance at the global and national levels.	Not specified	Rating: Medium The approval of the two new SGP implementing agencies demands a renewed coordination and governance model at the global level. Directly following the selection of the FAO and CI as the two new SGP implementing agencies, the GEF Secretariat convened, in January 2024, a first expanded SGP 2.0 Global Steering Committee Meeting. This meeting facilitated early onboarding issues for the additional SGP implementing agencies and discussions on measures to support needed collaboration between the agencies. Following this meeting, the GEF Secretariat convened a face-to-face meeting with all agencies during the GEF Council meeting in February 2024, and initiated regular technical	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges actions taken by the GEF Secretariat including approval of new SGP Agencies, the expanded SGP 2.0 Global Steering Committee Meeting, and efforts to re-energize national level governance. The IEO will continue to track the progress of this process.	Rating: Substantial During this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has continued efforts to re-energize the governance of SGP, including (1) organization of two expanded SGP 2.0 global steering committee meetings (including representatives from the GEF secretariat, the three SGP implementing agencies, the CSO network and IPAG): (2) organization and facilitation of regular technical meetings among all SGP implementing agencies, both for the global core program (FAO, CI and UNDP), as well as with IUCN and the WB in the development of their respective PIFs and CEO endorsements. These meetings are geared to support greeter coherence on national governance and executing arrangements,	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes the GEF Secretariat's efforts to re-energize its governance at the national and global levels. The IEO will monitor these efforts, especially at the national level.

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including members with expertise in building business models or inclusion of private sector representatives).			working group meetings. It is expected that the Steering Committee will discuss and approve a renewed TOR of the SGP Global Steering Committee at its next meeting to be scheduled by the GEF Secretariat before the June 2024 council meeting. Efforts to re-energize national level governance are being advanced as part of the design of the three SGP implementing agencies' projects and supported by the GEF Secretariat as part of technical discussion and project review efforts.		strategies for enhancing the engagement of IPLCs, women and youth, and improving private sector engagement. As CEO endorsements are being developed by the agencies, active discussions around the operationalization of these country level arrangements are currently taking place between country OFPs, existent national steering committees, agency country offices and SGP country management teams. These are being closely monitored by the GEF secretariat.	
Recommendation 6: (to the Central Programme Management Team). The SGP should test new ways to track and aggregate the intangible results generated by countries benefiting from SGP inputs such as the benefits received from its capacity-building activities, monitoring and evaluation, communications and knowledge management. There should be a systematic	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23) <i>From the GEF: The Secretariat will further work to ensure that the SGP strategy for GEF-8 is aligned with GEF Policies and Guidelines and forthcoming GEF-8 Policy Agenda, including ensuring that SGP adopts a results framework that is compatible and aligned with the GEF-8 results architecture, while</i>	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: Substantial In this reporting period, the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines for GEF-8 were prepared by the GEF Secretariat and discussed with the three SGP implementing agencies for their input and feedback. The SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines for GEF-8 (soon to be posted on GEF's website) outlines the SGP 2.0 Results Framework for	Rating: Substantial The IEO welcomes the preparation of 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF website). The IEO encourages the GEF Secretariat to take into consideration the feasibility of and capacity for applying them at the community level and will continue to monitor the adoption and application of these guidelines.	Rating: Substantial During this reporting period, the Operational Guidelines, including the SGP results Framework for GEF-8, have been completed and posted to the GEF website: https://www.thegef.org/documents/gef-small-grants-programme-2-0-operational-guidelines-gef-8. This has been widely disseminated.	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes that SGP 2.0 operational guidelines have guided project formulation and country level partners. The IEO also notes discussion on experience sharing and learning. The IEO will continue to track the progress of these actions

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process in which the global programme countries benefit from the experiences of the upgraded countries and vice versa. At the country level, the SGP should be able to track the evolution of the grantees they support and the broader adoption of activities that have been implemented, to maximize the space for innovation and support the evolution of its grantees. The team should continue to ensure that adequate knowledge management strategies are in place with related capacity to implement these strategies, so as to allow the maximization of broader adoption opportunities stemming from SGP initiatives.	<i>taking into consideration the feasibility of and capacity for applying them at the community level, and the GEF forthcoming strategy on knowledge management and learning.</i> <i>From CPMT:</i> The Central Programme Management Team and UNDP accept this recommendation. ... SGP will further refine and formalize the system to monitor the efficiency and results of capacity development, knowledge management and communication, including the definition and capture of appropriate indicators.		GEF-8. The Results Framework builds on previous versions and aligns with the GEF-8 results architecture, and, for the first time, includes SGP-specific indicators that captures and monitors the social inclusion and livelihood outcomes underlined in the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8. In addition, the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines incorporates M&E guidelines aligned with the GEF Core indicators and the new SGP specific indicators, whilst allowing for flexibility and further reporting, by each agency, on capacity development and other social and economic indicators when relevant. The SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines include sections on Knowledge Sharing and Learning, consistent with the GEF Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (GEF/C64/07) and which clearly sets out the guidance on these issues for the implementing agencies.		These Guidelines have successfully guided the three Core implementing agencies in the formulation of their global PIFs and CEO endorsements, including the application of the SGP 2.0 results framework, introduced in GEF-8, to capture and measure important socio-economic benefits. Although principally intended for use by the SGP Implementing Agencies, they also serve as general guidance, where relevant, for SGP Executing Agencies, GEF Operational Focal Points (OFPs) and other country level partners. With the introduction of multiple SGP implementing agencies in GEF-8, and the diversity of approaches and technical experience that these represent, with a view to GEF-9, the GEF secretariat is leading discussions on how to enhance experience sharing and learning among SGP grantees, country officials, implementing agencies, and other partners (e.g. south-to south learning platforms), capturing and sharing best practices and innovative	

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					solutions across multiple, multi country SGP projects.	
Recommendation 7: (to the Central Programme Management Team, UNDP, and the GEF). The approach to and measurement of sustainability in the SGP should be improved to capture the tangible and intangible benefits of the programme. A first layer of sustainability could be measured at the level of small grant projects, while another could be measured at the level of grantees. A measure of sustainability in this context may be whether the organizations continue to operate in the environmental space after the SGP grant is concluded. A scale of CSO capacity could be devised that would allow for long-term tracking of SGP grantees and their progression along the development continuum, especially for those who receive repeat funding or	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23) <i>From the GEF:</i> In the context of this evaluation and this recommendation, and building on the work already being done in the wider GEF portfolio, <i>the Secretariat will work with UNDP and the COPT to understand more deeply the factors that influence sustainability in the SGP, and the ways in which these factors can be influenced within the parameters of the program.</i> Sustainability considerations can also be discussed as part of efforts to develop an appropriate approach to capture the intangible benefits of SGP interventions (see response to recommendation 6) as well as in the formulation of an updated long-term vision for the SGP (see response to recommendation 1).	Not specified	Rating: Substantial In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has considered issues of sustainability in the preparation of the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines, results framework, and project reviews. The PIF, approved by Council in June 2023, for the SGP Tranche 1 (UNDP) include strategies for sustainability of grantee projects. The Project identifies how local communities, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged groups will benefit from technical and grant assistance for interventions allowing them access to knowledge and information and capacity and skills development that enhance socioeconomic conditions and generate global environmental benefits. The project incorporates strategies to support a positive enabling environment	Rating: Medium The IEO welcomes the preparation of 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF website) and the considerations of sustainability issues in the selection of new Agencies and the PIF approval process. The IEO will continue to track actions to better understand factors that influence sustainability in the SGP and to monitor the adoption and application of the guidelines.	Rating: Substantial In this reporting period, the CEO endorsement submitted by UNDP for tranche 1 was approved in August 2024. Additionally, four PIFs – three for tranche 2 core resources, submitted by FAO, CI and UNDP, and the PIF for the CSO Challenge Program, presented by IUCN, were approved by the 68th GEF council in December 2024. These projects were carefully reviewed by the GEF Secretariat to ensure that the barriers and solutions to sustainability including stakeholder capacity, social and cultural coherence, environmental factors, technical and technological feasibility, economic and financial viability, the institutional setting, the provision for private sector engagement, as well as governance arrangements and	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes the actions taken by the GEF Secretariat on barriers and solutions to sustainability. The IEO will continue to monitor the sustainability in the SGP

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whose activities are replicated or upscaled through new projects.	<i>From UNDP:</i> The Central Programme Management Team and UNDP accept this recommendation and will work with the GEF for its implementation. As part of efforts to develop an appropriate approach to capture the intangible benefits of SGP interventions (see response to recommendation 6), the SGP will also explore ways to measure sustainability at the level of grantees, as recommended. ... With an emphasis on further integration of SGP country teams with UNDP country offices in GEF-7 and beyond, sustainability of results will be maintained through linkage with relevant national policies and programmes, as well as by scaling up through larger donor- and government-led programmes and projects.		for building skills and technical capabilities beyond each project's lifespan. As part of the GEF Secretariat's selection process of the additional SGP implementing agencies, specific selection criteria were incorporated to evaluate Agencies' capabilities and experience in developing community level and grantee capacities, providing technical assistance, fostering alliances and partnerships, leveraging and mobilizing resources. Strategies and approaches for enhancing local sustainability will also be an important consideration of the GEF Secretariat's technical discussion and review of SGP 2.0 Tranche two projects.		political coherence and alignment. These considerations are clearly reflected in the projects' theories of change and overarching strategies to ensure that CSOs and CBOs, with a focus on IPLCs, women and youth will be supported to develop the necessary skills and capacities to generate global environmental benefits and positive livelihood outcomes. The GEF Secretariat will closely track the implementation of the strategies and approaches set in the project documents and monitor their results, including the measurement of social and economic indicators, as well as enhancing opportunities for knowledge sharing and cross-learning around sustainability issues.	
Recommendation 8: (to the Central Programme Management Team). The team should create operational mechanisms to	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23) <i>From the GEF:</i> The Secretariat welcomes this	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: Medium In line with the SGP 2.0 Implementation arrangements and the Operational guidelines, the GEF Secretariat	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges discussion among the three SGP Agencies on practices or tools for private sector	Rating: Substantial The three SGP PIFs for tranche 2 core resources and the CSO challenge program PIF, submitted by IUCN were	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes efforts to engage with the private sector, the PIF for the SGP microfinance initiative, and

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
improve and incentivize innovation and business-oriented approaches in country programmes. These mechanisms would maximize the potential for environmental benefits and social inclusion while creating opportunities for long-term viability of supported SGP small grants. The social economy model provides a useful avenue for the SGP to expand to new beneficiaries and to optimize the sustainability of its results. Enhanced and more systematic synergies between UNDP and the SGP at the country level could facilitate this process. Examples include priority selection of innovative projects, varied scales of financing for business-oriented initiatives, and the broader adoption of SGP small grant projects into UNDP programming.	recommendation and will seek to <i>collaborate with UNDP and the Central Programme Management Team to leverage linkages with the newly approved GEF Private Sector Engagement Strategy and lessons learned from the GEF Non Grant Instruments (NGI)</i> . During GEF-8, the GEF's ambition is to build on experiences with micro-credits in a number of SGP Country Programmes and to explore modalities to further promote sustainable livelihoods through i.e. greater collaboration with local micro-financing entities; and to support and accompany the creation of micro, small and medium enterprises at the local and community level. <i>The Secretariat will also explore options to expand SGP Dialogue Platforms towards a greater engagement of the private sector to leverage its potential to support sustainability at the local level and to provide opportunities for local communities to engage in policy dialogues with national</i>		has initiated renewed discussion on among the three SGP implementing agencies, through technical group discussions, on opportunities to further leverage their experiences and specific practices or tools for private sector engagement. In addition, the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements earmarked \$10 million for a Microfinance Initiative financing window. This initiative, along with the CSO Challenge Program is expected to be launched in the second semester of 2024.	engagement, the earmarking for the Microfinance Initiative financing window, and welcomes the preparation of the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF website). The IEO will continue to monitor actions for this recommendation.	approved by the 68th GEF Council in December 2024. Each of these projects provides provision for enhanced private sector engagement through a variety of strategies, practices and tools, including: • Strengthening dialogues and partnerships with the private sector, including as members of multistakeholder governance platforms, including national steering committees. • exploring sector business-oriented approaches and potential opportunities for finance and technical support, including financing landscape-seascape strategies in relation to the different links of key value chains. • Leveraging private sector expertise and resources for scaling up SGP innovations and practices. Moreover, in this reporting period, the World Bank was selected to lead the SGP microfinance initiative. This	the forthcoming SGP country program strategies. The IEO will continue to monitor the actions for this recommendation

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	and local governments. The collaborative work and findings of these efforts is expected inform the GEF SGP Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8 and to serve as a broader SGP guiding framework for future GEF replenishment periods. <i>From UNDP:</i> With respect to broader adoption of innovations tested under the SGP projects into UNDP programming, many SGP country programmes will continue to strengthen linkages with UNDP accelerator labs and regional innovation teams to scale up innovation and experimentation. To support business-oriented approaches in country programmes and projects, SGP is developing a private sector guidance note as part of its resource mobilization and partnership strategy (2020-2024), with an aim to enhance private sector engagement and adoption of relevant business models, including supporting small and medium-scale enterprises and				stand-alone mechanism aims to improve MFIs’ capacities to design and introduce innovative financial products and solutions and support and facilitate low-income households, small producers, and microenterprises’ access to increased finance for climate and environmental solutions towards achieving positive livelihood outcomes and Global Environmental Benefits. It is also expected that the initiative will strengthen local public and private partnerships. The PIF for this project is currently under development and is expected to be submitted at the 69th GEF Council in June 2025. Furthermore, as per requirements in the GEF-8 Operational Guidelines, SGP Implementing Agencies and Executing Agencies, in close consultation with the GEF OFF and local partners, are expected to formulate an SGP country program strategy or equivalent landscape/seascape planning tool to operationalize SGP 2.0 in GEF-8. These planning	

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	exploring use of different financing scales and modalities, through the SGP country programmes.				documents will further identify and develop, together with key stakeholders, including from the private sector, the opportunities for further private sector engagement and support, with a key focus on supporting IPLCS, women and youth in the development of nature-based businesses and value chain development.	
Recommendation 9: (to the GEF). The GEF Secretariat should apply the explicit, accepted accounting standards that are applied to the rest of the GEF portfolio when assessing SGP management costs. The appropriateness of the level of management expenditures should be a factor of the level of management activities that are required. Programmatic activities related to CSO capacity-building, monitoring, knowledge, technical assistance and communication should not be considered part of the management cost even if they are expenditures	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23) <i>From the GEF:</i> The Secretariat fully agrees, with this Evaluation, that the calculation of SGP's management costs should not extend to services to CSOs and costs for activities related to CSO capacity-building, monitoring, knowledge, technical assistance and communication. ... The Secretariat has in the past tracked the proportion using the methodology as defined and calculated in the Joint IEO-UNDP SGP evaluation of 2008. This proportion remains	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: High In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has (i) incorporated the renewed cost efficiency and reporting protocols in the review of SGP projects as approved by the GEF council (see https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/EN_GEF.C.63.06.Rev_.01_GEF%20Small%20Grants%20Programme%202.0%20Implementation%20Arrangements.pdf) ; (ii) included further specifications and reporting requirements in the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines; and (iii) requesting information	Rating: Substantial The GEF Secretariat's incorporation of the renewed cost efficiency and reporting protocols in the review of SGP projects, new specifications in the 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF website), and request for further monitoring information is acknowledged. The GEF IEO will continue to track the setting of benchmarks for programmatic costs for the next replenishment and the development of a long-term SGP vision.	Rating: High As part of the screening and approval process of implementing agencies' PIFs and CEO endorsement, the GEF secretariat examined closely the renewed cost efficiency and reporting protocols in the review of SGP projects, as approved in the GEF-8 Implementation Arrangements and as required in the Operational Guidelines. As a result, all the approved tranche-2 PIFs have adhered to the grant-non grant ratios, including the 72% grant ratio (up from 62% in GEF-7).	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges the alignment in PIFs with GEF portfolio cost norms. The IEO will monitor the impact on the quality of delivery.

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incurred by UNDP and UNOPS in their capacity as implementing agency and executing agency. Further discussion on this matter between the GEF and the UNDP should take place on the basis of clarification as to the future vision of the SGP. The next GEF replenishment may wish to consider setting benchmarks for programmatic costs in relation to the demands placed on and resources provided to the SGP.	a valuable marker of SGP operations. As per the recommendation, <i>the Secretariat commits to continuing this conversation with UNDP in the context of formulating the longer-term vision of the SGP (see recommendation 1).</i> ... <i>The Secretariat will consult and work with UNDP to, as part of setting the long-term SGP vision, make sure that SGP program resources flowing directly to CSOs are carefully defined in terms of terminology, methodologies and resources. The Secretariat will seek to align with IEO’s recommendation that the next replenishment should consider setting benchmarks for programmatic costs.</i> We also propose that the next replenishment considers setting a proportion of the total SGP financing to flow to CSOs in the context of the overall resource envelope and strategy of the SGP and the GEF-8 GEF SGP Implementation Arrangements to be presented at the 62nd Council. The collaborative conclusion of		that will allow the Secretariat to monitor and report through the PIR, MTR and TE of each SGP global projects. In addition, the GEF Secretariat is looking to capture lessons learned from this process to inform SGP in future replenishments.		These will be closely monitored and tracked through the PIR, MTR and TE of each global project, as specified in the Operational Guidelines.	

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	this effort is expected to inform the GEF SGP Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8 and to serve as a broader SGP guiding framework for future GEF replenishment periods and for project approval.					

4. GEF Support to Innovation – Findings and Lessons ([GEF/E/C.60/02](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: Since many innovations involve risks, the GEF Secretariat should continuously monitor the risk across the GEF portfolio. The GEF Council, together with the GEF Secretariat and STAP, should, based on such assessment, identify an acceptable risk tolerance level for the GEF portfolio. This risk tolerance level should be clearly communicated to the Agencies along with clarity on defining an innovative project and the criteria for selection of innovative projects.	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) To address this recommendation, <i>the Secretariat will seek guidance from both STAP and the GEF Council so as to examine the tradeoffs of risk versus innovation in the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations, with an aim to establishing a clear baseline for risk acceptance in GEF-8 programming and to a risk assessment in the ongoing projects and programs in the GEF portfolio.</i> The Secretariat sees this as the essential first step that can then guide the subsequent steps as identified by this recommendation. In addition to the valued findings of this Evaluation, the Secretariat would also like to highlight a recent STAP document on this topic entitled “Innovation and the GEF”2 - it is therefore envisaged that STAP will be particularly valuable on this recommendation, and the Secretariat plans to work closely with them in this regard.	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: High A Risk Appetite and Framework was drafted by the Secretariat and approved by Council in Feb 2024. Agencies have been briefed on implementation and relevant GEF templates have been updated accordingly.	Rating: Substantial The risk appetite statement and framework approved by the GEF Council in February 2024 sets out expectations about risk preferences across the GEF portfolio, including a high-risk appetite for innovation supporting transformational change. However, moving toward a higher risk profile requires a stronger risk management and support structure. According to the new GEF IEO Risk Evaluation, the increase of the risk appetite not only on paper but on the ground requires an in-depth consultation within the GEF and implementing agencies, greater clarity on the practical application, and instruments to support agencies to manage high-risk projects successfully.	Rating: High A Risk Appetite and Framework was drafted by the Secretariat, as the output of a dedicated Working Group comprising of STAP and Council Members. This was approved by the GEF Council in Feb 2024. Agencies have been briefed on implementation and relevant GEF templates have been updated accordingly. Agencies now routinely provide a risk assessment, mitigants and ratings at PIF/PFD, CEO endorsement and MTR stages. The GEF Secretariat reviews these to ensure adherence to guidance and adequacy of the rating in light of the assessment. Cover Notes to Work Programs now include the related risk profile for Council’s consideration. The 2024 Monitoring Report provided the risk profile of projects under implementation and a series of practical project examples	Rating: Substantial GEF IEO acknowledges progress with the Council-approved Risk Appetite and Framework, the inclusion of risk assessments project milestones, as well as the integration of risk profiles into Work Program Cover Notes and the Monitoring Report. GEF IEO will continue to monitor this action area along with recommendations on the Assessing Portfolio-Level Risk Evaluation.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
					of risk assessment and mitigation measures, as a way to share good practices with Agencies. Further engagement on aligning risk appetite with incentives and programming for Agencies and countries took place in February 2025 during the GEF-9 Technical Advisory Group session on “Innovation and Risk,” featuring experts from climate funds, international NGOs, the private sector, GEF Agencies, and STAP.	
Recommendation 2: The GEF should continue to explore and partner with innovation support programs that may mobilize larger sources of risk capital, and should explicitly encourage adaptive, flexible management of innovative interventions. This could include a separate funding window for innovative projects, as well as adaptive management and flexible funding, such as a contingency component.	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) <i>The GEF will address this recommendation during the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations by exploring with replenishment participants the possibilities for new funding modalities and funding windows that can provide the flexibility that is desired for increasing innovation within the GEF portfolio. We will also explore a dialogue with risk capital entities which may be attracted to invest in GEF projects if flexible and responsible funding</i>	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: Substantial The Innovation Window will be opened for proposals through a competitive process. The Call for Proposals for the GEF-8 Innovation window has been drafted and is currently with the STAP Secretariat for their input. As soon as the Call is finalized, it will be issued in the coming months, with the intention of the first set of projects for the Innovations window to come to the December 2024 Council. This is intended to generate a cohort of innovative projects that will	Rating: Medium The IEO notes the GEF Secretariat’s response and will continue monitoring progress of this action.	Rating: High The Innovation Window was successfully deployed and fully programmed during FY25. As The Call for Proposals generated considerable interest globally, resulting in a total of 128 proposals submitted directly (22) or through GEF agencies (106), with a total funding request of \$244 million. Beyond the GEF agencies, 35 universities, 79 civil society organizations, 48 research institutions, 23 private sector and 27 other development agencies	Rating: Substantial GEF IEO acknowledges the deployment of the Innovation Window with 7 projects selected for funding in December 2024. The IEO will continue to monitor this action area.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>modalities can be found.</i> These steps will build upon ongoing GEF engagements with innovation investments such as the Non-Grants Instruments (NGI), and will incorporate learnings from these as well as from other experiences such as the “Challenge Program” of the LDCF Trust Fund.		help inform and advance GEF-8 priorities. A report on the process and selected cohort of projects will be prepared for Council.		including UN and government partners were identified as directly or indirectly involved. After an initial screening for eligibility, 56 proposals were selected for a detailed review and assessment by the GEF Secretariat and STAP. A final cohort of 27 were considered suitable for further consideration. The cohort covered a wide range of issues, cut across multiple GEF programming areas, geographical balance, and institutional representation, all of which will contribute innovations toward nature-positive, low-carbon, and pollution-free pathways for a healthy planet and healthy people. Unfortunately, the US\$ 12.34 million funding available under the window can only allow for a small number of proposals with the greatest potential for delivering impactful outputs in the near term. Given these limited resources available and drawing from the valuable inputs and recommendation from STAP,	

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					the GEF Secretariat selected a final cohort of seven (7) for funding by considering the following additional needs: substantive focus and global significance of the proposed project; complementarity with other GEF funding windows; balance between GEF agencies; and opportunity to harness the expertise of diverse entities. The selections were announced in December 2024 , and preparation of the Medium-Sized Project proposals is now underway.	
Recommendation 3: The GEF must require monitoring, mid-term reviews, evaluation, and knowledge sharing in all innovative projects, regardless of project size. Regular monitoring and mid-term reviews should be required for innovative projects of all sizes, to allow for learning and adapting as needed in time, and lessons should be captured and shared widely to understand factors underpinning success or failure, prior to scaling up or replication.	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) Firstly, as recommended by the Knowledge Management evaluation, the Secretariat is in the process of developing a partnership-wide KM strategy, the implementation of which will enhance the harnessing and dissemination of lessons on multiple dimensions of GEF projects, including innovation. Secondly, as recommended by the Medium-Size Projects evaluation, the MSP modality will continue to be used for developing innovative projects in particular, and that relevant	Not specified	Rating: Substantial A new Division for Integration and Knowledge is now operational as part of the new GEF Secretariat reorganization. This Division will oversee implementation of the Council approved KM and Learning strategy, including the development of an implementation plan, capacity and expertise, processes, and systems necessary to advance knowledge exchange and sharing across the GEF partnership. Experienced	Rating: Medium The progress in establishing the new division and hiring knowledge management specialists are positive steps. Specific actions to ensure knowledge sharing in and from innovative projects of all sizes are still limited.	Rating: Substantial The GEF Secretariat is taking steps to strengthen knowledge sharing in and from innovative projects of all sizes. In addition to the standard requirement for knowledge management in all projects, the Secretariat is now working with agencies to connect people, streamline processes, and align systems to strengthen knowledge sharing from GEF investments. A specific focus has been on programs, where such	Rating: Medium The IEO notes the progress, including the inclusion of innovation-related tags in GEF Portal, as well as activities initiated as part of the KM&L Strategy implementation. The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress of this effort.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	lessons will be provided from the monitoring of those projects. Finally, with an eye to the continued improvement of the GEF Portal to serve the expanding needs of the GEF partnership, <i>the Secretariat can consider several portal enhancements that can facilitate enhanced learning related to innovative projects through the development of specific fields and tags for relevant data capture.</i>		knowledge management specialists will be added to this team in 2024 as part of the GEF’s ongoing staffing-up exercise.		engagement is creating opportunities for portfolio-level synthesis of emerging lessons. Specific actions include expert workshops on thematic issues co-organized with agencies, learning missions by GEF Secretariat staff to engage with stakeholders, and synthesis reports to disseminate lessons. Building on this experience, the GEF Secretariat has developed and deployed principles to further strengthen such learning and knowledge sharing across programs by making the coordination platforms interoperable. With the new Innovation Window, the GEF Secretariat is now in position to crowd-in diverse entities with strong capability and experience for contribution knowledge that will advance innovative approaches and solutions to global environmental challenges. This will be reflected in the design and implementation of the MSPs that benefited from the window.	

5. Evaluation of the Country Support Programme ([GEF/E/C.60/03](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: Build on current efforts to collaborate with other global environmental funds. To help countries to respond better to the commitments of countries vis-à-vis the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements that the GEF is supporting along with other global funds, CSP management should build further on past efforts to collaborate on readiness activities with other funds. Overall, the management of the CSP should continue to monitor developments to identify where substantive opportunities for collaboration can be established beyond the current efforts.”	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) The Secretariat has already been taking steps towards closer collaboration with other funds and will intensify these efforts in response to this recommendation. The GEF CEO has stated as one of his goals a broad relation of complementarity with related funds, in particular the Green Climate Fund (GCF). To this end, a parallel document is being presented for discussion and consideration at the current 60th Council meeting that describes the agreement reached between the GEF and GCF Secretariats and sets the overarching framework for deeper cooperation between the two funds. Within this framework, <i>the CSP will explore options to enhance collaboration in a manner that most effectively build capacities of OFPs and other stakeholders to access GEF resources and to learn about GEF policies and guidelines. Any progress will be reflected in the annual joint progress report that will be submitted</i>	On annual basis	Rating: Substantial The Secretariat continues to take steps towards closer collaboration with other funds. This is embodied through the Long-Term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence and Collaboration between the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility, on which annual updates are provided to Council. The GEF Secretariat has also engaged in several collaborative efforts with the 4 climate funds (GEF, GCF, CIF and AF) such as a joint statement issued at COP-28 in December 2023 and the co-hosting of a Pavilion among the 4 funds at COP-28. A detailed action plan is under development to enhance access and impact along specific dimensions. The GEF Secretariat is also embarking on collaborative efforts with the Conservation Trust Funds across the LAC and Africa. Finally, a 4 day workshop was held in April at the GEF offices to advance the common plan to be presented to GF council in June 2024.	Rating: Substantial The GEF Secretariat embarked in a series of activities with other funds, joining efforts to promote the topics related to Climate Finance, challenges in BD and learning programs aimed to the countries in the South.	Rating: High The Secretariat has continued to advance this agenda by intensifying the work on collaboration, complementarity and coherence over the last year. Following the joint statement between GEF, GCF CIF and AF, the GEF convened an in-person week-long retreat at the GEF Secretariat offices in Q2 2024, to prepare a joint action plan aimed at further strengthening collaboration and simplify access to funding for developing countries. A governance mechanism, including a taskforce that meets regularly, thematic working groups and a Committee of the Fund's Heads was established its governance. The Committee of the Heads have been meeting regularly, and regular updates have been offered to the respective governing bodies of the 4 funds. At the UNFCCC COP-29 in December 2024 the Funds co-hosted a joint Pavilion, showcasing their collaborative work.	Rating: Substantial The improvements made by the Secretariat in fostering collaboration, coherence, and streamlined processes are notable. It seems like the joint efforts of the GEF, GCF, CIF, and AF are setting a new standard for collective action. The creation of a governance mechanism with a taskforce and regular updates demonstrates a commitment to accountability and shared goals. The progress showcased at COP-29, including the joint Pavilion, reflects the tangible outcomes of these collaborative efforts. Establishing investment platforms in multiple African countries aligns well with the regional development goals, and the plan for expansion highlights an ambitious yet necessary vision for broader impact.

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	<i>to both the GEF Council and the GCF Board.</i> The experiences and lessons from this initiative as it develops, can serve as guidance for possible collaborations with other global environmental funds as appropriate and relevant.				In addition, over the reporting period the GEF has actively engaged with the IMF, the World Bank, Regional MDBs and other international agencies and bilateral donors to advance collaborative efforts to establish national investment platforms in four countries, including Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, Madagascar and Tanzania. Initial results have been presented at COP29 and are described in series of IMF announcements. The GEF Secretariat intends to continue this important engagement going forward, including to expand it to additional countries, and to strengthen the linkages with the Country Engagement Strategy’s workplan and its expected outcomes.	
Recommendation 3: Strengthen technical expertise in the CSP team and monitoring and reporting systems. CSP management should improve the program’s dedicated technical capabilities and its ability to provide more localized support, to meet the high demands placed on the CSP team across countries and	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) As discussed in response to recommendation [2] above, the Secretariat is in the process of developing a comprehensive program strategy for the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations. Resulting from the scope of this strategy, <i>the Secretariat</i>	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: Substantial The GEF Secretariat is in the process of operationalizing the GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy (CES), which builds upon and supersedes the Country Support Program. As a result, all recommendations of the CSP evaluation will now be realized through the Country	Rating: Medium The GEF Secretariat has organized a series of expanded constituency workshops and other activities, in an in person and virtual format, as planned in the Country Engagement Strategy (CES). However, the fully implementation of the CES has not advanced as	Rating: Substantial As of March 2025, the full set of activities envisioned in the Country Engagement Strategy have been put in motion. Some of these actions, such as direct financial support to OFPs for portfolio management took a lot of due diligence to find the correct modality to use so that	Rating: Substantial The implementation of the Country Engagement Strategy is on a very promising track. The effort to ensure smooth financial support for OFPs while minimizing bureaucracy is a significant achievement—it’s always

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
regions. In light of the insufficient program data management and reporting, CSP management should also put in place results-based data management, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems to track the use of resources, as well as activities, outcomes, and impacts. These systems should provide the basis for more systematic and comprehensive reporting at each GEF cycle to both GEF management and the GEF Council.	<i>will also elaborate on any further technical team skill gaps to meet the high demands for more localized support that has been identified by the Evaluation. In response to this recommendation, this strategy will elaborate a logical framework, and this framework will also include proposed monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems for the program.</i>		Engagement Strategy. A report on implementation of the GEF-8 CES was provided to the 66 th GEF Council in February 2024, including details on how the financial resources are being utilized. The Secretariat continues to implement the GEF-8 CES and closely monitor its various budget lines. In parallel, the GEF Secretariat is in the middle of its internal restructuring exercise, where the CES strategy is being implemented through the work of several Divisions including the Programming Division and the General Management Division. The GEF Secretariat is in the process of staffing-up and several of the new positions will directly contribute to the CES.	quickly as expected, with only a handful of regional activities during FY24.	funds can easily flow from the GEF to the OFPs with minimal bureaucracy. The agreements are now in place, and we anticipate that resources will start to reach OFPs in the coming weeks. This type of support will also be jointly deployed with regional workshops, bringing together all the OFPs to further serve as information and capacity-building events and as a continuous channel for OFPs support. This will be complemented with the proactive outreach by the technical regional teams in the Programming Division, Extended Constituency Workshops, technical missions, introduction seminar, etc. A full report of the Implementation Progress of the Country Engagement Strategy was presented to the GEF council in December of 2024.	a challenge to balance efficiency with due diligence. It’s exciting that the agreements are in place and resources are expected to reach the OFPs soon. The combined approach of financial support, regional workshops, and proactive outreach seems like a holistic way to empower OFPs while building their capacity. These steps should not only support immediate needs but also foster longer-term resilience and success.

6. Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach to Address the Drivers of Environmental Degradation ([GEF/E/C.60/04/Rev.01](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: To make the ongoing efforts in aggregate program-level reporting effective, the GEF Secretariat must clarify program-level reporting requirements for Lead Agencies. The value-added potential of integrated programming is there but must be measured. Program-level monitoring and reporting requirements must be better codified in project cycle practices. Global and regional coordination projects should not be required to report on global environment benefits in all cases. Some relevant intermediate results linked to the program theory of change—not just global environment benefits—should be aggregable across child projects	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) To address the recommendation, <i>the Secretariat will consider that the following requirements are codified in the guidelines specifically for the integrated programs:</i> a) Coordination child projects to be designed alongside the Program Framework Document to ensure that program priorities including theory of change, results framework, and governance mechanisms are well established at the time of PFD submission for Work Program inclusion and Council approval, b) Coordination child projects to be exempt from direct contributions to core indicator targets and instead focus primarily on aggregating results across child projects under the program, c) Country / thematic child projects approved as a cohort under integrated programs to follow as close as possible similar timelines to CEO	Not specified	Rating: High The Project Cycle Guideline includes a focus on the Programmatic Approach, which is the modality used for integrated programs. Hence most of the important aspects identified in the Annex are embedded within the guidelines. These will be further developed and improved as we continue to learn from the programs.	Rating: Substantial GEF Secretariat’s response is acknowledged. It would be good that these requirements are also integrated in a revised version of the GEF Project Cycle Guidelines on programs, as indicated in the GEF Secretariat’s response last year.	Rating: High The GEF Secretariat has taken steps toward formalizing a template for program-level reporting. A full draft of the template with detailed instructions has been prepared, and an initial consultation with GEF agencies conducted. A report submission deadline will be indicated in a revised version of the Monitoring Policy to be presented for Council approval in June 2025. Once finalized, the template will be made available to Agencies along with a cover note aimed to guide Agencies in completing the report. This program progress report will be mentioned in the project cycle guidelines and programmed into the GEF portal where agencies can provide input directly. Since GEF-8, global projects in Integrated Programs must design a program-wide results framework, tracking additional indicators beyond	Rating: Substantial Progress in developing a template for program-level reporting is noted. The planned inclusion of program level reporting in the Monitoring Policy, in the project cycle guidelines and GEF Portal are also noted. Once included, this recommendation can be graduated.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	endorsement, and milestones for monitoring and reporting during implementation.				GEF core indicators across child projects. Since GEF-8, none of the child project contributes core indicator targets. Finally, most PFDs of Integrated Programs have been approved as one package, enhancing the ability of child projects to follow very similar implementation schedule.	

7. Evaluation of GEF Engagement with Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises ([GEF/E/C.60/05](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: MSMEs vary in their capacities and constraints and GEF support should appropriately address the context-specific needs, barriers, and economic viability in projects involving the private sector. GEF engagement with MSMEs may not only or necessarily be through increasing their access to financing, but by introducing low-cost, context-appropriate practices and technologies they can easily adopt, and by facilitating regulations and administrative reforms required to access resources. Increasing access to financing is appropriate where a minimum level of resources already exists, and the higher amount of investment is needed to generate a higher magnitude of global environmental benefits. Partnering with local, established organizations may provide long-term support that increases the likelihood of global environmental benefits being sustained,	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) In implementing Recommendation [1], the Agencies could consider how the private sector actors themselves can play a key role by introducing low-cost, context-appropriate practices and technologies that can be easily adopted and through the provision of additional financial resources. <i>This could be undertaken through consultations and leverage key private sector networks and platforms that include MSMEs. Technologies in ICT and digital applications could also be employed to facilitate MSME engagement and will be a topic for the GEFs informal digital working group and as key component of private sector engagement in GEF-8.</i>	GEF-8	Rating: Substantial Throughout the reporting period the general findings of the evaluation report have been circulated have been promoted and included in the discussions for project design. There has been most interest in the development and incorporation of low-cost, context appropriate practices and technologies has been in those IPs in which smallholders, medium enterprises and small business are engaged in larger global value chains. These IPs include the Blue and Green Islands, the Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution, Food Systems, Eliminating Chemicals from Hazardous Supply Chains and Sustainable Cities. In each case, new business models, practices and initiatives that are specifically targeting the MSME sector are being incorporated into project designs. Such	Rating: Substantial The increased focus on systems (e.g. value chain approach, circular economy) and more integrated roles for the private sector in the GEF-8 Programming indicate greater attention to implementing pilots that engage MSMEs in their particular contexts. The outcomes of this more MSME-conscious approach can be tracked to see if MSMEs are indeed adopting--and contributing to more global	Rating: Substantial The introduction of low-cost, context-appropriate practices and technologies along with important accompanying training and capacity development programs has been a strong component of GEF’s work with the private sector during the period. While many of the IPs have an upstream value chain focus that supports the deployment of new technologies and practices as part of supply chain carbon reductions or nature positive initiatives with larger corporates, it is in the chemicals and waste focal area and the LDC Fund where these measures with MSMEs are especially evident. This frequently involves the training of farmers and fishers (GEF project ID: 10411 and 4274 are excellent examples) in new or innovative practices such as fish net modifications, agroforestry techniques or aquaculture development.	Rating: Substantial As noted in the last IEO assessment, GEF-8 Programming appears to engage a broader range of stakeholders as part of a more systems-focused approach. The examples provided show evidence of this design that engages MSMEs through innovative practices. The GEF needs to continue to monitor technology uptake and obtain feedback from users on the financial and logistical feasibility as well as contextual appropriateness of these technologies. This feedback will be critical to ensure sustainability of this uptake.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
mainstreamed and/or scaled up.			examples include re-use and refill systems for small scale businesses and local entrepreneurs, localized and technology appropriate aquaculture operations, sustainable grazing methods for fiber production and small scale growing of sustainable materials in textile use. The focus on value chain approaches and the requirements of larger business to be accountable for their supply chain impacts (scope III emissions) has placed a strong emphasis on developing context specific resources for SMEs and the larger private sector entities are making strong efforts to build supply chain resilience post covid by investing upstream into such practices and technologies. In such cases, the policies, incentives and approaches that are needed to make these resources available are being incorporated into the relevant components of the project design and will be the subject of stakeholder		In the chemicals and waste focal area, there is a continued major emphasis on shifting communities through the GEF Gold program, mostly comprised of the MSME sector, towards more sustainable gold mining practices and to use technologies and methods that do not require mercury. The uptake success of these models requires that the approaches are low-cost, context-appropriate practices which drives the scaling of these solutions, and brings the ASGM sector closer to formal, structured business models. In addressing plastic pollution, <i>The Towards a more circular Uruguay (Uruguay + Circular)</i> (GEF Project ID: 11434) FSP is an excellent example which incorporates a competitive fund mechanism to stimulate innovative proposals that promote the development of solutions for the reduction of plastics (including single-use plastics) in micro, small and medium size business. This competitive fund will consider initiatives that introduce eco-design, substitution, sustainab	

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
			consultations during the design process.		le production and safe circularity principles for plastic products of relevance within the country. GEF-8 also includes another innovative financing program targeting the MSME communities under the Challenge Program for the SGP (GEF project ID: 11757) which includes partnering with local, established organizations to provide long-term support that increases the likelihood of global environmental benefits being sustained, mainstreamed and/or scaled up. This project is being implemented with the inclusion of businesses and research organizations which can provide new solutions, business models and practices in the MSME context.	
Recommendation 2: In addition to tracking environmental outcomes, GEF projects should design for and monitor social and economic benefits that engage the private sector, including MSMEs.	Partially Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) In the context of the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations, the GEF Secretariat has started work on the identification of new metrics that can help assess the contribution to improving the well-being of the people	GEF-8	Rating: Medium The GEF approach is to design for nature at the center of human well-being and to generate multiple global and local environmental and societal benefits. Placing nature at the center of the GEF strategy under a “one health” approach (human and	Rating: Medium Since GEF-7, the GEF has been giving more attention to socioeconomic benefits/ human well-being as part of its approach alongside securing global environmental benefits. While this has not yet translated to indicators at the corporate level, the	Rating: Substantial Increasingly the private sector is seeking to deliver on a broad range of non-financial goals and targets, specifically the social and economic benefits related to the SDGs, to the requirements of investors and to address the fundamental inequities in	Rating: Medium As noted in the last assessment and in the GEFSEC’s current assessment, there is increasing attention on measuring social and economic benefits in the GEF. While gender inclusion has seen more progress, the integration of concrete

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	across the portfolio. This includes identifying metrics detailing the socioeconomic characteristics of these beneficiaries. They could relate to aspects such as livelihoods, jobs, and health – and to this end, the GEF Secretariat appreciates the information contained in “Table 9, Social and economic benefits” intended to be generated by MSME projects and extent of achievement of the MSME Evaluation as a practical example list of co-benefits that can be used as a platform for the further articulation of the socio-economic results framework for GEF-8. As outlined in paragraph 5, this evaluation discusses the fact that “previous evaluations have noted that social and economic benefits can address constraints and serve as an incentive for these MSMEs to adopt and sustain environment-friendly sustainable technologies or practices, eventually allowing environmental benefits to be scaled up”. However, this needs to be accompanied by careful consideration during		planetary health) builds in positive social and economic outcomes at the design stage. The engagement of large businesses, MNCs and the finance sector has helped to ensure that broader SDG goals and targets related to social and economic benefits are included in their project engagement. While the quantification of environmental benefits remains the focus, new metrics and a socio-economic result framework for GEF-8 is under development. The GEF now reports annually on gender specific private sector metrics to account for the scale and diversity of women’s private sector enterprises that support livelihoods and gender equity goals and targets.	inclusion of gender-specific metrics for GEF-supported private sector activities is progress in this direction.	society that drive environmental degradation. The private sector has developed its approach from a “doing no harm” or compliance-based approach of eliminating child or forced labor towards more of a community capacity building model focusing on the benefits provided to communities. Engaging in this way with the private sector in the GEF project portfolio is one channel that social and economic benefits can be designed into projects and measured accordingly. As the GEF focuses more on the “Whole of Society” approach, there is a stronger, more inclusive approach to the needs of local communities, indigenous peoples, women and youth which will emphasize project design and monitoring for social and environmental benefits including special provision for the MSME sector. Under the <i>Healthy Planet, Healthy People</i> framework, GEF-8 adopted whole-of-society and inclusive	socioeconomic indicators in the GEF’s results framework and reporting have yet to be formally adopted in GEF-9, during which action on this recommendation should be assessed again.

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	the project planning and design phase in order to ensure that social and environmental benefits do not become the primary outcomes sought from the project. Relatedly, in considering the implementation of Recommendation [2], the GEF Secretariat agrees with Conclusion 3 (d) that private sector engagement is influenced by several project design characteristics, the quality of project preparation, and the project management teams’ and partners’ relevant technical expertise. To this end, <i>the GEF Secretariat will continue to work with Agencies to ensure high quality project preparation, both in general and on this dimension. This will involve consulting a wide range of stakeholders including the broader private sector, and conducting sufficient assessment of the context as inputs to project design taking into account MSMEs.</i>				approaches and committed to improving the tracking of socio-economic co-benefits. As part of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework, one of five action areas is “better measuring co-benefits improving human well-being” (GEF/R.08/31). To advance this and address a related Replenishment commitment (GEF/R.08/31), the GEF Secretariat outlined in a Council document (GEF/C.66/12) how socio-economic co-benefits are measured and proposed improvements, including standardized indicators and alternative methods like geospatial analysis. In this same Council document on better tracking socio-economic co-benefits, a project review on a sample of GEF-7 projects indicates that 35 percent of projects include social co-benefits in their results framework, 26 percent have economic co-benefits, 17 percent contribute to market development and 55 percent to cross-cutting areas— inclusion, empowerment, institutional capacity, gender equality.	

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					It should also be noted that as part of The GEF Small Grants Programme 2.0 Operational Guidelines for GEF-8 (https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-05/GEF%20SGP_Operational_Guidelines_Feb2024.pdf), a new standard outcome level indicator was introduced in the SGP 2.0 Results Framework tracking specifically the number of direct beneficiaries with diversified, strengthened livelihoods and/or sources of income. Gender considerations are also strongly evident in GEF programs with the MSME sector, often where women’s leadership in the private sector drives more sustainable business practices and gender equality in the workplace, especially in the waste management sector where women often make up the majority of the workforce, especially in the informal economy. These are tracked and reported in GEF’s Annual	

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					Report on Private Sector Engagement.	

8. Evaluation of Institutional Policies and Engagement of the GEF ([GEF/E/C.60/06](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: The Secretariat should prepare an overarching narrative for the three policies under the banner of “inclusion”, make explicit the complementarities across the policies, their contribution to the GEF program, and their tie-in to the GEF project cycle. As the policies progress through implementation, the Secretariat should build capability to track inclusion at a project level in a way that allows GEF to analyze policy impact at a portfolio level.	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) While we agree on the merits of tracking inclusion at the project level, we will need to explore how and where the Secretariat can effectively “build capability” for this as the Secretariat does not have an implementation role at the project level. The Secretariat concurs with the IEO, however, that the GEF should move toward a framework to better “analyze policy impact at a portfolio level” and we commit to working with the Agencies on this during GEF-8. <i>The Secretariat expects that early commitments and approaches to move in this direction will be included in the GEF-8 replenishment documents.</i>	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: High The Gap Analysis was completed and presented to Council for information in June 2023. Subsequent deliberation by Council in Feb 2024 resulted in a Council request to confirm a timeline for policy/guideline adjustments, if any. This will be presented to the June 2024 Council.	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges the Gap Analysis and notes the focus on the following stakeholder groups that historically have received less attention: youth as changemakers; child protection; persons with disabilities and sexual and gender minorities. The IEO also notes the plans to confirm whether policy/guideline adjustments are necessary and will monitor these plans. The IEO notes that the GEF has not indicated how it will analyze policy impact at a portfolio level.	Rating: High The GEF Secretariat presented the Gap Analysis of GEF Policies and Key Social Inclusion Issues - Timetable for Policy Actions (GEF/C.67/06) in June 2024. Among the actions carried out includes a series of consultations with experts and stakeholders including in intergovernmental conferences (COPs) and at the GEF-9 Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting where the GEF Secretariat engaged with stakeholders (youth, women, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, other gender groups, on how to better integrate social inclusion considerations in GEF programming. Recommendations from those consultations will inform the GEF’s Whole of Society approach for GEF-9. The GEF provides routine analysis on the portfolio progress seen under each of	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes the substantial progress on building the narrative around social inclusion to include gender, youth, and people with disabilities and additional efforts including knowledge exchange to engage and build momentum around the issue. IEO notes the additional reporting/narrative on lessons emerging from MTRs and TE in annual progress reports on gender and ESS, as well as the additional reporting in the risk appetite and monitoring reports. Once the additional monitoring information on ESS implementation is integrated this recommendation can be graduated.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
					these policies, which altogether amounts to comprehensive reporting on their collective impact. Annual portfolio progress reports on gender and ESS constitute how the GEF tracks the overall implementation and results of these policies at portfolio level across the key milestones of the project cycle. In the context of the implementation of the recently introduced GEF Risk Appetite, portfolio analysis on stakeholder engagement and ESS are also now provided in the Monitoring Report, also covering the PIF, CEO endorsement and MTR stages. In addition, the Monitoring Report provides a dedicated sub-section on gender results. In the context of the joint climate funds’ action plan as contained in the document Relations with the Conventions and Other International Institutions: Annex II. The Multilateral Climate Funds Action Plan on Complementarity and Coherence, (GEF/C.67/07), May 17, 2024, Area #3: <i>Knowledge exchange and</i>	

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
					<i>communications of the Action Plan</i> includes the following gender and inclusion action to be carried out by 2026: <i>Create a knowledge product that analyses evidence on the social, economic and environmental benefits of strong gender and social inclusion elements within climate investments. This will identify success factors, best practices, and lessons learned to improve project design and implementation.</i> To build capability to track inclusion at the project level, the ESS Policy will be revised to require including monitoring information on implementation of an environmental and social risk management plan in the Project Implementation Reports.	
Recommendation 2: The Secretariat should develop a knowledge sharing effort that leverages expertise within the Partnership to highlight approaches for addressing safeguards implementation issues related to the updated	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) Considering the emerging experiences and expertise within the GEF Agencies, <i>the Secretariat will explore cost-effective ways to take advantage of its position as</i>	On annual basis	Rating: Substantial The KM and Learning Strategy has been Council approved and is now under implementation phase. With the new Division for Integration and Knowledge	Rating: Medium The IEO notes that the KM and Learning Strategy’s objective 2: ‘Increase knowledge flows through platforms’ indicates that it will hold regional events on	Rating: Substantial In the Progress Report on the Implementation of the GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF/C.68/Inf.08), “[t]he GEF Secretariat is committed to	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges the planned efforts to improve knowledge sharing efforts on safeguards implementation as well as plans to strengthen

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
ESS policy. Related to the IEO’s evaluation on Knowledge Management, the Secretariat should incorporate: a) inclusion practice content; b) Environment and Social Safeguards implementation topics within the scope of the Secretariat’s forthcoming KM strategy.	<i>knowledge broker, utilizing existing platforms such as the Country Support Program, GEF Agency Retreats, virtual courses and learning events to leverage existing knowledge and facilitate learning across Agencies and the GEF Partnership more broadly. The Secretariat will also explore opportunities to highlight the importance of this area of work in the forthcoming Knowledge and Learning Strategy being developed in response to the earlier IEO Evaluation on Knowledge Management.</i> Progress on this effort will be reported in the Secretariat’s annual Progress Report on the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards.		operational, GEF Secretariat is now well-positioned to strengthen capacity and expertise, processes, and systems necessary to advance knowledge exchange and sharing across the GEF partnership.	programming and policy. Beyond this reference to an event on policy, there is no specific mention of content related to inclusion or ESS policy implementation specifically. The IEO will monitor implementation of the KM strategy to assess whether the two content areas recommended by the evaluation are covered in KM activities.	<i>enhancing its role as a knowledge hub in alignment with the GEF Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning, by facilitating exchange of lessons learned in ESS implementation.”</i> The GEF Webinar Series on Conflict sensitive approaches in projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations, including particular attention to inclusion of the most vulnerable populations, is scheduled in April and May 2025 along the line of the KM&L Strategy. The Partnership Division engages regularly with the climate funds and the GEF Gender Partnership on the issue of inclusion. The Partnership Division is working with the KMI Division on ways to strengthen capacity and share knowledge on inclusion in GEF projects in the context of ongoing elaboration of GEF’s Whole of Society Approach and GEF-9 replenishment.	capacity and share knowledge on inclusion in GEF projects in the context of the new GEF-9 strategy.
Recommendation 3: The Secretariat should a) reset the GEF’s relationship with the	Partially Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)	62nd GEF Council meeting, June 2022	Rating: Medium	Rating: Medium	Rating: Substantial	Rating: Medium

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
CSO Network with clarity on roles and responsibilities, and b) recalibrate the IPAG mechanism for increased strategic impact. In both instances, the Secretariat should draw upon the growing body of knowledge on civil society outreach practices, the opportunities inherent in the policies to promote inclusion, and the strategic directions indicated for GEF-8.	The Secretariat strongly believes in the importance of civil society engagement as an important lever for delivering global environmental benefits. It concurs with the IEO's findings on the need for a greater clarity on roles and responsibilities between the Secretariat and the CSO Network. The Secretariat, however, would like to highlight that the current relationship is guided, at the strategic level, by the "Updated Vision to Enhance Civil Society Engagement with the GEF"7 based on the results of an ad hoc working group of interested Council Members. <i>The Secretariat proposes to develop more detailed guidelines within the approach defined by the vision statement, working with representatives of the GEF CSO network and the broader GEF partnership to formulate greater clarity on the GEF's engagement with civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities moving forward and reporting to Council on the outcome. The Secretariat proposes, as a first step, to</i>		In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has continued to work with the CSO Network and the external consultant to support the Network's interest to address shortcomings identified in the IEO evaluation and opportunities to modernize their operation. In the fall of 2023, there were some positive steps to implement a plan of action based on the findings and recommendations of the consultancy. It should be noted, however, that the CSO Network elections of a new chair and regional focal points that commenced in the end of 2023, resulted in a serious setback due to complaints and allegations of irregularities. In the meanwhile, the GEF Secretariat has continued efforts to engage civil society, including at the GEF-7 Assembly and Partnership Forum, as well as through Extended Constituency Meetings and other events.	The IEO notes the ongoing engagement with the CSO Network, and the steps toward a plan of action. It also notes the CSO Network elections and subsequent changes in leadership. The IEO will continue to monitor progress toward the recommendations of this evaluation, including creation of guidelines that provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the CSO Network.	The GEF Secretariat has continued supporting regular interactions and meetings with the GEF CSO Network. It has been noted that the CSO Network has, since the selection of a new Chair, made investments to strengthen its operations and governance as well as good progress developing a clear and practical work plan, including updates to its membership management and communication. These improvements are welcome by the GEF Secretariat, that in the meanwhile continues to consult and extend opportunities for the CSO network to actively participate in ECWs and other GEF activities, including participating the Global SGP Steering Committee. Moreover, the GEF Secretariat facilitated consultations with the Network related to the GEF-7 TAG meetings and a dedicated session focused on stocktaking and visioning related to GEF's engagement and financing to civil society	The IEO notes that in spite of governance changes within the CSO Network the GEF Secretariat has made efforts to continue to engage civil society in GEF governance, planning and strategy. Clarity on roles and responsibilities between the Secretariat and CSO Network is still lacking. IEO notes there has been no updates on the future directions of IPAG, as described in the specified actions agreed upon by management.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>carry out a review of similar organizations’ civil society outreach practices, in consultation with the GEF CSO Network and the broader GEF Partnership, and present the findings of this analysis and early recommendations to the GEF Council for their consideration at the 62nd Council meeting.</i> The Secretariat greatly values the role of the IPAG as a key actor in the GEF Partnership and welcomes the IEO’s many positive findings in this regard. ... In response to this recommendation, <i>the Secretariat commits to a continued engagement with the IPAG in both higher-level strategic GEF-8 programming dimensions and in specific projects and programs as most relevant, and including regular engagement with the CEO.</i> The Secretariat would like to highlight that discussions on potential changes in IPAG modalities and membership composition had in fact started in 2019. However, the inability to conduct face-to-face meetings due to the pandemic has				and the GEF-whole-of-society approach.	

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	considerably slowed this process, particularly with respect to changes in membership structure. In response to this recommendation, <i>the Secretariat will restart the discussions within these constraints, with the future directions of IPAG to be guided in detail by the IPAG itself. The Secretariat will also enhance its monitoring of engagement with indigenous peoples: as part of the keyword taxonomy in the Portal, every project and program can be tagged as including indigenous peoples which makes it convenient to identify relevant projects</i> (though it should be noted that differing definitions of indigenous peoples and local communities by national governments can complicate such tracking).					

9. Study on Resilience, Climate Change Adaptation and Climate Risks in the GEF Trust Fund ([GEF/E/C.62/03](#)), June 2022 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: Develop guidance on climate risk mitigation measures.	Agreed (GEF/C.62/13/Rev.01) As paragraph 1 of the study mentions, "Climate risk screening (CRS) was mandated for all projects in GEF-7, with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) releasing CRS guidelines and the GEF Secretariat launching a successful GEF Agency training and collaboration event." The Secretariat would also like to point to the GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy ¹ , mentioned in paragraph 28 of the study, which states that "Short- and long-term risks posed by climate change and other natural hazards are considered systematically in the screening, assessment and planning processes described in paragraphs 4.a.–g. above, based on established methodologies, and significant risks and potential impacts are addressed throughout the design and implementation of projects and programs." <i>The Secretariat will continue to apply this Policy to its projects</i>	GEF-8, on annual basis	Rating: High The GEF Secretariat elevated the requirement to provide a climate risk screening by introducing a dedicated risk category in the new risk table introduced in GEF-8 templates for projects and programs. Training events were provided to Agencies as these templates were first introduced. This focus on climate risk was further enhanced with the Council endorsement of the GEF Risk Appetite (GEF/C.66/13) which includes a dedicated risk category on Climate risk screening and was developed as part of a working group composed of representatives from Council, STAP and the GEF Secretariat. The description of the Climate risk category in Annex B of the Council document makes explicit mention of STAP's foundational work on the matter as a reference and guiding source. The development of this Risk Appetite framework benefited	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat's continued efforts in applying the GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy, elevating the climate risk screening requirement, facilitating inter-Agency dialogue, and Council's approval of the GEF Risk Appetite statement and framework. The GEF Secretariat is encouraged to report annually to Council on its progress.	Rating: High The GEF Secretariat continued to monitor the implementation of the requirement to provide a climate risk screening in GEF projects, including through the dedicated risk category of the risk table introduced in GEF-8 templates for projects and programs. Agencies were trained when these templates were first introduced, with specific reference to the STAP's foundational work on the key steps to perform climate risk screening. The GEF Risk Appetite is now under full implementation, and Agencies are providing a risk assessment and mitigants on climate risk in PIF/PFD submissions, CEO endorsement requests and Mid-Term Reviews. Reporting on the average risk ratings under this category at PIF/PFD stage, which feeds into the broader Risk Dimension, is made available in the Cover Notes to Work Programs for the main GEF Trust Fund and	Rating: High The GEF Secretariat has executed its action plan, integrating climate risk screening across the GEF-8 project cycle. Climate risk mitigation is now institutionalized. This recommendation will be graduated.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>and programs, as well as to mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations, and to report annually to Council on its progress.</i> As the 2019 STAP guidance on climate risk screening sets out, Agencies are to outline in project documents if "resilience practices and measures to address projected climate change and its impacts have been considered" and how they will be addressed. GEF Agencies, who are in charge of project design and close to the project stakeholders, are therefore best positioned to develop context-specific climate risk mitigation measures and adjust the project design to ensure that the variety of climate risks that a project can face are adequately factored in. <i>Going forward, the GEF Secretariat will continue facilitating inter-Agency dialogue during GEF-8 in order to enhance cross-pollination on best practices in climate risk-responsive project design of GEF operations.</i>		from the sharing of climate risk screening practices and discussions with All Agencies to inform the work of the Working Group on the GEF Risk Appetite. Further to Council endorsement of the GEF Risk Appetite, bilateral meetings took place with each Agency to sensitize them on the requirements of the implementation of the new risk framework.		LDCF/SCFF separately, as well as across project cycle milestones for the family of funds and disaggregated by focal area, region and country groups, in the Monitoring Report.	

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 2: Improve the monitoring of resilience in GEF projects, with attention to the context of each focal area.	Partially Agreed (GEF/C.62/13/Rev.01) Furthermore, the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations were clear in requesting the GEF Secretariat to work towards streamlining the GEF project cycle into a more comprehensive and integrated framework and to implement efficiency measures, in line with the IEO OPS-7 recommendations. The OPS-7 recommendations on administrative processes noted that “the preparation and approval of GEF projects can take many years, given the substantial requirements, processes, and procedures. To be more dynamic and transformative, the GEF will need to adjust these processes so funds can be accessed, and projects move toward implementation, more readily— particularly in the post-pandemic period”. <i>The GEF Secretariat’s Management Response to this recommendation indicated the clear commitment by the Secretariat to revisit, over the coming months, its suite of</i>	GEF-8	Rating: Substantial Agencies submit updates on climate risk screenings and related mitigation measures throughout the project lifecycle under the implementation of the GEF Risk Appetite, which requires to provide a climate risk assessment and an update on the design and implementation of mitigation measures at PIF, CEO endorsement and the Mid-Term Review milestones This information is provided directly through dedicated fields in the GEF Portal by Agencies, allowing in turn to conduct analyses focused on climate risk and resilience measures. This progress across projects and programs will be documented in different ways, as per paragraphs 18 of the GEF Risk Appetite document: each Work Program submission to Council will include a descriptive summary analysis of the risk profile of that Work Program, and the GEF Monitoring Report will provide analyses on risk profile	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges these ongoing efforts and will continue to monitor the next steps and the documentation of the process.	Rating: Substantial Regarding the monitoring of climate risk, GEF Agencies continued to submit updates, including the related mitigation measures, throughout the project lifecycle. Information is provided directly through dedicated fields in the GEF Portal by Agencies. This fits within the GEF Risk Appetite, which requires to provide a climate risk assessment and an update on the design and implementation of mitigation measures at PIF, CEO endorsement and the Mid-Term Review milestones. Work Program submission to Council continued to include a descriptive summary analysis of the risk profile of that Work Program, and the GEF Monitoring Report complements this with analyses on risk profile disaggregated by segments of the GEF portfolio. The GEF Secretariat has also been working with Agencies to identify land use and vegetation changes affected, in part, by climate and weather patterns that can be	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat’s progress in advancing resilience monitoring and will continue to track the full implementation of the action area.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>policies, procedures, operations, and guidelines to determine what adjustments need to be made to streamline the project cycle and increase efficiency. Therefore, rather than adding any new measures to monitor climate resilience benefits, the Secretariat will strengthen the use of the existing policy provisions in order to improve the monitoring of resilience in GEF projects, and within the context of the limitations articulated above. The Secretariat will work with GEF Agencies to identify ways to collect more granular information through the existing reporting systems on how climate risk mitigation measures are being incorporated in GEF project design and, when possible, indicating if any impact can be observed with respect to the influence that such mitigation measures may have had on the project outcomes.</i>		disaggregated by segments of the GEF portfolio. With regards to socio-economic metrics, it is also relevant to highlight the consideration by the GEF Council at its 66th session in February 2024, of the paper titled “Tracking and Measuring the Socio-Economic Co-Benefits of GEF Investments. The paper offers an overview of how socio-economic co-benefits are captured by the GEF and presents a way forward to improve their tracking. The paper was endorsed by the GEF Council and the Secretariat requested to proceed on the proposed next steps.		identified through satellite imagery. This led notably to Figure 4 and related text in the 2024 Monitoring Report, showing the impact of pasture management on grassland through high-resolution satellite imagery occurring after a prolonged period of drought and supported by favorable precipitation patterns. Related to this, it is also worth mentioning the GEF Geospatial Platform (thegef.org/maps), which offers a novel way to track results in real time and helps countries and users identify where and how natural resources can be used more efficiently, and exposure to climate risk can be minimized.	

10. Review of the GEF Management Action Record (MAR) ([GEF/E/C.63/01](#)), November 2022 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: GEF management should ensure that the action plan included in its management response to GEF IEO recommendations lists specific actions with timelines where appropriate. GEF management should ensure that the management response to an evaluation clearly indicates the level of agreement with each recommendation. Where management fully or partially agrees with a recommendation, a clear articulation of timebound actions should be included in the management response which will make it possible to track progress on the implementation of follow-up actions and report on these to the Council. Where additional time is required by the GEFSEC to develop detailed action plans and timelines on certain evaluations, the Council may consider giving the GEF Secretariat time until the next Council meeting to present the details.	Agreed (GEF/C.63/13) <i>Applicable immediately (and as evident in this management response), the GEF Secretariat will clearly state the level of agreement with each recommendation of IEO Evaluations as follows: "The GEF Secretariat agrees / partially agrees / rejects this recommendation." Where there is full or partial agreement with the recommendation, and if the nature of the recommendation is appropriate to do so, the Secretariat will include into the management response a preliminary time frame for measures/actions, giving a suggested calendar time / year when these will begin and possibly a suggested calendar time / year by when the recommendation may be completely adopted. If the Secretariat is of the view that inclusion of a timeline is not appropriate to a particular recommendation, this will be explicitly discussed with the IEO in upstream</i>	Immediately	Rating: High The GEF Secretariat has fully and immediately internalized this recommendation. The MAR evaluation and the Secretariat's management response was presented to the 63rd Council in December 2022. From the 64th Council in June 2023, all GEF Secretariat management responses have followed an internal template that has been developed, which states at the start of each recommendation response whether the GEF Secretariat agrees / partially agrees / does not agree with the recommendation, with the necessary explanations if one of the two latter categories is adopted. Time frames are also included where relevant, with the necessary caveats that such time-frames are preliminary in nature. The Secretariat continues to fully utilize its minimum 4-week window to prepare management responses after receipt of a final IEO report.	Rating: Substantial The GEF Secretariat has implemented key elements of its action plan. However, in many instances the time frame for implementation of the planned activities is not clear.	Rating: High As before, the GEF Secretariat's assessment is that it has fully internalized and adopted both aspects of this recommendation – (i) on specifying level of agreement, and (ii) on specifying timeframes where relevant. On part (i), the management response to each recommendation clearly states agreement/partial agreement/rejection. On part (ii), the Secretariat includes time frames for the implementation of recommendations, where appropriate and viable to do so. It is to be noted that many of the recent IEO evaluations have recommendations that are relevant to GEF-9 preparations, which indeed is the point and purpose of evaluations that are feeding into OPS-8. Therefore, as per time frames, many management responses have abstained from specific calendar commitments,	Rating: Substantial As noted in the assessment provided by the IEO in 2024, the GEF Secretariat has fully implemented several elements of its action plan to address the recommendations. These include clearly stating the level of agreement and, where applicable, listing actions that will be undertaken to address the recommendations. However, providing clear timeframes has been a challenge. According to Management's self-assessment in 2025, there are situations where providing a precise timeframe may be difficult. The IEO broadly agrees with this assessment but believes that there are greater opportunities for providing clear timeframes than are currently being utilized. Overall, given that most elements of the action plan have been fully implemented, and that the gaps in areas where full implementation has not been achieved are limited,

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>consultations, and also explicitly articulated in the management response.</i> The Secretariat would like to emphasize any time frames introduced into management responses may be preliminary in nature. This is due to the fact that (i) timing can sometimes be influenced by factors beyond the Secretariat's control, and that (ii) the implementation of the recommendations themselves may further inform the process. Therefore, all timelines should be treated with a certain degree of flexibility, and the Secretariat should retain the option to introduce adjustments to these timelines as needed. These adjustments can be reassessed together with the IEO as needed in the preparation of the yearly MARs. The Secretariat would like to highlight that, as the required commitments and levels of detail of the management responses increase, this needs to be simultaneously accompanied by an increased preparation time. Since the IEO Peer Review Report in June 2020		Thus far, the Secretariat has been able to bring all management responses to the relevant council sessions without the need to postpone a response to a subsequent council due to lack of time. In this regard, the Secretariat appreciates the IEO's continued timeliness of delivery of its final reports.		instead specifying that the material will be considered in the preparation of GEF-9 programming and policy documents, as in fact is now being done as the documents for the first GEF-9 replenishment meeting are under preparation and which furthermore will be made clear in those documents. The actualization of recommendations in the GEF-9 phase will then depend on the GEF-9 replenishment negotiations. Finally, the Secretariat would like to again acknowledge the IEO's considerable efforts in their timely provision of draft and final reports and recommendations. Even in cases where there has been some delay, the Secretariat has continued to provide the required detailed management responses to the relevant Council session, without the need to postpone to a subsequent Council. Nonetheless, the Secretariat appreciates the flexibility to do so, should the need arise in the future.	the recommendation is graduated from the MAR.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	and the subsequent adoption of the revised process in June 2021, the Secretariat and the IEO have been engaged in constructive discussions on the lead-time available to the Secretariat for the preparation of these detailed management responses. To this end, the Secretariat greatly appreciates conclusion 5 of the Review which states that “...If a period of more than 8 weeks prior to presentation of an evaluation is required to develop a detailed action plan with timelines in response to an IEO evaluation, the Council might, in certain cases, consider allowing the presentation of the detailed action plan and timelines by the GEF Secretariat at the next Council meeting. The GEF Secretariat would still present a management response at the Council meeting in which the IEO evaluation is presented.” The Secretariat welcomes the implicit commitment of this conclusion that evaluations will be available to the Secretariat 4 weeks before the posting deadline for council					

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	documents (and therefore 8 weeks before presentation to Council) in order to facilitate timely preparation of the detailed management responses by the required posting date. The Secretariat also values the suggestion of this recommendation that, if needed, additional time can be given to the Secretariat to develop detailed action plans and timelines on certain evaluations. In the cases where that course of action becomes necessary, <i>the Secretariat will present a more general management response at the Council meeting to which the IEO evaluation is presented, clearly explain the reasons that more time is needed for the required detailed action plans and timelines, and commit to the presentation of these outstanding items in the subsequent council meeting.</i>					
Recommendation 2: The GEF should improve the MAR process and reporting through a more participatory approach involving GEF Agencies, where relevant, and develop a suitable platform for tracking	Agreed (GEF/C.63/13) The GEF Secretariat welcomes the commitment by the IEO to clearly address its recommendations to the specific actors of the GEF	GEF-8	Rating: High The GEF Secretariat has fully and immediately internalized the different facets of this recommendation.	Rating: Substantial The Office acknowledges the progress noted in the Secretariat’s response and will continue to monitor consultation with the	Rating: High As before, the GEF Secretariat’s assessment is that it has fully internalized and adopted all aspects of this recommendation.	Rating: High The Office acknowledges the progress noted in the Secretariat’s response, and notes involvement of the Agencies in preparation of

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
the implementation of action plans. Where IEO recommendations are clearly directed towards GEF Agencies or other actors, GEF management should explore ways to incorporate Agencies' and/or others feedback and comments when preparing action plans to implement IEO recommendations and in assessing the implementation progress of follow-up actions. In this way, Agencies or other actors can respond to recommendations that are directed toward them and will be able to implement and track these recommendations. A suitable platform that centralizes the recording of recommendations, management responses, action plans, and follow-up will help streamline access and improve efficiency in monitoring the status of implementation.	Partnership and looks forward to this in all subsequent evaluations. Where recommendations are clearly directed towards GEF Agencies in particular, the Secretariat will explore ways to consult with the Agencies in order to incorporate their input in the preparation of the relevant management response, action plans and timelines. As this may add to the preparation time needed for the relevant management response, the Secretariat would again like to underscore the need for appropriate preparation time, as discussed in the earlier recommendation. The GEF Secretariat agrees that the MAR process would benefit from a more centralized approach. To this end, the Secretariat would like to highlight the improvements made in its own internal processes on IEO evaluations over the last two years. Since 2020, the GEF Secretariat has adopted a centralized and coordinated Secretariat-wide approach to IEO evaluations that has resulted more efficient, structured, and		The MAR evaluation and the Secretariat's management response was presented to the 63rd Council in December 2022. From the 64th Council in June 2023, all GEF Secretariat management responses have followed an internal process which incorporates a consultation window with the relevant members of the GEF partnership, based on the IEO's statements in its recommendations as to whom the recommendations are targeted. This is reflected in the start of every management response to those recommendations, where the Secretariat explicitly states whom among the Partnership has been consulted in the response to the recommendation. As stated above, the Secretariat continues to fully utilize its minimum 4-week window to prepare management responses after receipt of a final IEO report. Thus far, the Secretariat has been able to bring all management responses to the relevant council sessions without the need to postpone	Agencies in preparation of management response, where application.	When a recommendation explicitly relates to another member or member(s) of the GEF Partnership, the Secretariat continues to consult with them and the specific aspect of the management response. This consultation is explicitly reflected in the management response to each recommendation, as needed. There have been several examples of this now-routine practice in two years since the MAR evaluation and its recommendations came. As before, the Secretariat continues to utilize an internal Excel platform for centralizing, assessing and tracking progress on IEO recommendations.	management response to GEF IEO evaluations.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	constructive engagements with the IEO and ultimately to a higher quality of management responses and evaluation uptake. <i>The Secretariat agrees that further improvements to this process can be made and is already working on further strengthening its internal process for the recording of recommendations, management responses, action plans, and follow-up,</i> particularly in light of the many recommendations of the OPS-7 report and its related evaluations. The Secretariat wishes to emphasize, however, that <i>while the recommendation references a “suitable platform” which can imply some new digital solution, this is not envisaged – rather, what is already underway is the deepening of the Secretariat’s centralized process which to date has demonstrated very positive and successful impacts on its engagements with IEO evaluations.</i>		a response to a subsequent council due to lack of time. In this regard, the Secretariat appreciates the IEO’s continued timeliness of delivery of its final reports, particularly in cases when members of the wider Partnership need to be consulted, as these steps add to the time needed for the preparation of these management responses. Finally, the Secretariat has developed and rolled out an internal platform in Excel for centralizing all IEO recommendations and our actions as promised in our management responses. This platform assesses and tracks the progress made on IEO recommendations. The platform is live and is kept up to date.			

11. Evaluation of the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on GEF Activities ([GEF/E/C.63/02](#)), November 2022 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should provide guidance and assist GEF Agencies in incorporating important features associated with systems thinking, resilience, and adaptive management in all project proposals.	Agreed (GEF/C.63/14) The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that it has already been working to redesign the logical structure and narrative of all GEF Projects and Programs along these lines. This work has been undertaken in collaboration with STAP, and new PIF templates have been released for GEF-8 with a new “project description” section that is fully aligned with this recommendation. These templates have been used in the work program currently under discussion at the 63rd Council. <i>Further templates for all funding modalities are under development and will be released soon. The Secretariat is also in the process of preparing some technical training sessions in collaboration with STAP. This will enable agencies to be fully briefed and fluent in the new logic and template structure. It is envisaged that these trainings will be rolled out in early 2023 and in</i>	Early 2023 and Agency Retreat 2023	Rating: Substantial As soon as the pandemic started, the GEF issued a “guidance” document on project and program design features that should be looked at and incorporated in project and program design as needed and appropriate to mitigate and/or take advantage of opportunities created by the pandemic. Also, new GEF-8 templates introduced in the last 18 months also included better guidance and logic on project and program design supported by STAP reviews and inputs. These templates were also accompanied with training webinars led by STAP and the GEFSEC for agency technical staff to better design narratives with the respective required “pieces” of PIFs and better quality at entry of projects and programs. This training will continue in FY25 with new training sessions with STAP and all agencies.	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat's response to the recommendation. The issuance of guidance was a timely adaptation to global challenges. The introduction of new GEF-8 templates and the associated activities are also noted. The Secretariat's strategy addresses immediate needs that was triggered by the pandemic and also establishes a framework for integrating essential adaptive management practices into the GEF's project lifecycle. The IEO will continue to track the progress on this recommendation.	Rating: High Much progress has been made on this front, and it is safe to say that we are fully in a “Post Pandemic” era of GEF programming and implementation. Efforts at providing guidance to agencies and countries on mitigation measures in projects and programs to address Covid-19 issues has now been fully integrated into the “business as usual” technical best practices both for agencies and countries in their project and program design phases, but also in the project cycle in terms of project reviews and endorsements. This type of best practices has also made its way in the “revamped” technical content of the Extended Constituency Workshops that are being deployed in all regions in FY24 and FY25. We have continued to work with STAP on enhanced guidance to agencies and GEFSEC staff on systems thinking, integration,	Rating: High The IEO acknowledges the progress in inclusion of systems thinking, resilience and adaptive management in design of GEF activities. This is confirmed by the GEF IEO ongoing work on assessment of design of CEO endorsed project proposals, which notes that nearly all proposals incorporate these elements. The recommendation will graduated .

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>advance of the preparation of the work program to the 64th GEF Council. Finally, the Secretariat will also place this topic of systems thinking, resilience and adaptive management on the agenda of the next Agency Retreat in 2023.</i>				etc. Additional training workshops are being planned now that we the position of the Manager of the Programming Division is filled. Of note, the December Work Program had projects of programs with a "MAJOR" rating indicating increased quality at entry of PIFs and PFDs.	
Recommendation 2: The GEF Agencies should ensure that GEF projects include a broad suite of livelihood options and support diverse income-generating activities. GEF projects should diversify strategies and actions for risk mitigation and build the resilience of local communities to various shocks.	Agreed (GEF/C.63/14) <i>The GEF is also working on strengthening the link between risk and project outcomes in the project narrative. This is being done by incorporating "scenarios" thinking in the project description phase</i> so as to assess the different possible future scenarios that can have an impact on the strategies being adopted in a project and the outcomes being delivered. This "scenarios" building also assesses how robust the difference actions and strategies in a project are to possible risks and perturbations that can be identified. <i>This is also part of the STAP-led training described above that will be rolled out in early 2023.</i>	Early 2023	Rating: Medium Socio-economic activities and co-benefits of projects and programs is an integral part of GEF investments. This is reinforced in project reviews as appropriate. This will be reinforced with the Results Based team work on defining the socio-economic co-benefits framework to apply as part of the RBM approach to all GEF investments.	Rating: Not rated The IEO acknowledges progress. Validation of the management's action requires an in-depth examination. The IEO will continue to track its progress.	Rating: Substantial Similarly to the above response, enhanced focus on engagements with local communities to ensure positive impacts on livelihoods of the work of the GEF has taken place. The work that is underway on defining and monitoring the socio-economic co-benefits of GEF investments is focusing on this aspect of GEF's work and will be presented as part of the GEF-9 Results Framework during the upcoming negotiations meetings. We have also increased the GEFSEC capacity on stakeholder engagement with new hires on youth and IPLCs that will complement the work we have been doing to ensure gender equality and	Rating: Substantial The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) acknowledges the progress made in addressing socio-economic dimensions through Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects. In addition to the evaluations cited in the Management's response, the ongoing work by the GEF IEO on the assessment of the design of CEO-endorsed project proposals indicates that the vast majority of these proposals address livelihood-related concerns. Specifically, about half of the proposals aim to reduce economic risks, and approximately two-thirds seek to improve livelihood resilience. However, it is noteworthy that "scenarios" thinking is explicitly

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					equity in all of GEF’s investments. These new positions will continue to provide guidance and build capacity of staff and agencies on best practices for these important aspects of GEF’s work. As part of the Council document titled <i>Tracking and Measuring the Socio-Economic Co-Benefits of GEF Investments</i> (GEF/C.66/12), an analysis on a sample of GEF-7 projects indicates that 35 percent of projects include social co-benefits in their results framework, 26 percent have economic co-benefits, 17 percent contribute to market development and 55 percent to cross-cutting areas— inclusion, empowerment, institutional capacity, gender equality. This analysis confirms that GEF projects include a broad range of socio-economic co-benefits, including livelihood options and income-generating activities. Separately, as part of <i>The GEF Small Grants Programme 2.0 Operational Guidelines for GEF-</i>	incorporated into the project design of only a few projects. The IEO will continue to observe the changes in the design of the projects for another year.

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					8 (https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-05/GEF%20SGP_Operational_Guidelines_Feb2024.pdf), a new standard outcome level indicator was introduced in the SGP 2.0 Results Framework tracking specifically the number of direct beneficiaries with diversified, strengthened livelihoods and/or sources of income. In addition, through the <i>GEF Risk Appetite</i> (GEF/C.66/13), Agencies now provide a risk assessment and mitigation measures at the PIF, CEO Endorsement and MTR milestones. This includes an assessment of key risk categories, such as climate risk and environmental and social, and stakeholder engagement, which help address how local communities may build resilience to various shocks.	

12. Evaluation of The GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security ([GEF/E/C.64/01](#)), June 2023 GEF Council Meeting

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Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should ensure that aspects of water security that are key to each GEF focal area are represented in the results measurement framework and project and program design. Explicit language related to freshwater resources should be added to some of the focal area indicators in the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework to better highlight linkages with water security. This would encourage countries and Agencies to design projects across all focal areas that better consider the importance of water security and freshwater resources. Furthermore, design and theories of change for projects and programs with strong links with freshwater resources should integrate elements of water security to help improve holistic integration of water security across GEF's portfolio. Considerations could also be made to integrate water security as a cross cutting theme in relevant IPs.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.64/13) The GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework was agreed by Replenishment Participants for a period of four years and allows to ensure adequate targeting of water security benefits. It therefore cannot be changed during the ongoing GEF-8 programming cycle. Looking ahead, <i>water security aspects will be considered within the context of guidelines to the use of Tier 1 Core and Sub-Indicators in the next iteration of the GEF Results Measurement Framework in GEF-9.</i> This would be cognizant of the fact that standard indicators may not lend themselves well to tracking the multiple dimensions of water security that do not allow for cross-portfolio aggregation of data (including, for example, various forms of pollution). <i>Going forward and already in GEF-8, regular project reviews of those projects and programs with strong links with freshwater resources will</i>	GEF-9 replenishment and during GEF-8 project reviews	Rating: Not applicable Guidelines for the use of Core and Sub-indicators will be considered in the context of the development of the GEF-9 Results Management Framework. Rating: Medium Ensuring that water security in relevant projects is defined, measured, reported and part of their ToCs is an ongoing effort in project reviews. Rating: Medium Ensuring that risks associated with water security are assessed and mitigation measures outlined is part of ongoing reviews.	Rating: Not rated The IEO acknowledges the progress. Validation of the management's assessment requires an in-depth examination.	This recommendation is differentiated by the three sub-points: i) GEF-8 Results Framework and indicators: Rating (i): Not applicable Guidelines for the use of Core and Sub-indicators will be considered in the context of the development of the GEF-9 Results Management Framework. While there is no change to the response that the GEF-8 Results framework cannot be changed during the ongoing GEF-8 programming cycle, work is being funded by GEF IW in cooperation with the Freshwater Challenge (FWC) - a country lead partnership which is joined by 49 countries and the EU. GEF IW is supporting the FWC in developing an indicator framework that is relevant and applicable to a wide range of conditions and locations and addressing a comprehensive set of	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes the increasing emphasis on water security across several GEF Integrated Programs, including Sustainable Cities and Food Systems. Water-related considerations—such as flood resilience, water management, and pollution control—are being increasingly integrated into program design and implementation, recognizing water as a cross-cutting issue. The IEO also acknowledges that the risks to water security, including scarcity, excess, and pollution, are being increasingly addressed in line with Minimum Standard 7 of the ESS Policy. The updated risk assessment framework is expected to further enhance the identification and management of these risks, particularly in light of climate change and fragility. The IEO will continue to assess the effectiveness of these

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	<i>place an emphasis on ensuring that elements of water security are featured adequately in their Theories of Change and Monitoring & Evaluation frameworks which include a detailed results framework. This includes using custom indicators for each project and clarifying how the logic of interventions enhances water security.</i> The Secretariat would like to point to several actions that have already been put in place to address water security beyond the International Waters Focal Area. Specifically, the LDCF-SCCF results framework already includes clear sub-indicators to capture water security related results. Furthermore, to address the impacts of water security on the project’s outcomes and vice versa, the GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Policy, Minimum Standard 7 already includes explicit language to “promote the efficient use of water and where significant water consumption is involved adopt measures to avoid or reduce water use to avoid significant adverse impacts on				indicators including threat to quality and quantity indicators relevant to water security. This will be one of the bases on which water security aspects will be explicitly considered within the next iteration of the GEF Results Measurement Framework and related guidelines in GEF-9. Also, as already reported, the LDCF Results Framework already includes clear sub-indicators to capture water security related results. ii) <i>Projects and programs with strong links with freshwater resources will place an emphasis on ensuring that elements of water security are featured adequately in their Theories of Change and Monitoring & Evaluation frameworks:</i> Rating (ii): Substantial In addition to the specific attention to water security especially in International Waters, the LD related Drought portfolio, and the LDCF project portfolio, the following IPs are increasingly addressing water security in	approaches and tools in GEF-9.

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	communities, other water users, and the environment”. These aspects are therefore already a requirement for project preparation. The Secretariat is confident that the GEF will continue to progress positively on the inclusion on water security dimensions in its programming. <i>During GEF-8 project reviews the GEF Secretariat will emphasize that risks associated with water security are assessed and adequate mitigation measures are provided for projects and programs with strong links with freshwater resources.</i>				GEF-8 and planning to increase this effort in GEF-9: > Sustainable Cities: Under the GEF 8 cities program, water is integrated in the theme of built environment. It is not explicitly targeting ‘water security’ as related to scarcity but there are references to support water management (especially related to addressing water security threats and resilience to floods) embedded in program design and child projects. Supporting flood resilience is quite central to most of the cities as key co-benefit. Project examples: IP Global Coordination Platform project and Belize and Serbia child projects. > The Food Systems agenda at the GEF encompasses a range of projects from the GEF-6 Resilient Food Systems to the GEF-8 Food Systems Integrated Program (FS IP). These projects focus on water security, water resources management, and water pollution as central elements to ensure productivity and crop yield while minimizing water	

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					pollution. Additionally, aquaculture, which relies on water quality and quantity, is a key entry point in GEF-8. Within the Food Systems IP nearly all projects address water management from both policy and practical innovation perspectives at the landscape level. This includes developing financial models and deploying technological innovations. <i>(iii) Risks associated with water security are assessed and adequate mitigation measures are provided for projects:</i> Rating (iii): Medium Across the portfolio risks to water security are already being considered as mandated by minimum standard 7 of the ESS Policy. In addition, the recent update to the risk assessment of projects through the introduction of a more detailed and standardized risk assessment framework has led to greater detail in addressing water security (“too much, too little, too	

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					polluted”) related to climate change, environmental and social risks, and FCV settings/ governance/ political risks. The recent GEF FCV guidance is another helpful tool that was developed recently and enhances attention to resource scarcity (including water and natural resources) as potential conflict multiplier contributing to displacement on local levels.	
Recommendation 2: The GEF Secretariat and Agencies should prioritize creation of sustainable financing mechanisms and other activities aiming to scale up interventions that successfully improve water security. Many GEF projects incorporate some factors into project implementation that encourage scaling up of water security activities, such as IW projects which develop water policy. However, more ambition for scaling up is needed to meet the water security needs of people and ecosystems. All projects that deal with water security should include sustainable financing and other activities to support scaling up efforts,	Agreed (GEF/C.64/13) The GEF agrees with the recommendations that GEF projects should include mechanisms that increase the likelihood of sustaining and scaling-up water security benefits beyond the project’s duration, including the creation or strengthening of innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms. This is considered in the GEF-8 programming directions and identified as a lever of change for Integrated Programs, therefore applying to the relevant projects that are addressing water security. The Secretariat would like to point to the fact that the scope of relevant and feasible	End of GEF-8	Rating: Medium IW:LEARN is in the process of organizing with partners to define the scope and process of the TDA-SAP update and will include a module to address guidance on sustainable finance. IW:LEARN is capturing efforts on private sector engagement across their activities and will deliver the experience note before the end of GEF-8. This is strongly supported and aligned with one of the objectives on private sector engagement in the IW:LEARN 5 prodoc. IW:LEARN will also report on capacity building efforts on financing	Rating: Medium The IEO recognizes the GEF's action in response to this recommendation, which focuses on prioritizing the creation of sustainable financing mechanisms and scaling up interventions to improve water security. The IEO also notes the GEF’s approach to integrating sustainable financing mechanisms within the GEF-8 programming directions and the GEF's efforts to increase private sector engagement through the IW: LEARN network. The IEO will continue to monitor the progress of these actions.	Rating: Medium The GEF Secretariat in partnership with IW:LEARN is continuing the workstream hosted by UNECE and partners on a series of workshops on Sustainable Funding and Financing of Transboundary Cooperation with the next workshop envisioned in 2026. IW:LEARN is planning a regional workshops on Funding & Financing [end Sept 2025, Peru, back to back with the TB Symposium in LAC] and a Global Workshops on Funding & Financing [pre-IWC11 in 2026]. IW:LEARN is planning to develop training material on	Rating: Medium The IEO notes ongoing efforts by the GEF Secretariat and IW:LEARN to strengthen sustainable financing for transboundary cooperation through targeted workshops and capacity-building tools. Planned regional and global workshops, as well as the development of training materials and practical ‘how-to’ guides, reflect a proactive approach to addressing funding gaps and enhancing project implementation. The IEO will continue to track the uptake and utility of these initiatives in improving financial sustainability and integrated water resource

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including projects that improve water security at the community level. IW projects, in particular, should offer guidance that sustainable financing must be considered as part of the preparation for the SAP implementation phase of the TDA/SAP process. Activities could include creating novel and innovative financial mechanisms in watersheds or aquifer areas, enhancing existing mechanisms or partnering with the private sector and entities with expertise in financial inclusion. Addressing the issue of sustainable financing in the framework of the SAP implementation in various geographies of the world would also increase the likelihood of scaling up water security outcomes.	sustainable finance depends on the country and regional circumstances especially in light of the fact that many GEF intervention take place in fragile and conflict affected locations. For GEF IW projects, in particular, the Secretariat would like to point out that many IW foundational projects that are preparing a Strategic Action Program (SAP) do include efforts to communicate the SAP adoption, via signature by at least one Minister from each country, to all relevant country and regional stakeholders and convene donor roundtables (preceded by bilateral dialogues with development partners) to leverage finance from a variety of finance sources. More recent projects have been more consistent in explicitly budgeting for such SAP development partner round tables and regular donor coordination meetings to maintain SAP finance and reporting to donors. Long-term financial mechanisms in IW projects so far have included the first ever blue bond (in the Seychelles),		transboundary cooperation at the end of GEF 8.		Sustainable Funding & Financing including engagement with the private sector within its 2025/26 workplan. IW:LEARN is also developing a number of “how to” guides to provide practical tools to project managers on how to address e.g. water security in the context of Water-Food-Energy-Environment Nexus in the TDA/SAP process. TORS are currently being developed and a consultation with stakeholders at the occasion of the UNECE WEF Task Force meeting in June 2025	management across the GEF International Waters portfolio.

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	Payment for Ecosystems Services schemes, such as Water Funds, and other public private partnerships. To increase private sector engagement on the project level, the GEF is confident that the IW: LEARN network which has a designated objective to enhance private sector involvement in GEF IW projects will be able to accelerate engagement with and co-finance by the private sector to reduce pressures on freshwater and marine ecosystems. The Secretariat would like to point out though that the investment needs outlined in most SAPs or basin management plans range from analytics and needed pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, to national policy and strategy reforms, to national or regional investment needs that are at the scale of requiring large national investments via national budgets and/or MDB or other engagements beyond what the GEF can finance on its own. The Secretariat further would like to highlight the already significant track record of the LDCF and SCCF which					

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	consistently has been a highly reliable financing mechanism for vulnerable countries to address water related adaptation priorities. Specifically, the LDCF financing recently has doubled for LDCs and there is a dedicated window for the SIDS for adaptation financing. Also, water is identified as a priority theme6. Finally, the GEF-8 strategy has indicated scaling up financing for adaptation as a top crosscutting priority in all the project including those in the water sector. Engagement with private sector has also been a priority for GEF-8 which builds on GEF-7 strategy. Going forward, <i>the GEF IW focal area will strengthen its TDA-SAP guidance toward ensuring sustainable financing is incorporated more consistently within project and program design related to Water Security. Furthermore, the GEF Secretariat will work with the agencies through the International Waters Learning Network (IW: LEARN) to deliver an IW: LEARN experience note based</i>					

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	<i>on the ongoing IW portfolio with regard to engagement with the private sector and to report on any capacity building efforts on financing transboundary cooperation at the end of GEF 8.</i> The findings will inform GEF-9 programming including updates to the TDA – SAP process.					

13. Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation of the Lower Mekong River Basin Ecosystem ([GEF/E/C.64/02](#)), June 2023 GEF Council Meeting

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Recommendation 1: The GEF should coordinate with partner LMRB countries, other multilaterals, bilaterals and regional bodies (e.g., MRC, ASEAN) on the strategic regional priorities of the MRC's Basin Development Strategy. This could be achieved through various GEF projects and programs which have a coordination component.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.64/14) The GEF appreciates the benefits of aligning GEF resources with relevant strategic regional priorities, including MRC River Basin Development Strategy, to the extent that they relate to GEF strategy and country commitments under the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) for which the GEF serves as the financial mechanism. The GEF recognizes the role of governments in setting and owning regional priorities. The GEF further notes, therefore that the implementation of this recommendation will depend on the initiative and actions of GEF recipient countries who are outside of GEF Secretariat's direct control given the country-driven nature of the GEF. Further, the Secretariat would like to highlight that while the mandate of the MRC per article 1 of the 1995 Agreement extends to cooperation across all fields of sustainable development	During GEF-8	Rating: High Key actions were taken over the last year in response to this IEO recommendation at the programmatic, regional and global levels. Given its decades of experience, the Mekong River Commission (MRC) is a close partner in GEF/IW:LEARN and other partner supported outreach and knowledge sharing events with other basin organizations. This includes for example a workshop session at the 2023 Stockholm Water Forum exchanging experiences across the MRC, the Danube Commission (ICPDR), the NBI, and the Orange-Senqu Commission on barriers and lessons of the implementation of Strategic Action/River Basin Management Plans. Beyond the innovative and cross-sectoral GEF IW supported Mekong Delta Aquifer project, the 66 th GEF Council approved an intersectoral project "Enhancing transboundary	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes that the GEFSEC has outlined the actions taken over the last year in response to IEO's recommendations. These actions include collaboration with the Mekong River Commission on regional workshops and the initiation of projects like the Mekong Delta Aquifer project and the "Enhancing transboundary fisheries management in the Lower Mekong Basin" project. These developments signify a positive advancement toward addressing regional and global environmental challenges through comprehensive, cross-sectoral, and integrated management strategies. The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress.	Rating: High The GEFSEC has taken further concrete steps to coordinate with partner LMRB countries, other multilaterals, bilaterals and regional bodies (e.g., MRC, ASEAN) on the strategic regional priorities of the MRC's Basin Development Strategy, including through learning activities and GEF project investments. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) is an active participant in learning events and experience exchanges (e.g. the GEF International Water Conference and UNECE hosted meetings). The GEF Mekong delta aquifer project (GEF ID 10520) is taking a cross-sector approach to assess linkages between groundwater fed ecosystems and productive water intensive sectors such as agriculture, aquaculture and urban uses. The Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) Fisheries project (GEF ID 11304) has been submitted for endorsement and is under revision. This investment links	Rating: High The IEO notes the GEF Secretariat's continued efforts to align investments with the strategic priorities of the Mekong River Commission's Basin Development Strategy. Coordination with regional bodies such as MRC and ASEAN, as well as with bilateral and multilateral partners, reflects a growing emphasis on regional coherence.

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	across water and natural resources, and the scope of the MRC’s Basin Development Strategy aims at the integration across sectors beyond water, the reality in the lower Mekong still lags behind realizing the ambitions of an integrated systems approach to basin management. The MRC is no exception here to other transboundary basins and riparian countries eligible to receive funds by the GEF globally. The MRC’s Basin Development Strategy itself is adopted by the ministries responsible for water in each country and not by overarching national entities such as the ministry of planning or development. The Secretariat agrees with the IEO that such an integrated approach supported by MRC strategies is needed and well aligned with GEF-8 strategic directions that emphasize systems-level engagement and transformation. The Secretariat would like to point to several actions that have been initiated in past and ongoing GEF projects/programs on		fisheries management in the Lower Mekong Basin” which aims to counteract the decline of LMB fish stocks and taking an intersectoral angle across the impacts of the water-food-energy-environment connections and enhancing transboundary cooperation on fisheries management. This project will be executed on regional level by the MRC and at national level through relevant line ministries or the national Mekong Committee. Finally, during the Indo-Malay Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program (IP) design process, several regional stakeholders were involved in the consultations and especially the Technical Design Workshop in Bangkok, February 15-16, 2024: ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, Asian Forest Cooperation Organization, CIFOR-ICRAF Asia Bureau, Global Youth Biodiversity Network for Asia, RECOFTC, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), Technical Assistance Facility to the Green Team Europe Initiative in ASEAN, and Asian Forest Cooperation Organization		natural resources and here fisheries management with basin planning and is fully anchored in the LMB Fisheries strategy and the MRC basin development plan. MRC is the regional executing agency working with counterpart agencies in each of the LMB countries. Through these actions, and others, GEF continues to coordinate closely with partner LMRB countries, other multilaterals, bilaterals and regional bodies (e.g., MRC, ASEAN) on the strategic regional priorities of the MRC’s Basin Development Strategy.	

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	coordination and outreach with the LMRB, other multilaterals, bilateral and regional bodies (e.g., MRC, ASEAN) on the strategic regional priorities of the MRC’s Basin Development Strategy, including the first regional project of the GEF with the MRC (GEF ID 615) which aided the MRC and the countries to implement the Mekong agreement and develop procedures and protocols for cooperation on a number of issues across sectors and led to the development of the first Mekong Basin Utilization Plan as well as the ongoing Mekong Delta Aquifer project (GEF ID 10520) which is aligned with the Basin Strategy and works with the relevant MRC National Committees. Finally, we would like to highlight the current coordination of Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscape in Thailand (GEF ID 10268) project under GEF-7 FOLUR program, which indicates engagement with key policy drivers including the MRC and the ASEAN Agreement on Cooperation for Sustainable Development of		(AFoCO) among others. Collaboration through a multi-stakeholder approach is a hallmark of the integrated programs and will continue in the Mekong region under this and other IPs.			

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	the Mekong River Basin. International Waters projects will continue to cooperate with the MRC as the regional river basin organization in the lower Mekong. <i>In GEF-8 the GEF will encourage agencies, including through GEF project concept reviews, that relevant GEF supported projects in the LMB countries aim for consultations with the National Mekong Committees. Finally, the GEF secretariat can consider inclusion of relevant regional bodies in outreach events organized by the GEF Secretariat, that could include Extended Constituency Workshops (ECW) held in the region.</i> Although there is no specific timetable for this engagement given the macro-planning that will take place for these events, <i>we expect that there will be an ECW held in Asia during GEF-8 (2022-2026).</i>					
Recommendation 2: To support longer term sustainability, the GEF Secretariat and Agencies should design and implement mechanisms for testing, replicating, and scaling up	Agreed (GEF/C.64/14) The Secretariat agrees that sustainability is a vital design component of each GEF intervention, particularly in the context of multi-country	During GEF-8	Rating: Substantial Key actions were taken over the last year at the strategy, programmatic and global levels that contribute to the implementation of this	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges that the GEFSEC has taken actionable steps over the last year in response to IEO’s recommendation, aimed at	Rating: High Over the last year the GEF has made significant progress on this recommendation including through leveraging the Extended Constituency	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes the GEF’s progress in advancing regional knowledge exchange and promoting sustainability through the Extended

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
successful local outcomes and mainstream them at the national level. This would include dissemination of good practices and working in close co-ordination with local, provincial and central governments to broaden and sustain the impacts of GEF investments.	investments and has undertaken work to identify ways to promote durability and sustainability of GEF investments (Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments, GEF/C.57/08) welcomed by Council in 2019 and further refined and discussed in 2021 with Replenishment Participants (GEF-8 Policy Directions: The Enabling Environment for Transformation, GEF/R.08/14). These reports identified actionable design and implementation elements on durability and are centered around four main, interconnected themes: (1) theory of change, (2) multi-stakeholder processes, (3) stakeholder involvement and (4) adaptive learning. These elements are all now mainstreamed in GEF policy and guidelines and are explicitly addressed in the GEF-8 strategy, in GEF project design requirements and in the implementation of the GEF's Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (GEF/C.64/07). This will further increase the sustainability and durability of		recommendation, specifically: The new GEF Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (GEF/c.65/03/Rev.01) was approved by the Council. Based on the new strategy, GEF will continue to bolster knowledge management and learning in every project and program the GEF invests in, from design through to implementation, with an emphasis on South-South exchange for maximum effect. South-South exchange among a network of partners and stakeholders will involve fostering dialogue, collaboration, and capacity-building among stakeholders for facilitating capture, transfer, uptake, and scale-up of lessons, expertise, and best practices, regionally including the Lower Mekong River Basin, through the integrated programs, new Country Engagement Strategy, and others. The GEF-8 templates for PFD, PIFs and CEO endorsement requests have specific requirements regarding sustainability in project design, theory of change,	enhancing long-term sustainability. This includes the adoption of the new GEF Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning and the integration of sustainability-focused requirements into project templates and guidelines under GEF-8. The IEO also notes measures to support the replication and scaling up of successful practices, particularly through South-South exchanges and the development of regional coordination platforms. While these efforts mark an initial progress towards strengthening sustainability in project designs and outcomes, the IEO will continue to monitor their implementation and impact.	Workshops (ECWs) as a key platform to strengthen regional knowledge exchange, promote South-South learning, and encourage the replication and scaling up of good practices, including on sustainability. These workshops have facilitated dialogue among stakeholders and supported the uptake of lessons and innovations across regions. The GEF continues to incorporate recommended sustainability measures through scaled up KM and capacity building efforts in line with GEF's Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (GEF/C.64/07), drawing on the momentum and partnerships established through the ECWs. At the regional level, the MRC who is an active participant in GEF learning events and experience exchanges (see previous response) is a global leader among river basin organizations in terms of sharing information (e.g. flood and drought forecasts), experiences, guidance across	Constituency Workshops and is working to integrate sustainability measures through KM and capacity building efforts. The IEO will continue to assess the effectiveness of these mechanisms in facilitating learning, replication, and long-term impact across regions.

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	GEF investments, per the recommendations of this evaluation and the "continuation/likely continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has come to an end”, as per IEO’s definition of sustainability (GEF/ME/C.56/02/Rev.01). The Secretariat welcomes the recommendation to disseminate and scale-up good practices to broaden and sustain the impact of GEF investments. The Secretariat notes significant ongoing efforts to capture, produce and share lessons and good practices of GEF investments. This includes GEF IW: LEARN the GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network, which is active across all regions and working with a range of partner agencies supports the GEF International Waters portfolio in strengthening transboundary water management by collecting and sharing best practices and lessons learned, and enhancing awareness and capacities to apply innovative solutions to common		stakeholder engagement, and M&E Framework, including dedicated budgeting for project M&E. Further, these elements are currently being included and emphasized in the project preparation (PPG) guidance provided by Integrated Program (IP) lead agencies to support the development of high-quality child projects under the GEF-8 IPs. For example, the design of global platforms under the IPs, such as Wildlife Conservation for Development and regional coordination platforms under the Critical Forest Biome IP will share and promote lessons and best practices, including in participating Mekong Countries.		sectors (see e.g. the Handbook on Mainstreaming Gender) and cross-cutting themes, including sustainability. In addition to GEF sponsored events such as the GEF International Water Conference, the MRC shares these lessons and best practice through regional stakeholder forums in the Mekong and in 2024 a Regional Forum was held in Vientiane, under the Theme of Information Sharing for Transparency and Trust to enable less dependency on country contributions and donors. The MRC is also in the process of setting up a Mekong Fund (supported by KfW) which through an endowment mechanism will then be able to provide a long-time sustainable and predictable stream of fund for the implementation of actions. This Fund could be a model for financial sustainability for other river basins.	

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	problems across GEF International Waters projects and programs. Further, The Secretariat develops, in coordination with the Agencies and the OFPs, Good Practice Briefs which summarizes key aspects of successful GEF projects and lessons learned to promote South-South cooperation and regional/global collaboration. In coordination with the OFPs, executing agencies, local CSOs and NGOs, and beneficiaries, the Secretariat disseminates Good Practice Briefs through webinars, South-South exchange activities or field visit learning event as part of the GEF regional workshops, such as Expanded Constituency Meeting or Adaptation Workshop. Looking ahead, <i>the GEF will continue to pay special attention in the review of GEF projects (including those in the Lower Mekong River Basin) to sustainability elements in project design and where relevant in the project Theory of Change, and M&E framework. During GEF-8 the GEF Secretariat foresees organizing a knowledge event</i>					

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	<i>aiming to foster exchange of knowledge and lessons on how to design and implement mechanisms for testing, replicating, and scaling up successful local outcomes and mainstream them at the national level. This event could draw from examples in the Lower Mekong River Basin and beyond and could take the form of a Brown Bag Lunch, a session at an Agency Retreat or similar.</i>					
Recommendation 3: The STAP, in consultation with the GEF, should provide technical advice on internationally agreed upon definitions and guidelines for implementation of ecosystem based conceptual approaches and management tools (e.g., EbA, EbM, NbS, R2RB), to support consistent understanding and implementation on the ground. Future GEF projects should include robust theories of change and indicators that measure the effectiveness of these conceptual approaches and management tools.	Agreed (GEF/C.64/14) STAP has provided technical advice and guidelines for the implementation of ecosystem-based conceptual approaches and management tools. For example, on natural capital approaches including a report commissioned from Stanford, on Nature-Based Solutions, and a Conceptual Framework for Governing and Managing Source-to-Sea Continuum. <i>STAP, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat, will consider what further advice might be needed. STAP is doing further work on how to strengthen project design and adaptive management, in addition to its Theory of Change Primer,</i>	Not specified	Rating: High In response to this recommendation, the STAP, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat, prepared a paper titled: <i>A Summary of Definitions, Guidelines, and Tools on Ecosystem-Based Approaches for Watershed Management</i> (GEF/STAP/C.66/Inf.07), for the 66th Council meeting in February 2024. The paper provides advice on definitions, guidelines, and available tools on Ecosystem based adaptation and Ecosystem based management and was prepared in response to this recommendation.	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges the STAP's efforts, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat, to provide technical advice on internationally agreed upon definitions and guidelines for implementation of ecosystem based conceptual approaches and management tools through the preparation of the guidance document. Together with the guidance the recommendation also points to the need for robust theories of change and indicators for assessing the effectiveness of these approaches and tools. The IEO will continue to monitor the adoption and application of	Rating: High The GEF Secretariat, in coordination with STAP, continues to expand and promote the use of Theory Of Change (TOC)-based project design. The GEF Secretariat has designed and rolled-out an Expanded Constituency Workshop (ECW) agenda focused on integration which promotes the development and use of a Theory of Change-based design approach. Thus far an integration-focused ECW was held in South Africa, and another one is planned for Central Africa (Equatorial Guinea) with several others in the pipeline for the next year.	Rating: High The IEO notes the GEF Secretariat’s continued efforts, in collaboration with STAP, to promote Theory of Change based project design. The IEO also acknowledges the STAP guidance on one of the ecosystem-based approaches.

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	and enabling elements for good project design. The Secretariat notes, that in GEF-8 projects are required to be based on theory of change, operationalized through PIF and PFD templates and review sheets and is supported by periodic Agency training.		https://www.thegef.org/council-meeting-documents/gef-stap-c-66-inf-07	these guidelines in project design and implementation.	Over the last year the STAP has undertaken both routine and targeted activities related to TOC-based project design and monitoring; Including through: regular advice on TOC provided to individual projects during STAP screening of the GEF work program before Council approval and participation in learning workshops to provide systems-thinking based TOC in integrated programming; In February 2025 STAP provided a training for GEF Secretariat programming staff on the development and use of Theories Of Change in project design; another training course on Theory of Change will be held for GEF agencies and consultants on April 30 and May 1, 2025; and finally STAP is currently producing a paper on Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning to promote adaptive management in GEF programs and projects which builds on TOC-based project design and implementation. Finally, since posting in 2024, the paper titled: <i>A Summary of</i>	

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					<i>Definitions, Guidelines, and Tools on Ecosystem-Based Approaches for Watershed Management</i> (GEF/STAP/C.66/Inf.07) has been accessed over 300 times.	

14. Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries ([GEF/E/C.66/01](#)), February 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: As the GEF prepares to design and implement an official policy coherence framework for GEF-8, the Secretariat should ensure that guidance to enhance policy coherence through GEF operations includes a focus on subnational and local levels. The most recent policy coherence documentation from the GEF Secretariat does not refer to these levels, although they are addressed in length in a STAP brief on the topic (STAP 2023b). This evaluation has demonstrated that even in contexts of decentralization, policy coherence at lower levels of governance remains elusive. As the GEF Secretariat develops guidance for and assesses policy coherence in GEF projects, it should give sufficient emphasis to supporting institutional coordination mechanisms and coherent implementation of policies at subnational and local levels. Improving resource use norms, sanctions, and bylaws at local levels can be an effective and realistically ambitious strategy to enhance policy coherence. Especially in drylands contexts, a greater reliance on phased, longer-term, and integrated approaches will also support effectiveness in enhancing policy coherence.	Agreed (GEF/C.66/14) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation, with the understanding that its formal agenda on policy coherence has only recently begun in October 2023. <i>The initial focus is therefore intended to be at the national level, and based on those learnings the GEF Secretariat will work on how best to address governance at different levels of spatial scale.</i> Policy coherence is key to reducing the funds needed for nature financing, increasing and sustaining the impact of nature funding flows, aligning private and public investments to the international convention agreements, and increasing national and global environmental benefits. Policy coherence is being progressively mainstreamed in global dialogues as a critical mechanism in the achievement and sustainability of global environmental benefits. In recognition of the importance of this agenda and in response to a GEF-8 replenishment commitment, the GEF Secretariat brought to the 65th GEF Council in October 2023 a paper that presented for discussion several options to enhance policy coherence in GEF operations. This paper represented the first dedicated discussion on this topic by the GEF Council. It therefore focused, as intended, on a broad framework for policy coherence. Based upon the GEF Council’s approval of this	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium The recommendation is being addressed in the context of the development of the policy recommendations and programming strategy for GEF-9. Progress is rated medium for two reasons: (1) policy coherence is a relatively new topic in the GEF delivery, and the formal agenda has only just begun in October 2023, and (2) the replenishment process has also just begun in January 2025. However, progress has been made in the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) discussions that took place February 18 – 20, 2025 in Washington DC, where the topic was elevated to the level of a separate TAG as a cross-cutting topic. It also featured prominently in the integrated theme TAG on Drylands and Drought resilience as well as in the Land Degradation Focal Area (LDFA) TAG, the Biodiversity TAG, and other TAG meetings. In addition, the Expressions of Interest in the GEF-8 STAR Competitive Window for several projects with a specific thematic focus on policy coherence have recently been selected by the GEFSEC, with the purview to bring the full PIFs to the December 2025 Council for approval. Through their multi-focal area focus, several of these projects aim to enhance policy coherence related to Land Degradation. These projects will also be helpful to	Rating: Medium GEF IEO agrees with GEF SEC plan of addressing this recommendation in GEF-9, and rating progress as medium.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	document, the GEF Secretariat is now preparing an internal action plan in order to operationalize this framework. As part of this action plan, the GEF Secretariat is undertaking an extensive portfolio review of its completed and ongoing projects. This will highlight the projects that have a policy coherence dimension and yield examples, best practices and lessons on this agenda. This exercise will also identify the potential for the strengthening of policy coherence in a subset of active projects and programs that are in early stages of implementation. Simultaneously, policy coherence is being integrated into the design stage of GEF-8 programming, particularly in its integrated programming. The GEF Secretariat is considering the development of tools to track and assess progress on policy coherence, and the potential for the development of policy relevant indicators. Policy coherence is also a key component of the GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy (CES) which is currently being rolled out. As the GEF Secretariat advances on the different elements of its action plan in the coming years, STAP and other guidance and experiences on policy coherence will be taken into consideration. <i>Depending on the local contexts, addressing different levels of governance at the country level may have to be done in a phased approach at different levels of spatial scale, with a focus first on the broader, national level. To that end, at the level of national governance, successful transformations of policies and incentives require combined</i>		provide learning and guidance on the topic for future policy and programming strategies in the land degradation focal area and throughout the GEF portfolio. Similarly, policy coherence had been integrated into the revised GEF-8 ECW programme as part of the GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy, which will provide the platform to sensitize the GEF partnership on the topic and promote its integration in GEF projects and programs, including in the LD focal area. In the GEF-9 programming strategy, policy coherence will be pursued in a variety of cross cutting ways across IP and focal area programming, e.g. in dryland contexts with entry points to promote coherence at sub-national and local levels through programmatic approaches.	

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	<i>efforts at the Executive and Parliamentary Branches, and this is where the GEF Secretariat may place its initial focus.</i> At the same time, as recognized by the IEO's OPS-7 Report, there can be enforcement challenges at any/all governance levels that are beyond the GEF's reach and may accordingly limit impact in this sphere. <i>As part of its preparations for the GEF-9 replenishment, the GEF-Secretariat will undertake an internal stock take of its initial progress on the policy coherence agenda, including experiences and challenges at the country level. These learnings will inform the integration of policy coherence into the GEF-9 policy and programming strategies.</i>			
Recommendation 2: The GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies should ensure that increased attention is devoted to the inclusion of land tenure security and conflict resolution for resource management within program and project designs and the underlying theories of change. Land tenure is especially weak in communally managed drylands, characterized by a relatively limited natural resource endowment. Yet local communities need tenure security to invest in the sustainable management of the ecosystems on which they depend. Tenure security can reduce resource conflicts, and also help address sustainability. Agencies should adequately describe the status of land tenure security and resource conflicts in assessing project and program context and include relevant elements in their	Agreed (GEF/C.66/14) The GEF-8 Programming Directions have introduced increased attention to this issue by promoting good, effective and participatory land and water governance, making specific reference to land tenure and water rights (ref. para 550) and by including the resolution of land tenure issues as an element of LD-objective 4: "Improve the enabling policy and institutional framework for LDN" (ref. para 553). As outlined in the GEF-8 programming directions, the application of FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security will be encouraged. Further, land tenure security and conflict resolution for resource management is addressed as a	GEF-8	Rating: Substantial In the follow-up of UNCCD COP15 decision, GEFSEC has been working with the UNCCD, FAO and other partners to promote the application FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT). In this context, a medium size project (MSP) has been developed titled "Addressing tenure governance and gender equality in land rights to strengthen LDN initiatives" (GEF ID 11501), which will be instrumental to further promote land tenure security and good governance globally. The topic of land tenure has featured prominently in the TAG discussions. The LDFA TAG has recommended to raise the visibility of topic in the GEF-9 programming strategy through including it into an LDFA	Rating: Medium These initiatives and developments are promising, worth a medium rating.

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theories of change (e.g., as assumptions or risks, and/or activities, outputs, or outcomes). Doing so would also help countries in responding to the UNCCD Decision 26/COP.14.	cross-cutting issue in GEF programming and features prominently in the strategies and theories of change of the integrated programs, notably the programs on Ecosystem Restoration, and Critical Forest Biomes (ref. para 58 and 103). Further, the GEF agrees with the IEO that the recent UNCCD COP Decision 26/COP.14 on land tenure will provide an additional entry point for increasing attention to these issues, especially in drylands and countries affected by drought. <i>GEF will work with its partner agencies to make continued efforts to foster leadership and political will to address land tenure through supporting capacity development and enhanced knowledge sharing learning, inclusion of all stakeholders, and provision of data and planning tools for informed decision making as part of its regional and global programming in GEF-8 and place special emphasis of bringing this topic into the context of dryland countries through its ongoing work in the GEF-7 DSL-IP, and potential future programs with a focus on drylands.</i>		objective. This will provide further entry point for continued work on this topic.	
Recommendation 3: The GEF Secretariat and Agencies should ensure that equal consideration is given in project and program design to both fostering synergies and mitigating trade-offs between environment and socioeconomic development, with due attention to distributional impacts. GEF projects in drylands have not adequately considered trade-offs between environmental outcomes and socioeconomic development,	Agreed (GEF/C.66/14) The GEF Secretariat has consulted with the GEF Agencies on the response to this recommendation. The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation, with the understanding that <i>the mandate of the GEF is to generate global environmental benefits; therefore, the consideration of trade-offs will need to balance trade-offs in a way that maximizes environmental</i>	Not specified	Rating: Substantial The recommendation has being taken up in child project design of the GEF-8 Integrated Programs, e.g. Ecosystem Restoration and Blue and Green Islands. STAP’s advisory document on nature-based solutions has been promoted as a practical step-by-step guidance to address trade-offs	Rating: Medium These early initiatives are acknowledged. Progress is medium.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
despite the real potential for unmitigated trade-offs to result in reduced environmental outcomes and unintended negative consequences, including leakage. Trade-offs in pastoral areas should be given concerted attention given poorer performance in these landscapes in past GEF drylands projects, and project design should also carefully consider who will benefit depending on the solutions adopted.	outcomes. Trade-offs between environment and socio-economic development and the potential for unmitigated trade-offs to result in reduced environmental outcomes and unintended negative consequences, including leakage, is a common issue in global efforts to achieve sustainable development and well described in the literature. The GEF Secretariat and its Agencies are fully aware of it and will continue its efforts to mitigate trade-offs, with due attention to distributional impacts. Specifically, the GEF-8 programming directions identify the mitigation of trade-offs as an important element of its nature-based solutions approach in several of its integrated programs, for example in the Ecosystem Restoration (ref. para 54), Blue and Green Islands (ref. para 169), Net-zero nature-positive accelerator (ref. para 239). Also, the Land Degradation Focal Area strategy employs the LDN concept and integrated land-use planning to promote synergies, manage trade-offs, and improve policy coherence across sectors and at all levels. GEF and its agencies will apply STAP’s advisory document on nature-based solutions, which will enhance these efforts in the general programming, and specifically in future work in drylands, particularly in pastoral areas and rangelands. Further, balancing environmental and societal benefits at different scales from local to landscape, as well as in time, is part of efforts of the GEF and its Agencies to improve the projects		in project design and implementation by GEF agencies and executing partners. The topic featured in the Drylands and Drought Resilience TAG and was recommended to be incorporated in GEF-9 programming directions, especially with regard to policy coherence.	

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	and programs’ theories of change and ways to monitors socio-economic and environmental cobenefits. These efforts are made in the context of STAPs advisory work on enhancing the application of theory of change concept, which is now consistently applied in GEF projects and programs at design stage.			
Recommendation 4: The GEF Secretariat should encourage Agencies to provide project-level monitoring data showing associated biophysical changes for relevant area-based core indicators. The relative lack of demonstrated changes in environmental status through monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems was noted. When taken alongside geospatial analysis and field-level biophysical data observations that suggested more localized sustainable results than those indicated by results reported simply on the basis of hectarage, these findings raise questions about the adequacy of area-based global environmental benefits in drylands. In its results framework guidelines, the GEF Secretariat should encourage Agencies to provide available biophysical monitoring data (alongside already requested GIS files), to better substantiate the environmental benefits of improved management practices and restoration. The newly launched GEF Geospatial Platform as well as the LDN indicators that countries are adopting and sometimes integrating into their GEF project reporting provide a good basis for this effort.	Agreed (GEF/C.66/14) <i>The GEF Secretariat will work with its agencies to provide project level monitoring data that better show biophysical changes for relevant area-based core indicators. This recommendation will be addressed through adjusting the GEF’s Results Based Measurement Framework and its related guidelines at the next opportunity, which will be the update of the GEF-9 Results Measurement Framework, likely by end of FY26. The GEF Secretariat will also assess its portfolio of ongoing LDN projects to learn on how projects are applying LDN indicators and their alignment with national LDN targets and extract conclusions and lessons learned on ways of integrating them into GEF project reporting. This assessment will be done by the end of FY25.</i> Further, the newly launched GEF Geospatial Platform already includes ways to demonstrate changes in environmental status, for example by assessing drought severity at local level over time. <i>Depending on data availability and technical feasibility, further improvements may be possible, similar to</i>	End of FY25 and FY26	Rating: Substantial GEFSEC has assessed the portfolio of in total 67 LDN projects under implementation and published a learning report on its website: https://www.thegef.org/newsroom/publications/land-degradation-neutrality-knowledge-management-and-learning-initiative As part of the preparation of the 2024 GEF Monitoring Report, the Secretariat asked Agencies to provide examples of project-level monitoring data showing associated biophysical changes for relevant area-based core indicators. This led to developing paragraph 24 and presenting related satellite imagery in Figure 4 of the report, illustrating the impact of pasture management on Grassland in Uruguay. Further, initial discussions were held on GEF-9 Results Measurement Framework to further address the recommendation going forward.	Rating: Medium These early initiatives are acknowledged. Progress is medium.

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	<i>recent additions to the platform by adding protected areas as polygons on the map.</i>			

15. Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF ([GEF/E/C.66/02](#)), February 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should ensure that co-design of projects with communities is possible under the suite of GEF policies and guidelines, for projects where community partnership is a critical element. The ongoing review of GEF policy and guidelines should be done in anticipation of the proposed “whole of society” approach in GEF-9, which emphasizes stakeholder engagement across different segments of society.	Agreed (GEF/C.66/15) The GEF Secretariat appreciates that this recommendation highlights the importance of recognizing communities as more than beneficiaries but rather as partners in the design and selection of activities. As highlighted by this recommendation, co-design could lead to more significant roles for communities within projects. The GEF Secretariat therefore agrees that CBAs could be further promoted in projects where community partnership is a critical element. Considering the renewed focus and attention to inclusion and the “whole of society” approach in GEF-8 and expectations to further develop this in GEF-9, <i>the substance of this recommendation will be considered in the lead up to the GEF-9 replenishment and the associated GEF-9 programming directions and policy agenda. The GEF Secretariat will also explore considerations for extending CBAs in the ongoing review of GEF policies and guidelines as appropriate.</i>	GEF-8 and GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium In line with the renewed focus on inclusion and the "whole of society" approach, we are preparing a strategy for GEF-9 that prioritizes partnerships with communities. This strategy will be developed in the lead-up to the GEF-9 replenishment and will inform the associated programming directions and policy agenda. Furthermore, we are exploring considerations for extending CBAs in the ongoing review of GEF policies and guidelines, as appropriate. By working together with communities and promoting CBAs, we aim to foster more inclusive and effective partnerships that drive positive environmental and social impacts.	Rating: Medium IEO notes the progress made so far and agrees with the rating of medium.
Recommendation 2: Building on earlier guidance, the GEF Secretariat, together with the GEF STAP, should provide more clarity and guidance on when and how CBAs can be used in GEF projects. This would include examples of results indicators observed in projects and appropriate guidance to facilitate the use of CBAs.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.66/15) The GEF Secretariat recognizes the important role played by communities in influencing environmental and socioeconomic outcomes and notes the findings in the Evaluation on challenges related to effective community involvement in project design beyond consultations. As such, the GEF Secretariat appreciates that	GEF-8 and GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium We have initiated discussions with STAP to explore opportunities to further promote the use of CBAs in GEF projects and programs. Furthermore, we are committed to prioritizing CBAs in GEF-9 programming directions. This includes incorporating CBAs	Rating: Medium IEO notes the progress made so far and agrees with the rating of medium.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	there may be room for providing further clarity on when and how CBAs can be applied in project design and implementation of GEF financed activities. <i>The GEF Secretariat will seek further advice from STAP on opportunities to further promote the use of CBA in GEF projects and programs as appropriate. This may include considerations to prepare a best practice document with STAP and incorporating into GEF-9 thematic discussions. In addition, the GEF Secretariat will continue to expand the scale and scope of CBAs in relevant projects such as the GEF SGP and ICI in consultation with relevant GEF Implementing Agencies. Moreover, the GEF Secretariat will consider opportunities to promote the use of CBAs in GEF projects within the context of the Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning as well as the GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy,</i> intended to enable countries to maximize expected outcomes and to take ownership in design and implementation.		into thematic discussions and exploring opportunities to promote their use in relevant projects, such as the GEF Small Grants Program (SGP) and the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI). We will continue to work closely with relevant GEF Implementing Agencies to expand the scale and scope of CBAs.	
Recommendation 3: The GEF Secretariat should develop an approach for tracking of devolved responsibility and/or financial resources to the local level for GEF projects as appropriate. Such tracking could differentiate between resources allocated to national CSOs, IPLCs, women’s groups, etc. as relevant.	Agreed (GEF/C.66/15) The GEF Secretariat agrees that there is scope to further refine its approach to tracking devolved responsibility and/or financial resources in GEF projects. The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that some measurement of socio-economic co-benefits is already a part of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework. Over the years, successive revisions of the GEF’s results architecture have strengthened the GEF’s capacity to disaggregate data by sex,	Not specified	Rating: Medium We recognize the need to further strengthen our capacity to track and measure benefits for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), civil society, and youth. As we move forward with GEF-9, we are considering the inclusion of socio-economic indicators to better capture and monitor the results of GEF financing for IPLCs, civil society, and youth. This may involve further	Rating: Medium IEO notes the progress made so far and agrees with the rating of medium. IEO also notes that there is no timeline specified for this action item

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	covering key environmental results areas where differentiated impact may take place on the well-being of girls and women. Details on how Agencies and countries should ensure projects track only direct beneficiaries through the related Core Indicator has also been strengthened in GEF Guidelines on the Implementation of the GEF-8 Results Measuring Framework. The GEF Geospatial Platform, launched in 2023, provides the geographic locations of beneficiary communities. In support of the GEF-8 “whole of society” and inclusion approaches, the GEF Secretariat has committed to working toward improving the tracking of socio-economic co-benefits. The GEF8 Replenishment Participants emphasized this focus through a policy recommendation to “improve the capture of human and socio-economic well-being metrics as well as climate change adaptation co-benefits in the results monitoring and improve their consideration in the design of GEF-funded projects and programs to further support the achievement of GEBs”. In line with this policy recommendation, <i>the GEF Secretariat has submitted a document for Council endorsement at its 66th Council Meeting entitled “Tracking and Measuring the Socioeconomic Co-benefits of GEF Investments”. This document outlines steps to improve the measurement of socio-economic co-benefits in results reporting and their consideration in the design of GEF-financed projects and programs. This may include opportunities to better</i>		disaggregating indicators to include beneficiary groups and exploring the feasibility of tracking financing supporting these groups at the corporate level.	

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>capture and monitor the results of GEF financing for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), civil society, and youth. In addition, a possibility may be to further disaggregate indicators that include the number of beneficiary people as their unit of measurement by, for example IPLCs and youth. Simultaneously, the Secretariat will explore the feasibility of tracking financing supporting IPLCs, civil society and youths at the corporate level.</i>			

16. Learning from Challenges in GEF Projects ([GEF/E/C.66/03](#)), February 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: This report recommends that while the GEF Secretariat operationalizes the recently approved GEF Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy in consultation with members of the GEF partnership, it would be beneficial to reflect and apply the lessons/guiding principles relevant to the GEF, in the detailed action plans for knowledge and learning.	Agreed (GEF/C.66/16) As articulated in the table above, <i>the eight specific guiding principles</i> to which this recommendation refers are well aligned with several existing policies and processes in the GEF and <i>will be further embodied as appropriate in specific action areas to be implemented under the KM&L strategy, in consultation with STAP and GEF agencies.</i>	Not specified	Rating: Substantial As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen knowledge and learning across the GEF partnerships, the GEF Secretariat is taking steps that consider many of the guiding principles. At the start of GEF-8, the Secretariat through the Country Engagement Strategy organized regional workshops to roll-out and socialize the programming directions for all recipient countries. This was particularly critical for the Integrated Programs, which required a careful understanding by countries so they can assess and prioritize what is most relevant to their national context. As a result, the programs include over 90 countries with child projects, thereby creating opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing on the complex global environmental challenges targeted by the programs. As the IPs moved toward the design phase, the GEF Secretariat engaged with Lead Agencies to provide guidance and support to design teams of country child projects, including scoping conditions (Principle 2), benchmarking (Principle 3), and contextual analysis (Principle 4). This ensured consistency and coherence across the portfolio, while at the same time embedding knowledge and learning as a key priority for investment. The engagement by Lead Agencies also fostered	Rating: Substantial GEF IEO acknowledges progress made, especially in relation to integrated programs. At the same time, the findings from the ongoing KM evaluation, as well as other recent GEF IEO evaluations contributing to the Eights Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS8), indicate gaps in project-to-project knowledge exchange, country-level sharing, capture and application of lessons to design, among other issues.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
			alignment between the coordination platforms and country child projects. As a result, agencies and executing partners are now well positioned to promote knowledge sharing and learning during implementation, which will support effective monitoring and foster adaptive management (Principle 5) across the program. Finally, the GEF is working with Lead Agencies and STAP to promote project and program level learning through connecting people and processes, such as expert workshops organized around key thematic issues to frame concepts that will foster adaptive management. One such workshop was on the critical forest biomes program, which involved over 50 experts from across the GEF partnership and externally. A key outcome is the establishment of working groups and communities of practice that will engage in deep-dive assessments to generate and socialize knowledge during implementation.	

17. Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems ([GEF/E/C.66/04](#)), February 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: GEF projects should shift their focus from solely providing early warning information to fostering early actions during disaster events. GEF projects ought to prioritize data usability and ensure that both national and local plans are in place. This involves establishing effective communication systems and providing the necessary knowledge of how to respond once the warning is issued. To overcome the “last mile” challenge, GEF projects must prioritize community engagement, capacity building, and the development of tailored communication strategies to address the specific needs and challenges of remote and vulnerable communities.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.66/17) Many of the adaptation actions supported by the LDCF and the SCCF aid communities in dealing with natural hazards, for example by supporting the ‘climate-proofing’ of key public infrastructure such as buildings, water supply and sanitation systems; establishing climate resilient storm shelters; and ‘safety at sea’ measures for vulnerable fisherfolk. Such measures can help communities better cope with climate extremes and hazards. However, the GEF does not directly support disaster risk management; therefore, activities that fall purely in the area of disaster risk management, such evacuation and reconstruction, are outside the mandate for support provided by the GEF, LDCF and SCCF. <i>In alignment with the mandates of the LDCF and SCCF, the Secretariat will continue to seek opportunities to support early adaptation action in the face of climate variability and extremes, in conjunction with support for climate information and early warning systems.</i>	Not specified	Rating: Substantial In alignment with LDCF and SCCF mandates, the GEF Secretariat has continued to engage with OFPs, Agencies, and global and regional partners to support early warning action in the face of climate variability and extremes, in conjunction with support for climate information and early warning systems. This has included approval and development of new projects that foster early action to reduce climate vulnerabilities and risks, as well as overcoming “last mile” challenges, including by prioritizing community engagement, and the development of tailored communication strategies to address the specific needs and challenges of remote vulnerability communities.	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes the progress made by the GEF Secretariat in approving and developing new projects that foster early action and address "last mile" challenges. The IEO will monitor the portfolio to assess continued efforts.
Recommendation 2: The GEF Secretariat, STAP, and GEF Agencies should continue aligning indicators with established good practices. It is advisable for GEF projects to adopt the most fitting indicators in line with WMO guidelines that are informed by international good practices, and lessons learned from past experiences. These indicators would effectively measure the	Partially agreed (GEF/C.66/17) While indicators for CIEWS do not align with the focal areas of the GEF Trust Fund, as part of its ongoing efforts to improve capture of socio-economic wellbeing and adaptation benefits, it will explore integrating best practices related to CIEWS indicators in the GEF Trust Fund. The results	Next adaptation programing strategy (2026-2030)	Rating: Substantial In preparation for development of the new LDCF/SCCF programming strategy for the 2026-2030 period, the Secretariat has prepared and convened in depth Technical Advisory Group meetings. These meetings included substantial discussion on CIEWS, as well as implications for impact	Rating: Medium The IEO notes the GEF Secretariat's preparation for new programming strategy and will continue tracking the development of indicators for CIEWS.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
success of CIEWS interventions, serve as a roadmap for future interventions and provide information to global results frameworks. Furthermore, for effective monitoring, it is suggested to set minimum standards for measuring and tracking CIEWS components at the project level. In alignment with the ongoing efforts to streamline and simplify the GEF results framework, this approach emphasizes repurposing existing indicators at the project level rather than introducing new ones. The overarching goal is to enhance the quality of measurement and tracking of the application of CIEWS components, ensuring that interventions are well-informed and impactful.	frameworks of the LDCF and SCCF, however, do include indicators for CIEWS. The Secretariat updates its LDCF/SCCF indicators every four years, as it launches the next adaptation programming strategy. The indicators are revised in accordance with best adaptation practice and in alignment, where possible, with the indicators of other climate funds, while adhering to the principle of streamlining the results framework in order to prevent overburdening of GEF Agencies and countries. <i>The GEF Secretariat will revisit, and may update, the LDCF/SCCF indicators that will accompany the adaptation programming strategy for the 2026-2030 period, including indicators for CIEWS.</i>		monitoring and indicators. These meetings benefitted from the insights of key actors in the CIEWS and climate adaptation impact monitoring. Further consultations have also been held with IPCC authors and other stakeholders.	
Recommendation 3: The GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies should continue to explore strategies to enhance the financial sustainability of CIEWS components. The significant costs associated with the operation and maintenance of CIEWS initiatives require a tailored approach to secure long-term financing to enable their continued success beyond the project's completion. Recognizing the complexities of engaging the private sector and acknowledging their potential role, particularly in LDCs, GEF projects are encouraged to support creating an enabling environment for the private sector in developing innovative adaptation solutions derived from CIEWS. This is especially important considering the multiple applications and increasing advantages that CIEWS offers to several sectors, including	Partially agreed (GEF/C.66/17) The LDCF and SCCF projects which support CIEWS include strengthening of institutional capacity of meteorological agencies and mainstreaming their services with sectors such as agriculture. This has often led to robust government institutions which have been continuing to monitor and provide climate and weather data after project completion. Regarding the private sector, engagement has been primarily in the application and use of climate data in sectors where private sector actors are active. The GEF Secretariat is supporting countries in piloting innovative CIEWS based and private sector led adaptation solutions and creating enabling policy environments, including in the agriculture advisory and climate risk insurance sectors.	Not specified	Rating: Substantial The GEF Secretariat has continued to identify opportunities for private sector engagement in CIEWS. This has included launching a third round of the Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation, with a focus on innovation and enabling sector creation for private sector engagement for the private sector in developing innovative adaptation solutions across sectors. This also includes the development of blended finance vehicles which potential to invest in enterprises that provide and use CIEWS.	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat's efforts to engage the private sector in CIEWS through the Challenge Program and the development of blended finance vehicles. While these initiatives may help address financial sustainability, they may be of limited scope. The IEO will continue to monitor the progress of these efforts.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
transportation, agriculture, tourism, finance, and insurance.	<i>It will continue to identify more such opportunities for private sector engagement in CIEWS, including through the Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation. As such, the GEF Secretariat welcomes highlighting the importance of continuing to ensure that GEF support for CIEWS includes purposeful financial sustainability strategies to enable the medium and long-term functioning and use of the systems.</i>			

18. Evaluation of Cofinancing in the GEF ([GEF/E/C.67/01](#)), June 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation (a): Re-evaluate the GEF approach to cofinancing. The GEF Secretariat should assess whether the cofinancing targets at the portfolio level are sufficiently ambitious while remaining realistically achievable to maintain credibility; establish precise criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of cofinancing components; and assess adequacy and quality of cofinancing within project proposals.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.67/10) <i>An assessment of the ambition and realism of co-financing targets at the portfolio level will be undertaken as part of the GEF-9 replenishment, leading to the establishment of targets for the next phase.</i> The findings of this Evaluation will be an essential input into those discussions. However, the establishment of precise criteria for inclusion or exclusion of certain components and assessment thereof could act against the flexibility that IEO notes as an advantage of co-financing arrangements at the GEF and reflecting the diverse nature of the GEF’s 18 Agencies. Co-financing confirmations are provided in the course of project preparation and negotiations among Agencies and third parties, not the Secretariat. Implementing this recommendation would require: 1) ascertaining the extent of the contribution of each cofinancier to the project objectives, 2) a capacity to assess the details of co-financing that would be available only at the country, Agency, project levels, and 3) additional capacity and resources at the Secretariat level and effort at the Agency level to assess the terms, source, and quality of the supportive evidence. This is outside the scope of the mandate and resources of the Secretariat and would result in a significant increase in reporting and compliance efforts that	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium The following actions were considered and proposed to 68 th Council in the ‘Streamlining the GEF Project Cycle’, but Council requested more time and suggested to consider this in the context of GEF9 policy reforms: 1. Recognize in guidelines the distinction between joint cofinancing (e.g. funds managed through the project budget by the executing entity) and parallel cofinancing (i.e. funds managed separately by other entities). 2. Develop guidelines for reporting of parallel and other co-financing as additional funds leveraged outside the GEF project 3. Revise co-financing guidelines for CSO and private sector execution to be managed more flexibly by introducing ranges for expected contributions and respective shares of Project Management Costs, based on the type and size of co-financing institutions. 4. Develop guidelines on how to measure financial equivalence and track in. Therefore, efforts in this area will proceed alongside advancements on the GEF-9 Policy Directions, which will be addressed in upcoming Replenishment meetings.	Rating: Medium The measures under consideration, as listed in Management’s response, are crucial for addressing the gaps in the current GEF approach to cofinancing. Further action on these measures is possible alongside the work on GEF-9 Policy Directions. Management has already taken a significant step by incorporating these measures as part of the efforts to streamline the project cycle. However, actual progress will be realized when these measures are approved and integrated into the GEF project cycle requirements.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	would undermine ongoing, simultaneous efforts at streamlining. The Secretariat believes that an assessment of the ‘quality’ of co financing would similarly require the Secretariat to assess funding coming from GEF’s donors, recipients, private sector, and other partners that would be challenging and potentially sensitive, particularly from a stakeholder engagement perspective. <i>The Secretariat will nevertheless revisit the guidelines relevant to co-financing in the context of the review of applicable policies in GEF-8. Where needed, additional guidance to Agencies on the nature of evidence required through revisions to these guidelines.</i>			
Recommendation (b): Revise the requirement concerning proportionality in covering management costs through cofinancing, taking into account that the majority of GEF projects rely on in-kind contributions for cofinancing, and a significant portion of raised cofinancing is administered by entities separate from the GEF project’s management unit. The existing requirement is not aligned with prevailing practices and definitions of cofinancing, resulting in substantial administrative exchanges between the GEF Secretariat and Agencies.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.67/10) The proportionality requirement is designed to promote equitable sharing of project management costs among the GEF and co-financing entities, so that the GEF Trust Fund does not bear a disproportionate burden of the Project Management Costs (PMC) for administration. The Secretariat already allows for some flexibility in this proportionality requirement of management costs if project co-financing is mainly in kind. The rationale behind this requirement not only involves the ‘burden-sharing’ rule but also the reasonableness, cost-effectiveness, and accuracy of management and administrative costs for	Not specified	Rating: Not applicable As with cofinancing decision of Council, this work is deferred to GEF-9 in the context of review of cofinancing and Project Management Costs more broadly.	Rating: Negligible Management partially agreed with the recommendation. While it felt that revising the requirement for proportionality in covering project management costs is not necessary, it noted that it will revisit the merits of requiring strict proportionality. Management’s response indicates that this reconsideration may take place during the next replenishment period (GEF-9).

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	projects. When co-financing is entirely ‘in-kind’, the costs associated with the project’s execution that cannot be covered by the PMC are covered by the project components (i.e., project budget) if there are clear terms of reference specifying the specific deliverables associated with the component. The Secretariat is not in agreement with the conclusion that a revision of this requirement is the solution to the issues identified by IEO at this time. Notwithstanding, <i>the Secretariat will revisit the merits of requiring strict proportionality, in the context of a planned broader review of Project Management Costs and streamlining efforts.</i>			
Recommendation (c): Strengthen the monitoring of cofinancing realization by verifying information provided by Agencies and rectifying any discrepancies. The GEF Secretariat must ensure quality control on data concerning the realization of cofinancing. In particular, when Agencies report on a newly realized cofinancing contribution that was not originally included in the CEO Endorsement/Approval request, such new contribution should require the same verification as that required during CEO endorsement.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.67/10) The requirements in the co-financing policy and guidelines at the PIF & CEO Endorsement stages differ from those applicable at the Midterm Review and Terminal Evaluation stages. The Secretariat has already made progress, as noted in the evaluation, on tracking and reporting of co-financing commitments and realization following updates in the co-financing policy and the GEF Portal that provides real time aggregated information. In this context, although the Secretariat has initiated reporting on co-financing realization, it must be noted that the	Ongoing	Rating: Substantial The GEF Secretariat routinely reviews co-financing materialized at MTR and TE stages, and probes Agencies in instances when further justifications are needed to explain the level of actual co-financing. In addition, exchanges indicate that some Agencies are establishing processes and reporting mechanisms to receive prompt updates on co-financiers’ disbursements.	Rating: Medium The Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO) acknowledges the progress made in implementing the action plan. However, improvements in the quality of information on cofinancing are not yet evident in the most recent terminal evaluations reviewed by the GEF IEO. The IEO will continue to monitor and track advancements in this area.

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	Secretariat largely relies on data from the Agencies. <i>The GEF Secretariat will continue to work with Agencies to provide monitoring data through mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations that better show the quality of information on the realization of co-financing.</i>			

19. Evaluation of the Global Wildlife Program ([GEF/E/C.67/02/Rev.01](#)), June 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: The GEF should explore avenues to bolster support for GWP child projects that prioritize enhanced cross-border collaboration on Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT). This could be achieved by encouraging countries to exchange data and evidence, engage in cross-border wildlife monitoring, and coordinate joint initiatives with other countries.	Agreed (GEF/C.67/08) The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that the GWP has supported significant cross-border/transboundary action via the global coordination project (GCP) to date. The GWP GCP was designed to support critical transboundary, regional or global activities needed to address drivers of wildlife loss, including through the knowledge exchange, technical assistance and partnership outcomes of the global coordination project. The GWP global coordination project has made significant gains in this area through targeted support from the coordination project that facilitates exchange and collaboration across countries, including: • Regional and cross-regional workshops on strengthening legal and criminal justice frameworks to combat wildlife crime in 2017 and 2018 delivered with the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products. • A targeted workshop on lessons learned in combating illegal wildlife trade for GEF-6 projects in 2022. • A 2022 virtual knowledge exchange and guidance note on enhancing inter-agency coordination on wildlife law enforcement, which emphasized the importance of national and	Ongoing	Rating: Substantial Over the last year, additional progress has been made on cross-border collaboration, as one of the pillars of the Global Wildlife Program, including through: The GWP project twinning program, to support and facilitate cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange through activities including training workshop, staff exchange, study tour, and mentorship. This includes an explicit selection criterion on transboundary and international cooperation. Four twinning proposals were selected in the first competitive round of GWP twinning. The aim of the program is to facilitate additional collaboration between GWP countries. The South Africa-Chad exchange was completed in February 2025, with further twinning exchanges to take place in 2025. Following the success of the first round, the GWP coordination project will announce a further competitive round of twinning exchanges in the second half of 2025. GWP virtual knowledge exchange: A virtual knowledge exchange for the GWP community and other conservation practitioners was held in December 2024, profiled case studies from Nepal, DRC, Kenya and Ecuador. A parallel global survey of anti-poaching lessons and progress gathered around 50 responses, including 15	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes the GEF’s continued efforts to strengthen cross-border collaboration under the GWP. Initiatives such as the twinning program, virtual knowledge exchanges, and engagement with ICCWC demonstrate focus on peer learning, capacity building, and transboundary cooperation. The alignment of technical assistance in GEF-8 with country needs and the use of established learning groups are positive steps toward fostering sustained collaboration. The IEO will continue to monitor developments in this area.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	transboundary law enforcement collaboration. • A 2023 virtual knowledge exchange for countries on conservation technology including documentation of lessons, good practices and available tools including to manage and share data to facilitate cross-border wildlife management • Thematic discussions on strengthening transboundary and cross-border cooperation at multiple webinars and GWP annual conferences, and facilitation of joint initiatives between GWP participating countries via quarterly regional coordination calls. The GEF Secretariat would like to point to the fact that the GEF is country demand driven. This means that the GEF Secretariat responds to the stated needs and priorities of GEF recipient countries within the bounds of the relevant GEF Programming Directions. Therefore, the extent to which the GEF can provide support to countries for transboundary cooperation within the GWP and other STAR-funded focal areas is determined by the interest, uptake, and actions of participating recipient countries. Nonetheless, in response to this recommendation, <i>the GEF Secretariat in partnership with the GWP lead agency will continue to seek both immediate and longer-term opportunities to further support cross-border collaboration to counter IWT, including through:</i>		transboundary sites. Results will be published in a future feature story. The theme of the opening panel of the 2024 GWP Annual Conference was transboundary collaboration and featured government officials from Panama, Philippines, Guinea, and Zambia presenting their experiences and good practices. International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) https://iccwc-wildlifecrime.org/): Targeted calls were held between ICCWC partners and seven national project development teams, which helped opportunities to fund the implementation of recommendations arising from ICCWC Toolkit or Indicator Framework assessments, including to strengthen transboundary, regional and inter-regional collaboration. In Ethiopia, the GWP coordination project, with UNODC and UNDP, co-financed the completion of the ICCWC Indicator Framework to guide the design of the GEF-8 GWP Ethiopia project. Findings identified gaps including opportunities to strengthen collaboration through multi-lateral trainings on IWT. GWP GEF-8 technical assistance: The GWP lead agency consulted with GEF-8 participating countries on their technical needs and used these to inform the GEF-8 coordination project outputs and activities, including support for enhanced cross-border collaboration. Technical assistance under Component 2 will be delivered through established learning groups of	

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	• <i>The recently launched GWP project twinning program, to support and facilitate cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange through activities such as a GWP supported study tour, training workshop, staff exchange, and mentorship. This includes an explicit selection criterion on transboundary and international cooperation.</i> • <i>A virtual knowledge exchange is being planned to share lessons from anti-poaching efforts, including transboundary wildlife monitoring and joint surveillance and operations.</i> • <i>An ongoing partnership with the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), including support to maximize GWP country engagement in regional and cross-regional activities, for example inter-regional enforcement meetings, and knowledge exchange with Wildlife Enforcement Networks. In addition, GWP is facilitating discussions between GEF-8 WCD IP PPG teams and ICWC partners on priorities for counter wildlife trafficking, including transboundary and international collaboration.</i> • <i>The development of a detailed technical assistance package for GEF-8 WCD IP in consultation with participating countries. The selection criteria to prioritize coordination project activities includes: areas important to facilitate transboundary</i>		participating countries, aiming to build networks and capacity for effective cross-border coordination. Activities include facilitating GWP country participation in relevant ICCWC activities to build transboundary, regional and inter-regional collaboration.	

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>and international cooperation, e.g., law enforcement coordination across supply chains; coordination on demand reduction.</i>			
Recommendation 2: The results framework and indicators selected in the child projects should be aligned with the program framework document to demonstrate overall program level effectiveness and additionality. This requires clearly defining roles and responsibilities among the implementing agencies, the GEFSEC, and the lead agency, as well as aligning the global and child project timelines.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.67/08) Overall, the GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this recommendation. Noting that this recommendation has three somewhat distinct parts, the GEF secretariat has varying levels of agreement with each component: a) alignment between the results framework and indicators at the program and project levels (agree); b) clearly defined roles and responsibilities (agree); and c) aligning global and child project timelines (partially agree). a) Alignment between the results framework and indicators at the program and project levels: The GEF Secretariat agrees with this part of the recommendation. Since program inception in GEF-6, the GWP has pursued and achieved alignment between the results framework and indicators at the program (PFD) and child project levels by using the GEF core indicators. All GWP child projects across all phases are required to report at the level of the GEF core indicators. The GEF core indicators were designed to capture effectiveness and additionality of GEF investments explicitly and specifically and continue to do so. In addition to the use of aligned core indicators, the GWP has been striving to go beyond these metrics of effectiveness and	a) August 2025 b) September 2024 c) GEF-8	Rating: Substantial Over the last year the GEFSEC, in coordination with the Global Wildlife Program have made substantial progress on this recommendation, including, Although the results frameworks and indicators for GWP GEF-6 & GEF-7 were selected ahead of the IEO report, the GWP lead agency continues to follow up with the GEF Agencies of closing GEF-6 projects to remind them to complete the GWP tracking tool in order to show their contributions to program results and impact. Latest GEF-6 and GEF-7 aggregated impacts will be reported in the next GWP progress report scheduled for June 2025. GEF-8 GWP child projects are currently under review, including for alignment of the results frameworks and indicators at the program and project levels. The endorsement deadline is August 9th, 2025. a.) PPG teams were reminded of GEF M&E roles and responsibilities, and these aspects were considered in the GWP lead agency review of draft national project documents and M&E plans shared for review ahead of submission for GEF CEO Endorsement. Roles and responsibilities will also be included in	Rating: Substantial The IEO notes continued progress in strengthening results-based management under the GWP. Efforts to improve indicator alignment and promote use of the GWP tracking tool in GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects are a positive step toward enhancing the visibility of program contributions. The ongoing review of GEF-8 child projects, including attention to M&E roles, responsibilities, and capacity-building through a new M&E working group, is another positive step. The sequencing of the global coordination project to align with national timelines is pragmatic. The IEO will continue to monitor developments in this area.

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	additionality to measure project results and impacts across the diversity of GWP projects. This is a much higher bar and a more challenging task on which the GWP lead agency in collaboration with the child projects are actively working. For example, in GEF-6 GWP implemented a tracking tool that includes a set of indicators for measuring progress in addressing poaching, trafficking and demand, for which national child projects are requested to report to the Lead Agency at baseline, mid-term review, and terminal evaluation. The Lead Agency continues to request and expects GEF GWP Implementing Agencies to report on this tracking tool, and acknowledges the challenges encountered by some projects to meet this higher bar. In addition, GWP results across GEF-6 and GEF-7 phases are aggregated by the Lead Agency from child project PIRs and reported annually in comprehensive GWP progress reports. In GEF-8, the WCD IP has developed a fully integrated Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system which ensures alignment of child project results frameworks to the program results framework, incorporating the lessons learned from GEF-6 and GEF-7. Detailed guidance has been provided to PPG teams on program M&E requirements, the common GWP-required indicators across the different technical themes, and the development of child project results frameworks and indicators to ensure adequate alignment. Furthermore, the GEF-8 WCD IP has a defined task team on M&E		a topic for discussion in the new GWP M&E working group that will be established to build M&E capacity and understanding of program M&E requirements among national project teams. b.) A number of the GEF-8 national project preparations experienced delays and accordingly, the GWP lead agency sequenced the submission of the global coordination project to align the global project timelines to national projects and to allow for the global project to better reflect the technical needs of national projects.	

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	and is not only setting the standards for tracking results and impact but is, simultaneously building capacity and co-ownership of tracking results with child projects. <i>The new system will be launched via the GEF-8 WCD IP child projects, fully integrating program guidance into project results frameworks to be included in the final CEO endorsement by August 2025.</i> b) Clearly defined roles and responsibilities: The GEF Secretariat agrees with this part of the recommendation. The GEF Secretariat notes that the GEF Project and Program Cycle Policy depicts in detail the roles and responsibilities among implementing agencies, the GEFSEC, and the lead agency in the context of Programs. <i>The GWP GEF-8 M&E framework guidance will therefore be updated to reference this document and clarify roles and responsibilities by September 2024.</i> c) Aligning global and child project timelines: The GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this part of the recommendation. GEF programs are made up of a set of child projects under a PFD (GWP included). The design of each child project is based on the priorities, commitment needs and context of the country (as is the case of GWP’s			

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	country child projects), including the life of project end date/timeframe. Although GEF Council approves the PFD and child projects as a package, the timelines can differ at any number of stages including the initiation of PPG, CEO endorsement, project inception and during implementation. Therefore, it is natural and expected that the timeline of projects can shift due context and partner-specific factors that may regularly occur. In addition, significant global shocks and force majeure (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) can cause unexpected changes in timelines. The GEF Secretariat notes the apparent misalignment in life-of-project timeframes between the GWP Global Coordination Project and country child projects in GEF-6 (for example. Annex A). The GEF Secretariat would like to point to the fact that the GEF-6 coordination project was intentionally started well ahead of most national child projects so that it could establish a functional GWP knowledge exchange platform to support country projects as they came online. This was a proactive rapid establishment of the coordination project that was essential for effective operation of the program. The GEF Secretariat further notes that this difference in timeframe was reduced in GEF-7 due to several changes to the project cycle policy approved by GEF Council including a shortening of the project PPG phase by six months, as well as an Agency fee disbursement structure and timeline			

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	that incentivizes faster disbursement action by GEF Agencies. Furthermore, the GEF Secretariat recalls that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in delays in project start-up and inception, thereby offsetting the project timelines in both GEF-6 and GEF-7 as reflected in Annex A of the evaluation. Based on previous experience, the benefits of global coordination support, including capacity strengthening and networking among others, are cumulative and sustained beyond the time of the global coordination project. The GWP has demonstrated that this core alliance initiated and supported by the global coordination project is strong and is likely to sustain impact beyond the life of the investment. <i>Going forward in GEF-8, the timing of the submission of the global coordination project will be aligned as far as possible to the submission of the national child projects. This will be further facilitated by the continuation of the GWP with the same Lead Agency across the GEF-6 and GEF7 cycles, as the program knowledge exchange and coordination functions are already operational and engaging the new GEF-8 WCD IP child projects.</i>			
Recommendation 3: To further strengthen knowledge management in the GWP, the GEF Secretariat should support a knowledge management platform which systematizes the collection and sharing of knowledge across the program phases. This	Agreed (GEF/C.67/08) The GEF agrees with this recommendation. This recommendation has two distinct parts: a) GEF Secretariat support to a KM	Not specified	Rating: Substantial Substantial progress was made this year to increase the interoperability of IP platforms for enhancing knowledge sharing and fostering a learning environment between	Rating: Medium The IEO notes the efforts undertaken to increase the interoperability among IP platforms to enhance cross-program learning and knowledge exchange among

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would ensure continuity in knowledge management even when there are changes in program management. Additionally, the coordination grant component and the child projects should be better aligned in timing.	platform; and b) Coordination grant and child project timing alignment. We have previously addressed the alignment of timing under the GEF management response to Recommendation 2 above, and thus will focus here on the first part of the recommendation regarding a KM platform. In June 2023, the GEF Council approved the Global Environment Facility Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (GEF/C64/07). This strategy guides and promotes a more systematic approach to how the GEF harnesses its knowledge resources, establish an appropriate system to management of the resources, and facilitate learning across the partnership. It is therefore framed around three main objectives: i) embedding cutting-edge knowledge into investments to generate public goods in line with GEF mandate and enhance the role of knowledge management in projects and programs, ii) increase knowledge flows through platforms through partnership and communities of practice; and iii) create and enable the environment for learning and capacity building for greater exchange of knowledge and collaboration across the partnership. The GWP knowledge management platform established under the GEF-6 global coordination project, and enhanced in subsequent GEF phases, continues to deploy an innovative and evolving calendar of technical assistance and exchange events		programs and across GEF-phases, including the principles of interoperability of IP platforms developed jointly by STAP and GEFSEC in consultation with GEF agencies. Further, a guidance note was launched last year after the Critical Forest Biomes IP (CFB IP) global meeting, during which the Wildlife IP lead agency was engaged to identify and discuss potential priorities for knowledge exchange and learning across the five biomes included in the CFB IP. The GWP continues to proactively engage and seek to collaborate with other IPs to amplify knowledge exchange and learning. For example, the program manager of the CI-led Ecosystem Restoration IP attended the GWP annual conference in Panama in January 2025 to share technical lessons on restoration. The GWP is also actively proposing 2025 collaboration opportunities on range-wide jaguar conservation (to WB-led and IUCN-led regional Amazon and Mesoamerica chapters of the Critical Forest Biomes IP) and on infrastructure-related threats to wildlife (to GRID IP).	programs and phases. The IEO will continue to monitor developments in this area.

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	and activities to strengthen cooperation and learning across the GWP network, as well as ensuring systemization of collection and sharing of knowledge across successive GEF phases and with other integrated programs working on similar technical themes. <i>Going forward, the GEF Secretariat, through both the new KM strategy as well as through the internal GEF Secretariat restructuring which places a greater emphasis on the knowledge management created by integrated approaches, will increase the interoperability of IP platforms for enhancing knowledge sharing and fostering a learning environment between programs and across GEF-phases.</i> By systematizing the collection and sharing of knowledge across program phases, the GEF Secretariat can ensure continuity and reduce knowledge loss during program management transition; facilitate access to lessons learned, best practices, and expertise to larger audiences; encourage collaboration and knowledge exchange among stakeholders; and support informed decision-making and improve program effectiveness.			
Recommendation 4: Conducting comprehensive risk assessments during the design phase, with regular updates throughout the project lifecycle, is essential for the effective and sustainable implementation of the Program. Emphasis should be placed on monitoring risks	Agreed (GEF/C.67/08) The GEF agrees with this recommendation. The GEF Secretariat takes a multifaceted approach to understanding, managing and reporting on risk at the portfolio, program,	July 2024 and August 2025	Rating: Substantial The GWP lead agency has continued to raise the profile of this issue with GWP projects. Notably, a virtual meeting on risk identification and management (including Environmental Social Framework risks) was	Rating: Medium The IEO notes the continued efforts of the GWP lead agency to strengthen risk identification and management across the program. The virtual meeting with GEF-8 PPG teams, complemented by guidance in

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related to climate change, conflict, fragility, pandemics, unsustainable tourism, and human rights violations.	project and activity level, both through social and environmental safeguards and through the provisions laid out in the new GEF Risk Appetite and framework. Furthermore, the GEF’s appetite for risk (substantial for context risk; high for innovation risk; and moderate for execution risk) reflects its unique mandate, intentional support to innovative approaches, exposure to a range of challenging situations, and objective to address the drivers of environmental degradation. It also translates the demand from countries and commitment of the GEF to provide support in higher risk contexts. The GEF Secretariat has moved forward rapidly to apply the new GEF Risk Appetite and framework, and has revised project templates to reflect this requirement for all projects (including all GEF-8 integrated program child projects), including a comprehensive risk assessment during the design phase (PPG) and identification of residual risks, i.e., after mitigation measures. For each risk category (for example: context, innovation, execution), Agencies provide a summary of risks identified, planned mitigation activities, and a risk rating on a four-point scale: Low, Moderate, Substantial, and High. As GEF Agencies report on risks at PIF stage, the GEF Secretariat engages with Agencies on risk assessments and ratings provided as part of regular project and program reviews. At Mid Term Review (MTR) GEF Agencies revise/update risks identified as		held with all GEF-8 PPG teams in September 2024. Lessons on risk management from prior GWP phases were shared at the meeting. Risks were also discussed at the virtual knowledge exchange on anti-poaching. This, as well as the detailed guidance on risks included in the PPG guidebook, facilitated a coordinated approach to risks across the different child project CEO ERs. Program-wide summaries of risks are provided annually in GWP progress reports.	the PPG guidebook, alignment of risk-related content in project documentation, and the integration of lessons from prior phases, reflect a proactive and coordinated approach to risk management. The IEO will continue to track how these efforts support risk-informed design and adaptive management at the project and the program level

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	needed, including mitigation measures. These are then aggregated and reported to the GEF Council at Work Program stage, and then in the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR). The GEF Policy on Social and Environmental Safeguards was approved by the GEF Council in December 2018, and sets out the GEF’s approach to anticipating, and then avoiding, preventing, minimizing, mitigating, managing, offsetting or compensating adverse impacts that GEF-financed projects and programs may have on people or the environment throughout the project or program cycle, thereby enhancing the environmental and social outcomes. The Policy states nine minimum requirements for the Agencies to identify and manage environmental and social risks and impacts in GEF-financed projects and programs. It requires all Agencies to have necessary policies, procedures, systems and capabilities in place to ensure that these nine minimum standards are met at all levels of project and program implementation, including by executing partners. The Policy specifies that, based on Agencies’ environmental and social screening and risk classification procedures and systems, Agencies document and report on environmental and social risk and potential impacts associated with the proposed project any associated measures to address such risks and impacts			

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	throughout the GEF project cycle; including during the following phases: Project Identification (PIF Preparation); Project Preparation (CEO Endorsement/Approval); Project Implementation (MTR), and Completion (TE). The Policy further calls on the Secretariat to report, annually, to the Council on the type and level of the risks and impacts identified in GEF projects and programs, and the management of these risks and impacts during project implementation and at project completion. At the programmatic level, the GWP Global Coordination Project tracks the risk ratings for each of the child projects and reports on them in annual GWP progress reports. Each GWP child project adheres to the GEF Policy on Social Environmental Safeguards and accordingly, all applicable GEF Implementing Agency SES procedures. <i>In alignment with this recommendation, the GEF Secretariat, in coordination with GWP GEF Agencies, will continue to adhere to both the GEF Social and Environment Safeguards policy and guidelines and apply the new Risk Appetite Framework in GEF-8. A detailed GEF-8 WCD-IP PPG guidebook includes specific guidance to project teams on assessment of social and environmental risks linked to field-based wildlife conservation and IWT projects and will be updated as needed.</i> <i>Furthermore, the global coordination project will convene a virtual coordination</i>			

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	<i>meeting during the PPG phase, to exchange information and share lessons from earlier GWP projects. In addition, the GWP global coordination project will continue to incorporate Social and Environmental risk management into its knowledge exchange and technical assistance activities, and report annually on risk management in annual GWP progress reports.</i> <i>The next GWP annual progress report, including risk management, is expected by July 2024. The coordinated approach on risk identification and management being taken for GEF-8 will be reflected in national child projects by August 2025.</i>			

20. Assessing Portfolio-Level Risk at the GEF ([GEF/E/C.67/03](#)), June 2024 GEF Council Meeting

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Recommendation 1: The GEF should refine the 2024 risk appetite statement to clarify risk ownership and establish a risk tolerance band. a) Clarify risk ownership: Articulate risk ownership within the GEF's implementing mechanism, encompassing implementing, and executing agencies, member countries, the Council, and the GEF itself. Specify the risk ownership of each entity. b) Establish a risk tolerance band: Define a clear range of risk tolerance for both the GEF and the Agencies at the portfolio level, clearly recognizing that levels of risk outside this band may still be accepted, but subject to a higher level of management scrutiny and approval.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.67/09) The GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this recommendation. The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that the GEF Risk Appetite approved by Council in 2024, based on the deliberations of a working group, did not establish a risk tolerance band. Nevertheless, it includes a commitment to review the Risk Appetite and Framework based on observed experience at the beginning of GEF-9. It is within this context that the GEF Secretariat will proceed on this recommendation. <i>Clarifying risk ownership</i> <i>The revision planned for GEF-9 will allow the clarification of risk ownership across the GEF partnership, building on foundational elements expressed in the GEF Risk Appetite:</i> “Responsibility for risk management is distributed across the partnership - among countries executing entities, Agencies, the GEF Secretariat and Council. Executing entities are responsible for managing risk in the day-to-day implementation of a project. They are overseen and supported by Agencies who adhere to their own operating frameworks in accordance with GEF minimum standards. This includes deploying experts and practices to address fiduciary risks (procurement and financial	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium As a prelude to fully delivering on this, further engagement on aligning risk appetite with incentives and programming for Agencies and countries took place in February 2025 during the GEF-9 Technical Advisory Group session on “Innovation and Risk,” featuring experts from climate funds, international NGOs, the private sector, GEF Agencies, and STAP. Exchanges around this commitment are set to take place around GEF-9 replenishment discussions.	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat’s proposed actions to clarify risk ownership and to explore the establishment of a risk tolerance band within the framework of the upcoming GEF-9 programming directions. The IEO will continue to monitor developments in this area.

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	management) and risks related to environmental and social safeguards. In Agencies, project teams are primarily responsible for managing risk. Finally, the Secretariat supports Council’s oversight of risk in the GEF portfolio, informed by data, including through reporting in the Monitoring Report.” Under its indirect operating model, the GEF Secretariat relies on Agencies’ risk management practices in addressing risk in projects and programs. The GEF Secretariat concurs with findings from the evaluation indicating that Agencies have already established active risk management and escalation structures. It should be noted that the GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards for Agencies approved by Council include that “a project-at-risk system is in place to flag when a project has developed problems that may interfere with the achievement of its objectives, and to respond accordingly to redress the problems” (GEF/C.57/04/Rev.02). GEF internal analyses and evaluation findings indicate many Agencies have in fact developed sophisticated enterprise risk management systems. During GEF-8, the GEF Secretariat anticipates the description of risk ownership to stay within these overall Council-approved parameters, as they reflect its indirect operating model whereby Agencies bear the direct risk. The GEF Secretariat recognizes that its risk			

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	management and governance structure differ from other climate funds, which operate under different business models and possess legal, oversight, and other essential capacities, assuming overall responsibility for fund utilization. While playing an important approval and oversight role, neither the GEF Secretariat nor Trustee directly supervises the use of GEF financing. This is the role of its 18 Agencies that receive funding and are responsible for project or program implementation. <i>Establishing a risk tolerance band</i> <i>The GEF Secretariat will explore the merits and applicability of introducing a risk tolerance band for the overall portfolio as it refines the GEF risk appetite at the beginning of GEF9, as agreed to by Council in the GEF Risk Appetite. In doing so, it will consider whether setting such risk tolerance band is practical, helpful and appropriate in the GEF context.</i> In principle, a risk tolerance level is helpful in that it helps to communicate the share of projects that can exceed an established risk appetite level. This could allow clarification that Council would accept that a given share of the GEF portfolio faces higher risk than what is expressed as per appetite levels, without resorting to extraordinary measures. In practice, setting a tolerance band would depart from the recently adopted GEF risk			

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	appetite and framework, in two main ways. First, appetite levels under the GEF Risk Appetite are set for three risk dimensions— Context, Innovation, Execution— whereas the IEO recommendation suggests that a tolerance level should be set for the overall risk where the overall risk is defined as the risk to achieving overall project outcomes. Second, appetite levels are set across the project lifecycle, whereas it is likely that the effectiveness of this tolerance band would be best assessed during implementation, when the risk is revealed, and when Agencies can indicate facing higher risk than anticipated.			
Recommendation 2: a) Establish a risk management mechanism to proactively manage risks within the GEF framework. This would include developing guidelines and processes for the GEF Secretariat and implementing agencies. b) Drawing on the experience of other global partnerships like the Green Climate Fund and the Global Fund, the GEF should enhance transparency and efficacy in risk management practices going forward. These may include (1) establishing risk management processes, setting standards, and providing the necessary support to implementing Agencies; (2) monitoring compliance; and (3) ensuring consistent communication of risk appetite from the Council and the GEF Management.	Agreed (GEF/C.67/09) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. <i>The GEF Secretariat will strengthen risk management and related support structures, within the confines of its operating model. This may include clarifying guidance in assessing and rating risk, and in identifying effective mitigation measures, as a way to enhance communication with Agencies on the risk appetite set by Council. The GEF Secretariat will also clarify further how it will report on the GEF risk appetite at the beginning of GEF-9, drawing from two years of implementation.</i> Accountability on the risk appetite implementation currently takes place in the Work Program Cover Note and in the Monitoring Report.	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium The GEF Risk Appetite documents include guidance on the scope and use of each of the nine risk categories covered by the GEF Risk Framework. These are used as a basis to review project-level risk assessments, mitigants and ratings, and provide comments to Agencies as appropriate. Consistent communication to Council on each Work Program’s risk profile is provided in the Cover Note and discussed during Council Meetings. Likewise, the GEF Secretariat is delivering on the plan made in the GEF Risk Appetite document to use the Monitoring Report as the place to provide more comprehensive analyses on risk during implementation, with project level examples.	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat’s proposed actions to strengthen risk management systems and related support structures under GEF-9. The IEO will continue to monitor progress in this area.

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	At the level of the GEF, regular internal monitoring and planned public reporting on portfolio risk along the GEF Risk Appetite allow the alerting of any observed deviation. This acts as a transparent and accountable risk management structure, with communications to Council structured around regular monitoring exercises. Here again, the GEF Secretariat recognizes its indirect operating model differs from the governance structure of other funds which enter into direct agreements with accredited entities governing use and return of funds, outcomes and other elements and as such, are directly exposed to risk. A key element of this aspect is ensuring that systematic monitoring takes place along the main milestones of the project lifecycle. Relevant GEF templates and related GEF Portal modules at PIF/PFD, CEO endorsement and MTR stages now include a dedicated section on Key Risks, aligned to the GEF Risk Appetite framework. This comes in addition to guidance from IEO to assess risk at completion with a view to supporting the sustainability of outcomes. The implementation of this framework involves ensuring quality risk assessments are provided during preparation and implementation.		Finally, exchanges with other Climate Funds, including the GCF, took place to discuss respective risk management frameworks and practices.	

21. Evaluation of GEF Interventions in the Chemicals and Waste Focal Area GEF-5 TO GEF-8 ([GEF/E/C.68/01](#)), December 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation (a): Strengthen the focus on policy and regulatory reforms, awareness, and communication within Chemicals and Waste projects and programs. The GEF should strengthen its focus on comprehensive policy and regulatory reforms, alongside heightened public awareness and communication efforts. Effective reforms require robust regulatory frameworks, supported by widespread public education campaigns to drive behavioral change, and enhanced enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance.	Agreed (GEF/C.68/07) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. Several ongoing and upcoming GEF programs and projects are already incorporating these elements into their designs, reflecting the focal area's focus on achieving "zero waste" and pollution-free solutions through the advancement of a circular economy. To further enhance this focus, <i>the GEF will continue to work with countries and implementing agencies to ensure the widespread adoption of these practices in GEF-9 and beyond. This will involve clear articulation of these principles in the GEF-9 programming directions.</i> <i>The GEF Secretariat anticipates that these efforts will be fully integrated into project design and implementation by the end of GEF-9.</i>	End of GEF-9	Rating: Medium In drafting the GEF-9 chemicals and waste focal area strategy the intent of the recommendation is being incorporated. Once the strategies are approved through the replenishment process it will be rolled out to countries via the GEF implementing agencies.	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges the actions proposed by the GEF Secretariat, including the integration of policy and regulatory reforms into projects, programs, and the GEF-9 programming directions. Looking ahead, the IEO will continue to monitor progress in this area, with particular attention to the development and enforcement of policies and regulations, as well as to awareness-raising and communication efforts aimed at driving behavior change.
Recommendation (b): Strengthen regulatory frameworks and further engagement with the broader private sector, including SMEs, to enhance project sustainability in chemicals and waste-related projects and programs. Regulatory reforms and compliance with international standards play a crucial role in encouraging private sector participation in chemicals projects. The GEF should assist	Agreed (GEF/C.68/07) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. The GEF Secretariat appreciates the IEO's insights regarding the importance of regulatory frameworks and private sector engagement in promoting sustainable	Ongoing and GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium In drafting the GEF-9 chemicals and waste focal area strategy the intent of the recommendation is being incorporated. Once the strategies are approved through the replenishment process it will be rolled out to countries via the GEF implementing agencies.	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges the actions proposed by the GEF Secretariat to integrate the IEO’s recommendations into ongoing and future projects and programs within the Chemicals and Waste focal area and GEF-9 programming directions. The IEO will continue to monitor progress in these areas.

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with reforms including formalizing the informal sector, enforcing anti-pollution laws, and legislating extended producer responsibility. In addition to strengthening regulatory frameworks, the GEF should continue to ensure the financial viability and technical capacity of small and medium enterprises through investments in advanced technologies and other forms of capacity building support.	practices in the chemicals and waste sector. The GEF Secretariat also appreciates the potential benefits of extended producer responsibility (EPR) legislation. We understand that the application of such legislation may not be universally feasible, given factors such as a country's role in global supply chains, its regulatory capacity, and the specific characteristics of its industrial sectors, which can influence the suitability and effectiveness of EPR legislation. The GEF is committed to supporting countries in formalizing informal sectors, enforcing anti-pollution laws, and implementing EPR legislation where appropriate. Several ongoing GEF projects are already working to integrate informal workers into the formal economy, particularly in sectors such as artisanal and small-scale gold mining, agriculture, and electronics. These projects also focus on ensuring that new production practices align with international standards and best practices, facilitating connections to global supply chains through private sector engagement. In addition, <i>the GEF will continue to support the financial viability and technical capacity of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through investments in advanced technologies and capacity-building support.</i> Addressing barriers such			

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	as high costs and limited access to technology will enable SMEs to improve their chemical management practices and adopt more sustainable production processes. To ensure the effective implementation of these initiatives, <i>the GEF will integrate the IEO's recommendations into its ongoing and future projects and programs in the chemicals and waste focal area. This will include incorporating the recommendations into the programming directions for GEF-9.</i>			
Recommendation (c): The GEF needs to ensure that investments in autoclaves, laboratory equipment, and other machinery for chemicals and waste management, associated with indigenous or imported technologies, are fully utilized. Local capacity must be addressed to ensure that technical skills of personnel are locally available thereby minimizing the risk of underutilization. To ensure sustainability, it is essential to ensure personnel receive adequate training, spare parts are readily accessible, and sufficient budgets are allocated for ongoing operation and maintenance.	Agreed (GEF/C.68/07) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. The successful implementation of these technologies hinges on several factors, including their suitability for the local context, stakeholder commitment, and the availability of necessary resources. The GEF has been actively incorporating these considerations into its project design, with a focus on identifying and promoting locally developed technologies that are appropriate for the specific geographic and environmental conditions. The GEF is committed to strengthening its project design to ensure the long-term operation and maintenance of these technologies. This includes providing comprehensive training programs, ensuring the accessibility of spare parts, and	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium In drafting the GEF-9 chemicals and waste focal area strategy the intent of the recommendation is being incorporated. Once the strategies are approved through the replenishment process it will be rolled out to countries via the GEF implementing agencies.	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges the actions taken by the GEF Secretariat to promote the long-term utilization and sustainability of new, locally appropriate technologies by incorporating related provisions into the GEF-9 programming directions. The IEO will continue to monitor progress in this area.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	allocating sufficient budgets for ongoing operation and maintenance. To further enhance these efforts, <i>the GEF will incorporate this recommendation in the GEF9 programming directions. This will ensure that future projects prioritize the effective implementation and long-term sustainability of new technologies, contributing to the overall success and impact of the GEF's interventions in the chemicals and waste focal area.</i>			
Recommendation (d): Integrate health co-benefit indicators into project designs and the design and monitoring frameworks. The GEF should, where relevant, incorporate health co-benefit indicators into project design and monitoring frameworks to better capture the impacts of its interventions. By adopting quantifiable indicators, these co-benefits can be effectively measured and tracked across projects. Greater emphasis on these indicators during project design will ensure that they are clearly defined within the project description, results framework, and theory of change, thereby enhancing the GEF's ability to demonstrate both environmental and health-related outcomes.	Agreed (GEF/C.68/07) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. This recommendation aligns with the founding principles of the multilateral environmental agreements that comprise the chemicals and waste focal area, which aim to prevent adverse health impacts on humans and the environment. To better capture the positive impacts of its projects on human health, <i>the GEF will assess relevant health-related indicators during the GEF-9 replenishment, and subsequently incorporate health-related indicators into its project design and monitoring frameworks, as appropriate, with relevant consultations and trainings.</i> This will enhance the GEF's ability to demonstrate the broader impacts of its interventions, showcasing not only the environmental benefits but also the positive effects on human health.	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium In drafting the GEF-9 chemicals and waste focal area strategy the intent of the recommendation is being incorporated into the strategy. Once the strategies are approved through the replenishment process it will be rolled out to countries via the GEF implementing agencies. Additionally, work has started with the GEF implementing agencies and the STAP to determine how to articulate the health benefits from the portfolio.	Rating: Medium The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat’s proposed actions to assess health-related indicators and integrate them into monitoring frameworks, as part of the provisions being developed for the upcoming GEF-9 programming directions. The IEO will continue to monitor progress in this area.

22. Evaluation of GEF Programs in Pacific Small Island Developing States ([GEF/E/C.68/02](#)), December 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation 1: Enhance coordination and collaboration to maximize development impact and resource efficiency. While existing coordination between governments and international agencies shows promise, there remains significant untapped potential to enhance donor alignment and government engagement for improved project outcomes. Key opportunities exist to strengthen external coherence through expanded partnerships among GEF Agencies and other development partners working in the Pacific. By implementing proven coordination mechanisms and fostering deeper collaboration, organizations can achieve more efficient resource allocation, minimize redundant efforts, and reduce transaction costs for governments. This coordinated approach would ultimately lead to more sustainable and impactful development initiatives that better serve the region's needs while optimizing the GEF's strategic influence through harmonized support systems.	Agreed (GEF/C.68/06) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that since GEF-5, a number of mechanisms have been utilized to increase the potential to enhance donor alignment and government engagement and to strengthen external coherence through expanded partnerships among GEF Agencies and other development partners. This has included: - National Dialogues and Expanded Constituency Workshops implemented under the Country Engagement Strategy, where Agencies within the GEF partnership as well as other bilateral and multilateral donors are invited to engage in discussions on programming at national and regional levels. These mechanisms facilitate and encourage sharing of knowledge and provide opportunities to build coherence and alignment amongst development partners. - Targeted donor collaboration, an example of which is the GEF-GCF Long -Term Visioning initiative¹. The Long-term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence, and Collaboration (LTV) between the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was initiated in 2021 in	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium GEF Secretariat has confirmed a number of plans for 2025 to enhance donor alignment and government engagement as well as strengthen external coherence with GEF Agencies and development partners working in the Pacific. These include through existing country engagement mechanisms such as the Expanded Constituency Workshops, of which one is scheduled for the Pacific in 2025. Efforts will be made to ensure there is significant representation not only at the country level but also from across the GEF Agencies and potential bilateral donors. Secondly, the GEF Secretariat continues to be actively involved in the Inter-Agency Consultative Group on SIDS, led by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHLRSS). Through this membership the GEF has and will have an opportunity to deepen collaboration with development partners who work in the Pacific in the context of the implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS. Finally, with the initiation of the GEF 9 replenishment process, there is an	Rating: Negligible The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat's ongoing efforts to enhance coordination and collaboration in the Pacific through Expanded Constituency Workshops, participation in the Inter-Agency Consultative Group on SIDS, and the GEF-9 replenishment process. The IEO will continue to track the progress and outcomes of these efforts as well as opportunities for other long-term actions.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	response to calls to ease access to country funding, increase impact and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of both funds through enhanced coordination and harmonization. - GEF Secretariat membership on the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHLRSS) led Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) on SIDS, which drove the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and will continue to do so for the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS). These meetings bring together multilateral and bilateral development partners and donors with the purpose of advancing and enabling SIDS to meet their priorities set under this global agenda. It provides an opportunity to deepen collaboration and harmonize support to all SIDS, including the Pacific SIDS. - At the project and program level, the GEF Secretariat’s extensive technical engagement during the program/project review process ensures that, from the design stage, there is intentional and effective collaboration among existing investments and initiatives. In addition, the evolving global		opportunity to refine the country engagement strategy and additional policies and practices related to the wider GEF partnership to strengthen coherence and collaboration.	

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	coordination mechanism embedded within programs also facilitates extensive coordination and collaboration with external partners to maximize development impact. <i>The GEF will continue to seek both immediate and long-term opportunities to strengthen coherence, collaboration, and coordination with external partners. The upcoming GEF-9 replenishment process will provide the opportunity to take stock of existing mechanisms, assess their impact, set the stage for their improvement where needed, and explore potential new mechanisms in alignment with other GEF-9 strategies during their development.</i>			
Recommendation 2: Strengthen program effectiveness by further improving the alignment and operational delivery between Pacific SIDS parent programs and their associated child projects. It is crucial that parent and child projects maintain strong internal coherence while addressing persistent implementation delays that hinder overall program performance. A more streamlined M&E framework at the program level will enable better tracking of outcomes, facilitate adaptive management, and support strategic decision making across the portfolio. By enhancing internal coherence and operational efficiency, while maintaining robust yet simplified oversight mechanisms, programs can achieve more consistent and impactful results. These actions should be	Agreed (GEF/C.68/06) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that: i) evaluative evidence underlines enhancements in the GEF results-based management system through the implementation of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework as well as with ii) the evolution of programmatic approaches toward making aggregate program-level reporting effective. The design of the coordination project of each GEF-8 program when program-level monitoring and evaluation needs are addressed – a marked improvement from earlier GEF phases which implements a commitment made in response to IEO’s evaluation on	Ongoing	Rating: Substantial As indicated in the management response, since the design of the programs evaluated, significant steps have been taken to ensure there is alignment, coherence and coordination between parent and child projects in GEF programs in particular through the integrated programs. The global coordination project for all IPs and the programmatic monitoring and evaluation framework are two key mechanisms which have been applied in this regard. There are a number of GEF-8 IPs which Pacific SIDS are involved in, in addition to the Blue and Green Islands IP. As these programs begin implementation, the GEF Secretariat will continue to provide	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges and commends the progress made by the GEF Secretariat in strengthening alignment between parent programs and child projects through the development of programmatic monitoring and evaluation frameworks and global coordination projects for Integrated Programs. The IEO will continue to monitor the effects of these improvements.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
strategically designed to foster a culture of adaptive management, ensuring that M&E findings are regularly used to inform decision making and refine implementation strategies.	GEF integrated approach to address the drivers of environmental degradation. In the context of GEF-8 – a cycle not captured by the scope of the Pacific SIDS evaluation – this translated into ensuring that every child project of a GEF 8 Integrated Program measures the same key results indicators. The coordination project is now responsible for tracking and aggregating results across child projects. This effort is of particular relevance in GEF-8 as the flagship Blue and Green Island Integrated Program includes Pacific SIDS and nine out of fifteen Pacific SIDS participate in integrated programs. This enhanced alignment and operational delivery is designed to support adaptive management and strategic decision making across a program’s child projects. <i>Enhanced attention on the matter is being applied on the matter by GEF Secretariat as coordination projects of integrated programs reach implementation stage.</i>		oversight to ensure this coordination and coherence is maintained.	
Recommendation 3: Prioritize robust institutional capacity development to ensure program success and enduring impact. Given implementation constraints in Pacific SIDS, programs must establish realistic objectives aligned with local institutional capabilities. This requires focused capacity building in project management, environmental governance, and technical skills, supported by systematic performance monitoring. Effective capacity development should leverage existing	Partially agreed (GEF/C.68/06) The GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this recommendation. Noting that the recommendation has five distinct parts, the GEF Secretariat would like to separate this recommendation into its respective components, and highlight our specific levels of agreement with each component as follows : a) programs must establish realistic objectives aligned with local institutional capabilities (partially	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium As indicated in the management response, in reference to recommendations a), b), c), d), the GEF Secretariat has made concrete steps to prioritize institutional capacity development, capacity building in technical skills and leverage existing local/traditional knowledge within all SIDS including Pacific SIDS projects and programs. The upcoming Pacific OFP training (May 2025) is another significant step which will	Rating: Negligible The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat's initial actions and plans to prioritize robust institutional capacity development in Pacific SIDS. The IEO will continue to track progress as planned activities are being implemented in the Pacific region.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
governance structures, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to ensure sustained project benefits. Programs should emphasize practical training that addresses immediate implementation needs while building long-term institutional resilience. This balanced approach will support both timely project delivery and sustainable outcomes beyond project completion. Additionally, to strengthen institutional capacity in Pacific SIDS, the GEF should explore opportunities to accredit regional organizations thereby increasing the pool of qualified GEF Agencies working in the region. Any expansion would need to be balanced against the increased complexity of managing an expanded partnership and ensuring new Agencies can meet GEF standards and requirements.	agree); b) requires focused capacity building in project management, environmental governance, and technical skills, supported by systematic performance monitoring (agree) ; c) effective capacity development should leverage existing governance structures, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to ensure sustained project benefits (partially agree); d) programs should emphasize practical training that addresses immediate implementation needs while building long-term institutional resilience (agree); and e) to strengthen institutional capacity in Pacific SIDS, the GEF should explore opportunities to accredit regional organizations thereby increasing the pool of qualified GEF Agencies working in the region (agree). <i>a) programs must establish realistic objectives aligned with local institutional capabilities</i> The GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this component of the recommendation. The GEF Secretariat would like to note that the GEF is country demand driven. This means that the GEF Secretariat responds to the stated needs and priorities of GEF recipient countries within the bounds of the relevant GEF Programming Directions. Therefore, the extent to which the GEF can influence the interest of countries in particular programs is limited.		be made to build the capacity of countries in project and portfolio management, environmental governance and provide tools needed to leverage existing governance structures, traditional knowledge and community engagement within the GEF portfolio of projects. With the launch of the GEF-9 replenishment process, steps are being taken to update the Country Engagement Strategy as well as policies related to the inclusion agenda, to ensure these specific needs of SIDS are taken into account. Finally, under the GEF-9 replenishment the GEF-Secretariat will also be putting forward a proposal to expand the GEF partnership to address the direct and unique needs and challenges of SIDS.	

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	However, <i>the GEF stands ready to provide targeted support to Pacific SIDS programs or programs that involve Pacific SIDS in a strategic way and expects to explore further such opportunities in the GEF-9 replenishment.</i> <i>b) requires focused capacity building in project management, environmental governance, and technical skills, supported by systematic performance monitoring); d) programs should emphasize practical training that addresses immediate implementation needs while building long-term institutional resilience</i> The GEF Secretariat agrees with these components of the recommendation. Capacity building in technical skills linked to the delivery of programs and child projects is currently expected to be incorporated in project design. The expectation is that this will enable local institutions to not only deliver on the objectives of specific programs and corresponding child projects, but also to provide the capacity to sustain these initiatives after the programs and projects have ended. In line with these elements of this recommendation, <i>the GEF has an opportunity in the upcoming GEF-9 replenishment negotiations to consider the enhancement of the Country</i>			

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>Engagement Strategy towards providing targeted capacity building support to SIDS and in this case Pacific SIDS.</i> c) <i>effective capacity development should leverage existing governance structures, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to ensure sustained project benefits</i> The GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this component of the recommendation. Since GEF-5, there has been a progressive focus by the GEF Secretariat on inclusion, as evidenced by the Policies on Stakeholder Engagement and on Gender Equality. This has encouraged and required projects and programs to demonstrate how traditional knowledge and community representatives and perspectives are built into planned interventions in their project designs. However as stated previously GEF is country demand driven and as countries deliver projects within often unique country context, there is often a balance between meeting the requirements of accessing GEF funding and operating and implementing a project within the context of their cultural norms. <i>In GEF-9, the GEF will continue to strengthen the capacity of Pacific SIDS to apply inclusion principles into project design, preparation, and execution to leverage existing governance structures,</i>			

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	<i>local civil society organizations, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to ensure sustained project benefits. This again can be potentially considered under the remit of the GEF-9 Country Engagement Strategy as well as further work on the inclusion agenda.</i> e) <i>to strengthen institutional capacity in Pacific SIDS, the GEF should explore opportunities to accredit regional organizations thereby increasing the pool of qualified GEF Agencies working in the region</i> The GEF Secretariat agrees with this component of the recommendation. <i>Possible expansion of Implementing Agencies to Pacific SIDS can be considered as one approach to prioritizing “...robust institutional capacity development to ensure program success and enduring impact”. This is supported by the parallel analysis coming to the 68th Council on the GEF Partnership, which highlights “...the need of context-sensitive approaches for SIDS, where more robust, targeted regional support is essential to bridge the gaps in project engagement”. The forthcoming GEF-9 replenishment negotiations will offer the opportunity to further the discussion on this part of the recommendation.</i>			

23. Evaluation of Components of the GEF’s Results-Based Management System ([GEF/E/C.68/03](#)), December 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
Recommendation (a): The GEF should review its metrics for portfolio effectiveness and efficiency to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with ongoing reforms. For instance, the GEF should reassess the current method for measuring efficiency indicators, such as first disbursements within 18 months or the submission of mid-term reviews within four years, to ensure that the appropriate project cohorts are used to reliably capture trends.	Partially agreed (GEF/C.68/08) The GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this recommendation. <i>As part of the design of the GEF-9 RMF, the GEF Secretariat will review the set of RMF Tier 2 metrics to better capture portfolio progress.</i> These Tier 2 metrics will continue to support portfolio management from project approval through implementation, all while aiming for environmental outcomes. Designing the GEF-9 RMF presents a timely opportunity to refine these metrics, reinforcing accountability, transparency, continuous improvement, and evidence-based decision-making. The GEF-9 RMF is expected to build on efforts initiated during GEF-7 and GEF-8 in measuring portfolio performance, as well as reflect new priorities from the streamlining agenda and any evolution in the GEF operating model. This includes tracking the implementation of key aspects of streamlining measures, as approved, and related expected outcomes to be decided at the 68th Council Meeting (GEF/C.68/05). Identifying new indicators involves ensuring continuous alignment with strategic objectives, responsiveness to emerging priorities, and clarity in measuring tangible progress toward operational efficiency.	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium Work in this area is slated to take place in conjunction with progress on the set of GEF-9 Policy Directions to be discussed in upcoming Replenishment meetings. Therefore, the process of adjusting and identifying new metrics is iterative and adapts to refinements during discussions. Separately, Figure 8 of the 2024 Monitoring Report on the projects pending implementation post-CEO endorsement provides a view of delays by cohorts of projects along their respective date of CEO endorsement.	Rating: Negligible As noted in Management’s response, work in this area is scheduled to occur alongside progress on the GEF-9 Policy Directions. Currently, progress is negligible, but by next year, the types of measures taken and their significance may be assessed.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	Systematically tracking the achievement of key milestones during a fiscal year has already yielded positive results. By assessing timeliness in reaching implementation start, and in submitting MTRs and Terminal Evaluation, the GEF Secretariat has strengthened its attention toward key implementation milestones, grounded in evidence. Notably, dialogue with Agencies indicates that addressing the backlog of completed projects awaiting financial closure contributed to identifying and returning \$126.7 million of unused financing to the Trustee in fiscal 2023. The associated guidance to the recommendation suggests shifting the approach to monitoring timeliness. Rather than evaluating performance based on the entire population of projects that achieved a specific milestone during the year under review (e.g., MTR submission in fiscal 2024), it suggests tracking timeliness by grouping projects into cohorts based on their year of CEO endorsement (e.g., the percentage of MTRs submitted to date for projects endorsed in separately 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). The GEF Secretariat finds the method used in the GEF-8 RMF streamlined and effective for annual reporting, allowing to establish data trends. <i>This systematic reporting may be complemented as needed by analyses looking at project cohorts, as recently done to inform the development of streamlining measures (see</i>			

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	<i>GEF/C.67/05/Rev.01) and in the context of bilateral exchanges.</i>			
Recommendation (b): The GEF should enhance its results measurement framework to be able to track and report on systemic and transformative changes. This is crucial, as several key outcomes targeted by GEF programs are not sufficiently captured by the current framework.	Agreed (GEF/C.68/08) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. <i>The GEF Secretariat will strengthen measurement of its contributions to system change.</i> This effort is essential to more accurately capture the outcomes financed by the GEF. Integrated approaches have been part of the GEF portfolio since GEF-6 and have since expanded in volume, depth, and breadth. Managing a portfolio of this scale and ambition toward high-level outcomes requires clear metrics to ensure projects and programs are on track in supporting system change. The GEF’s ultimate goal is to deliver sustainable environmental outcomes that drive system change. Measuring contributions to system change is challenging, both conceptually and practically. System change typically unfolds over longer timeframes than individual programs, and it cannot be attributed to a single intervention or organization. Outcomes are the result of actions by a diverse array of agents—governments, companies, households, agencies—and are influenced by external factors like conflict, health crises, climate events, and global economic conditions.	GEF-9 replenishment	Rating: Medium Further engagement with monitoring of system change took place in February 2025 during the GEF-9 Technical Advisory Group session on “Integrated planning, transformational change, monitoring, and reporting” featuring experts from climate funds, international NGOs, the private sector, GEF Agencies, and STAP. Drawing on experiences from existing initiatives, the TAG considered options for the GEF that aligns with its overall approach to programming, particularly the integrated programs that have an explicit focus on tackling drivers associated with five systems targeted in the GEF-8 programming. The TAG noted that rather than focusing on identifying a set of standard metrics for measurement of systems change, IPs should first embrace monitoring as a learning tool (see Principles in the IEO Report GEF/E/C.66/03, Learning from Challenges in GEF Projects). With a clear theory of change and pathways established, projects and programs can identify and consider appropriate levers that can be targeted and used as signals of change. The TAG recommended engagement with initiatives such as Systems Change Lab and Transformational	Rating: Not rated The IEO notes progress in this area, including discussions on this topic during the Technical Advisory Group meetings for GEF-9. As highlighted in Management’s response, collaborating with partners skilled in measuring systemic changes, rather than relying solely on standard metrics, might be more effective. The IEO will continue to track progress on this topic.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	To identify an approach for measuring system change, <i>the GEF Secretariat will explore as part of the design of the GEF-9 RMF the lines of evidence available and new ones that could be developed, mindful of the need to maintain a streamlined approach to reporting.</i> For example, each program already provides detailed information on progress toward outcome indicators and related outcome ratings through its child projects, reflecting their contributions to system change. Qualitative approaches also exist, including practices in other climate funds rating progress toward system change under a set scale. Additionally, GEF financing already supports external initiatives, such as the Systems Change Lab hosted by the World Resources Institute, which monitors and analyzes transformative environmental change.		Change Learning Partnership as useful partners for advancing this effort.	
Recommendation (c): The GEF should prioritize developing user-friendly functionalities and features for the Portal. While aligning the Portal with GEF-8 programming and Council decisions is essential, addressing user needs in a timely manner is equally important. Balancing these priorities will enhance the user experience and ensure the Portal effectively serves its intended audience.	Agreed (GEF/C.68/08) The Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. The GEF Secretariat appreciates the recognition of the importance of improving the user experience. Significant time and effort have gone into building the Portal’s data architecture, processes, and reporting functions. Currently, the Portal supports the review and approval of proposals for GEF-funded projects and provides comprehensive information and documentation on all projects in the GEF portfolio, along with reporting, search	Not specified	Rating: Medium The Secretariat is making progress toward its commitment to develop a costed proposal to enhance Portal functionality, usability, and accessibility for OFPs, Agencies, and the Secretariat, to be included in the fiscal 2026 GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget, for implementation in fiscal 2026.	Rating: Not rated The GEF IEO acknowledges the measures that Management intends to implement. However, these measures are still in the planning stage, making it difficult to verify any improvements at this time. The IEO will assess progress once more concrete steps are taken.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	features, and a full external geospatial platform. However, the Secretariat acknowledges that essential work to ensure the Portal meets new operational requirements has taken priority over enhancing user-friendliness. Enhancing the user-friendliness of the GEF Portal is crucial for driving both efficiency and engagement across the GEF Secretariat, Agencies and OFPs in their respective role through the project review, approval and oversight processes. Currently, the GEF Portal provides robust tools for reviewing submissions and facilitating interactions with entities. While there are many features to support user ability to navigate the different system functions, there are needs and opportunities to streamline the system and further facilitate ease of use, aligning to the broader simplification agenda overall. The Secretariat also encourages all users to communicate suggestions and any issues along these lines as they arise and will continue to reach out to build understanding of the role and ability of the Portal in supporting user needs and providing information about the work of the project portfolio and partnership. <i>The streamlining actions presented at the 68th Council Meeting aim to address this complexity to promote further efficiency gains from the Portal’s features (GEF/C.68/05).</i> This includes developing a costed proposal to enhance Portal			

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	functionality, usability, and accessibility for OFPs, Agencies, and the Secretariat, to be included in the fiscal 2026 GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget. This modernization is timely, allowing adjustments before new GEF-9 requirements emerge. <i>Key features under consideration and contingent on IT services provided by the World Bank include intuitive navigation, a clean interface, guided workflows, streamlined data entry, automated reminders and notifications, submission previews, collaborative editing, and accessible support, among others that may be identified in the short run.</i> These improvements would make submissions smoother and more intuitive, reducing time spent on training and support while enhancing user satisfaction and productivity. <i>Additionally, the Secretariat may continue expanding Portal data access for OFPs and Agencies, building on recent progress</i> (see progress detailed in GEF/C.68/05).			
Recommendation (d): The GEF should explicitly address FCV contexts by developing targeted guidance for M&E practices in such contexts and ensuring that relevant indicators are incorporated into project design.	Agreed (GEF/C.68/08) The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation. The development of guidance for M&E practices in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCS) matters as the volume of GEF-financed activities in FCS is significant and given the specific challenges in managing for environmental results in fragile and conflict environment, including	Ongoing	Rating: Substantial Drawing on insights from a gap analysis of GEF-funded activities in FCS (GEF/C.66/09), prior evaluations by the IEO (GEF/E/C59/01), and technical input from STAP (GEF/STAC.66/Inf.03), the GEF has taken a key step in strengthening its approach to fragile and conflict-affected settings. In the weeks leading up to the Council discussion on the RBM evaluation—and informed by its findings—	Rating: Substantial The GEF IEO notes the progress made with the publication of the Guidance Note on Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations. This guidance was developed because of prior work by the GEF Secretariat and in response to GEF IEO evaluations on the topic. The IEO agrees that the progress is substantial.

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2025	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2025
	institutional capacity, operating environment and mobility restrictions, evolving and high risk, and challenges in incorporating FCS considerations in the design of project results frameworks. Building on findings from a gap analysis on GEF-funded activities in FCS (GEF/C.66/09), earlier evaluative evidence from IEO (GEF/E/C.59/01) and informed by technical and scientific advice from STAP (GEF/STAP/C.66/Inf.03), the GEF has taken the important step of developing and releasing a dedicated Guidance Note on Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations. This guidance, developed with inputs provided by STAP, Agencies and Climate Funds, is now available through the GEF’s website. This guidance note’s dissemination includes plans to sensitize GEF Secretariat and Agency staff to the suggested actions described. The guidance note provides practical guidance for addressing FCS-specific challenges and improving the results focus and M&E in FCS situations. It complements the general GEF guidelines on Project and Program Results Framework and M&E Plans (GEF/C.59/Inf.03) and on the implementation of the GEF-8 RMF (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01). The guidance emphasizes embedding FCS considerations into project results frameworks to address unique challenges and impacts. It highlights participatory, inclusive processes, ethical data practices, realistic indicator design,		the GEF developed and published a Guidance Note on Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations. Released in Q2 of fiscal 2025 and shaped through contributions from STAP, Agencies, and Climate Funds, this guidance outlines practical measures for establishing fit-for-purpose M&E frameworks, results indicators, and processes suited to these complex environments. The Guidance Note offers practical recommendations for addressing challenges specific to FCS and strengthening the results focus and M&E in these contexts. It serves as a complement to the broader GEF guidelines on Project and Program Results Frameworks and M&E Plans (GEF/C.59/Inf.03) and the implementation of the GEF-8 RMF (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01). Emphasizing the integration of FCS considerations into project results frameworks, the guidance underscores the importance of participatory and inclusive approaches, ethical data practices, and the development of realistic indicators. It also promotes the use of process indicators to track institutional progress and stakeholder empowerment, supporting adaptive management and the achievement of sustainable environmental outcomes.	The recommendation will be graduated from the MAR.

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	and the use of process indicators to capture institutional progress and stakeholder empowerment, allowing for adaptive management toward sustainable environmental benefits.			