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GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

Evaluation of the International Waters Focal Area

An Evaluation Report by the GEF IEO

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1818 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20433
Internet: www.gefieo.org/; email: gefevaluation@thegef.org

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Task Team Leader: Mitsuaki Hirai, mhirai@thegef.org
GEF IEO Director: Geeta Batra

Cover design: AM Mascia Design + Illustration Inc.
Interior design and layout: Nita Congress
Editing: Karen Holmes
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Foreword

Water is an indispensable natural resource that underpins the survival and well-being of all humans, animals, and ecosystems. As the global community confronts the triple planetary crises of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, the effective management of water resources across both marine and freshwater ecosystems has become increasingly critical to the sustainability of the global environment.

Within this context, the international waters focal area of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has played a pivotal role in promoting international cooperation among countries that share transboundary waterbodies, including oceans, rivers, and aquifers. In response to evolving global environmental challenges, the GEF has progressively emphasized integrated programming, particularly since the GEF-5 replenishment period. This strategic evolution underscores both the opportunity and the necessity to assess how the international waters focal area has adapted its strategic orientation to enhance environmental and developmental impacts.

In this regard, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the GEF undertook a focal area evaluation to assess, for the first time, the international waters focal area's adaptation to integrated programming. The evaluation synthesizes evidence from GEF-5 through GEF-8, focusing on the focal area's strategic evolution, project performance and results, and the sustainability of achieved outcomes. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the evaluation drew upon a portfolio review of completed and ongoing international waters–related projects, field missions, key informant interviews, and an online survey. The findings were presented to the GEF Council in June 2025, and the Council subsequently endorsed the management response to the IEO's recommendations.

Through this report, the GEF IEO presents key evaluative evidence on the international waters focal area to inform decision-making, promote learning, and continue strengthening transboundary water management for global environmental benefits.

Geeta Batra
Director, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

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Abbreviations

ABNJ	area beyond national jurisdiction
BBNJ	Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction
bcm	billion cubic meters
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHO-IP	Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Program
CWM	conjunctive water management
DIN	dissolved inorganic nitrogen
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GloMEEP	Transforming the Global Maritime Transport Industry towards a Low Carbon Future through Improved Energy Efficiency
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IW:LEARN	International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network
IWC10	10th International Waters Conference
IWRM	integrated water resources management
LME	large marine ecosystem
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
OPS	comprehensive evaluation of the GEF (previously overall performance study)
PEMSEA	Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia
PROCARIBE+	Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's Natural Capital, building Resilience and Supporting Regionwide Investments for Sustainable Blue Socio-Economic Development
R2R	ridge to reef
S2S	source to sea
SAP	strategic action program
SDS-SEA	Scaling up the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia
SIDS	small island developing states
TDA	transboundary diagnostic analysis
TWAP	Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

Executive summary

Water is essential for all humans, animals, plants, and ecosystems to survive, grow, and thrive. The international waters focal area within the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has been instrumental in fostering collaborative management of transboundary marine and freshwater ecosystems for global environmental benefits. Over the past decade, the GEF has shifted toward integrated programming, and this is the first assessment on whether and how the international waters focal area has adapted its strategy in response to this shift. This evaluation reviewed and synthesized available evaluative evidence on the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, impact, and sustainability of the GEF international waters portfolio and its contribution to multifocal area projects from GEF-5 to GEF-8.

The evaluation portfolio comprises 277 projects—44 closed, 153 ongoing, and 80 at the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) endorsement stage—from GEF-5 to GEF-8, covering more than 140 countries. The total GEF funding for these projects was over $1.7 billion, with expected cofinancing of almost $17 billion. Approximately 40 percent of the portfolio projects are part of programs, while 60 percent are stand-alone projects. Geographically, Asia (67 projects, $399.6 million) and Africa (61 projects, $446.6 million) account for the largest shares of projects and GEF funding. Over 75 percent of the projects have been implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the World Bank.

Findings and conclusions

The strategic priorities of the international waters focal area have evolved in response to global priorities and emerging environmental issues. During GEF-5 and GEF-6, the focus was on transboundary cooperation in surface and groundwater basins, marine fisheries, coastal pollution reduction, large marine ecosystems, foundational capacity building, research, and portfolio learning. In GEF-7 and GEF-8, the emphasis has been on the blue economy, areas beyond national jurisdiction, and water security. Throughout these transitions, the international waters focal area has consistently used transboundary diagnostic analysis–strategic action programs (TDA-SAPs), enhancing regional coherence in transboundary water management and addressing relevant environmental issues across countries.

The international waters focal area has been relevant to national, regional, and global priorities. This is evidenced by terminal evaluations and previous GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) evaluations on water security, the Lower Mekong River Basin, and integrated programs. Evaluation findings suggest that there are a limited number of GEF international waters projects dedicated to groundwater, and that transboundary waterbodies with the highest risks are not always covered—indicating opportunities for further strengthening the relevance of the GEF's international waters focal area.

From GEF-5 to GEF-8, the international waters focal area addressed pollution reduction and sustainable fisheries as its most common thematic areas. It also promoted

integrated programming approaches and strengthening of the enabling environment. The majority of GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects incorporated at least one integrated approach, such as integrated water resources management, integrated coastal management, and ridge to reef. Among currently active projects, key intervention areas include knowledge management, institutional capacity building, and policy and regulatory strengthening. An emerging area of work is the provision of technical support to countries on implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).

The international waters focal area's mandate for transboundary cooperation has not been fully integrated or reflected within the GEF-8 integrated programs. From GEF-5 to GEF-8, GEF investments in the international waters focal area have expanded from primarily supporting stand-alone projects to contributing to national and multifocal area projects, integrated programs, and enabling activities related to the BBNJ Agreement. Despite the strategic emphasis on integration, these competing priorities risk diluting the international waters focal area's core focus on transboundary cooperation. For example, the Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Program includes only a subset of countries from transboundary waterbodies.

The performance of international waters focal area projects has improved in recently completed GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects. Project ratings across all evaluation criteria were higher than the cumulative results from the pilot phase through GEF-6. Approximately 86 percent of recent projects received a rating in the satisfactory range for outcomes, compared to 78 percent cumulatively. National and multifocal projects have underperformed. Additionally, 73 percent of recent projects received a rating in the likely range for sustainability, compared to 65 percent cumulatively. These performance results are comparable to, or better than, those of the overall GEF portfolio.

Several factors affect sustainability of outcomes. Limited communication and coordination among projects and stakeholders, gaps in monitoring and evaluation—such as insufficient tracking of cofinance and socioeconomic benefits—and overly ambitious project designs, have affected sustainability in GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects. Terminal evaluations also highlighted that multifocal area projects require a realistic scope and scale of interventions to avoid compromising both effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

Financial sustainability is essential for supporting long-term transboundary water management, yet current practices reveal gaps. GEF international waters projects have often faced challenges with gaps between project phases, and the prevailing practice of deferring sustainability and exit planning until late in project implementation has not been effective or adequate. Furthermore, robust financial sustainability planning requires adequate training on available financing models and options.

Several projects have demonstrated catalytic effects in sustaining and scaling up interventions after project completion. For example, the Global Maritime Energy Efficiency Partnerships (GloMEEP) project, which aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting energy-efficient shipping, led to the establishment of the Global Industry Alliance in 2017. This public-private partnership facilitated low-carbon shipping through research and development, technology demonstration, global dialogues, and capacity-building activities. The work was continued, with support from the International Maritime Organization and the government of Norway, through the launch of the GreenVoyage2050 Project in 2019.

Evidence from several terminal evaluations demonstrates that international waters activities have contributed to socioeconomic co-benefits. For example, a terminal evaluation of the Implementation of Global and Regional Oceanic Fisheries Conventions and Related Instruments in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) project reported that it contributed to an average increase of

6.25 percent in fisheries sector employment between 2010 and 2019. Other evaluations pointed out additional co-benefits, including increased employment and learning opportunities for women, improved economic conditions for fishers, and enhanced food security.

The international waters focal area has advanced knowledge management by disseminating impacts, successful practices, and key lessons from projects through IW:LEARN. IW:LEARN (International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network) has established a knowledge management platform for the GEF international waters focal area by facilitating learning exchanges, knowledge sharing, biennial international waters conferences, regional workshops, and a central website. Implementation of the now-completed $5.1 million GEF-5 IW:LEARN initiative alone led to the adoption of at least one new management approach in 47 international waters projects, underscoring the replication and uptake of good practices.

Terminal evaluations of GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects highlighted several examples of innovative technologies applied in international waters projects. For instance, the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem SAP project employed integrated multitrophic aquaculture technology—an approach that enhances aquaculture productivity while reducing water pollution by replicating natural food chain processes. Knowledge and experience from this project were shared with three Caribbean countries through a learning exchange facilitated by IW:LEARN.

The international waters focal area's transboundary mandate offers an opportunity to promote policy coherence. By design, the mandate aims to harmonize water management policies across countries, ensuring consistent and coordinated protection and regulation of shared water resources. Survey findings and interviews pointed to the GEF international waters focal area as an effective channel for advancing policy coherence, helping to integrate and align environmental objectives with policy instruments across sectors including fisheries, tourism, and agriculture.

The international waters focal area has consistently maintained a focus on gender inclusion and mainstreaming across GEF replenishment periods. For example, terminal evaluations from the Drin River Basin reported that women made up approximately 30 percent of the decision-making body and 60 percent of its expert working groups. A SIDS fisheries project called attention to the publication of *Moana Voices*, collections of firsthand experiences and narratives by women aimed at mainstreaming gender in the fisheries sector.

Despite some successes at the individual project level, the international waters focal area has generally struggled to achieve meaningful private sector engagement. This issue is brought to the fore by survey results from international waters conference participants, stakeholder interviews, and project evaluations. Survey respondents identified the lack of private sector engagement as a major weakness of the focal area. Interviewed stakeholders pointed to several contributing factors including time-consuming approval processes for private companies to participate in projects; limited private sector expertise within the GEF Secretariat; and the long-term nature of international waters projects, which often lack early economic returns to attract investment.

The GEF's core indicators are insufficient for systematically measuring and demonstrating transboundary benefits and socioeconomic co-benefits related to the international waters focal area. While subindicators track elements such as the status of TDA-SAP, regional agreements, national/local reforms, multisectoral coordination, and IW:LEARN engagement, multifocal area projects within integrated programs often do not focus on these international waters–specific benefits. Moreover, the measurement of socioeconomic co-benefits has lacked a systematic approach, with indicators that are either missing or inconsistent across projects, making it difficult to compare results or aggregate findings. The GEF IEO evaluation on water security also noted that water-related outcomes have not been consistently

measured across all focal areas, making it difficult to demonstrate the GEF's overall synergistic impact.

The international waters focal area has faced the challenge of balancing time efficiency with adequate stakeholder engagement and country ownership of projects. Timely project approval and implementation are essential for sustaining transboundary cooperation without significant gaps between projects. However, excessive focus on accelerating project preparation could result in limited stakeholder engagement and reduce ownership by participating countries.

Recommendations

- The GEF should continue to carefully assess all new projects supported by the international waters focal area to ensure that its core mandate of transboundary cooperation remains central to all investments.
- To enhance the financial sustainability of international waters projects, the GEF Secretariat should support stakeholder training on innovative financing models and promote the development of comprehensive sustainability plans early in the project cycle. The international waters focal area should also ensure an early and sustained emphasis on capacity building, delivery of targeted training to a broad range of stakeholders, and active engagement of private sector partners.
- The GEF Secretariat should establish guidance for Agencies and national partners to enhance monitoring of the effectiveness of transboundary cooperation arrangements and relevant socioeconomic co-benefits using quantitative indicators and qualitative approaches, as required. This would be particularly pertinent where transboundary arrangements are associated with integrated programs.

1 Introduction

International waters encompass transboundary marine and freshwater bodies, including oceans, rivers, lakes, aquifers, and large marine ecosystems (LMEs). Over 300 watersheds and 460 aquifers are shared by multiple countries, benefiting approximately 40 percent of the global population.[1] Oceans and LMEs also play a crucial role in food security by providing fish, which is a key source of protein for billions of people. These international waters, however, face major environmental threats, such as pollution, overfishing, and ocean acidification. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated transboundary efforts and sustainable management practices to protect critical marine and freshwater ecosystems for future generations.

Since establishing the international waters focal area in 1991, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has become one of the largest financiers of transboundary cooperative arrangements in marine and freshwater bodies. The strategic priorities of the GEF's international waters focal area have evolved in response to global priorities and emerging issues, such as transboundary cooperation on fisheries, pollution reduction, areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), and water security. Over the past decade, the GEF has shifted toward integrated programming, and it is timely to conduct a first assessment on whether and how the international waters focal area has adapted its strategy.

1.1 Background

Water is essential for all humans, animals, plants, and ecosystems to survive, grow, and thrive. Available evidence suggests that over 1.38 billion cubic kilometers of water are available on Earth.[2] Of the total, approximately 97.5 percent is saline or seawater, and the

[1] Sources: GEF International Waters web page; UNECE, UNESCO, and UN Water (2024).

[2] Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Where is all of the Earth's water? web page.

remaining 2.5 percent is fresh water (Kashiwase and Fujs 2023). Glaciers account for 69 percent of available fresh water on Earth, while freshwater supplies accessible to humans—groundwater and surface water sources (e.g., rivers, lakes, ponds)—hold 30 percent and 0.3 percent of fresh water, respectively (Shikimalgor 1993). The remaining fresh water is available as moisture in the soil and atmosphere.

Freshwater supplies have been withdrawn by humans on a major scale for agricultural, industrial, and domestic purposes. Water requirements for each of these sectors vary substantially among countries, strongly related to national income levels. Globally, agriculture accounts for approximately 70 percent of freshwater withdrawals, followed by industrial and domestic sectors (UNESCO 2024). However, the proportion of national freshwater use by the agricultural sector ranges from 44 percent in high-income countries to 90 percent in low-income countries. Similarly, industrial and domestic water use varies substantially by country income levels. The total amount of freshwater use in 2020 was highest among lower-middle-income countries at 1,656.9 billion cubic meters (bcm), followed by upper-middle-income (1,225.7 bcm), high-income (870.5 bcm), and low-income countries (110.6 bcm; Kashiwase and Fujs 2023).

Marine ecosystems play an essential role in protecting the global environment and supporting a broad range of human activities. They absorb approximately 90 percent of excess heat and 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions by humans;[3] provide aquatic food as the major source of high-quality protein (FAO 2024); serve as habitats and breeding grounds for fish and other animals; foster biodiversity; and facilitate the transport of materials, products, and people. However, the ocean has faced substantial environmental stress and negative consequences of human activities—such as habitat destruction from coastal development activities (e.g., tourism, infrastructure development, and housing construction); acidification; plastic pollution; and loss of coastal ecosystems, including mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass. Social cohesion, indigenous knowledge, and cultural heritage have been placed at risk in various marine areas due to these activities (Pearson, Jackson, and McNamara 2023).

Climate change, water scarcity, and water pollution have exacerbated global environmental and socioeconomic challenges. Extreme climate events, such as floods and worsening droughts, have progressively increased worldwide. Between 2002 and 2021, floods resulted in 100,000 deaths, affected 1.6 billion people, and cost $832 billion in economic losses (CRED 2023). During the same period, drought caused 21,000 deaths, affected more than 1.4 billion people, and led to $170 billion in economic losses. Severe water scarcity has also been experienced by almost half of the global population (IPCC 2023), and 25 percent of the global population from 25 countries has withdrawn more than 80 percent of their renewable freshwater supply (Kuzma et al. 2023). In 2021, several countries in the Middle East and North Africa were under critical levels of water stress, because over 100 percent of their renewable freshwater supply had been withdrawn.[4] These water-related issues have been reported to have major implications for social stability, migration, and economic vulnerability in many countries (Zaveri et al. 2021).

1.2 Key findings from previous IEO evaluations

Several earlier evaluations by the GEF's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) served as useful background for the present evaluation on the international waters focal area.

[3] Source: United Nations Environment Programme, Ocean, Seas and Coasts web page.

[4] Source: UN Water website, Level of water stress map.

The 2016 International Waters Focal Area Study confirmed the high relevance and contributions of international waters to global priorities and goals (such as the Sustainable Development Goals) and regional security, as well as to the GEF's internal strategic directions, through transboundary water interventions (GEF IEO 2018). An ecosystem-based approach, transboundary diagnostic analysis–strategic action program (TDA-SAP) tools,[5] and knowledge management also allow the international waters focal area to be a catalyst for integration with other sectors, such as food, energy, urban planning, and forest management. This study identified an imbalance of financial resource allocations within the international waters portfolio, with 60 percent for marine and 40 percent for freshwater projects.[6]

The Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS6) noted that the international waters focal area was the first to implement a programmatic approach (GEF IEO 2017). It thereby demonstrated how a series of projects contributed to some of the major environmental issues in the program region. Early examples of the international waters programs focused on supporting SAP implementation, which addressed marine pollution in the Black Sea and ameliorating environmental stresses in the Mediterranean Sea. These programs leveraged investments and promoted the replication of successful practices, behaviors, and technologies.

OPS7 reported that the earlier imbalance between marine and freshwater investment was partially reduced by increasing investment for integrated water resources management (IWRM; GEF IEO 2022). As of mid-2021, the GEF's investment allocation had shifted to 52 percent for marine projects and 48 percent for freshwater projects. This evaluation also reported that the GEF's fisheries projects were well aligned with global, regional, and national priorities, and effectively addressed overexploitation of fishery resources in the marine environment. Furthermore, an assessment of freshwater projects suggested that such projects contributed to generating co-benefits in multiple focal areas (e.g., biodiversity, land degradation, and chemicals and waste) by enhancing freshwater resource management, water quality, and water security.

[5] For more on the TDA-SAP methodology, access the TDA/SAP Manual from the IW:LEARN website.

[6] The study noted that this imbalance primarily arose from the alignment of country and GEF Agency interests, with project locations being influenced by the degree of transboundary tensions rather than by deliberate strategic decisions.

2 Objectives and methodology

2.1 Objectives and scope

The main objective of this evaluation was to assemble and assess evaluative evidence to draw conclusions, learn lessons, and provide recommendations to strengthen the international waters portfolio and its contribution to the GEF's overall performance. To achieve this objective, this evaluation covered a series of questions aligned with the programming directions of the international waters focal area. These questions (annex B) aimed to inform OPS8. The main evaluation questions were as follows:

- To what extent has the international waters focal area adapted to evolving global, regional, and national priorities and the GEF's recent shift to integrated programming?
- How have the international waters focal area projects performed and produced impacts?
- How has the GEF contributed to knowledge management and information sharing of international waters–related projects and initiatives?

The scope of this evaluation encompassed a comprehensive review and assessment of the available evidence of the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the GEF international waters portfolio from GEF-5 to GEF-8. The evaluation also examined the portfolio's contribution to multifocal area projects. The international waters portfolio under review comprises 277 projects (annex A)—44 closed, 153 ongoing, and 80 at the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) endorsement stage—representing $1.7 billion in grant funding and approximately $17 billion in anticipated cofinancing. Building on previous assessments by the GEF IEO, this evaluation assessed the alignment of GEF international waters interventions with regional and global priorities, their consistency with GEF strategies and programming directions, and the needs of participating countries. Furthermore, it evaluated the design and relevance of recent projects that reflect a GEF-wide strategic shift toward a more integrated, multifocal area approach.

2.2 Methodology

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach to review, collect, and synthesize available evaluative evidence. Specifically, it consisted of a portfolio review, analysis of data from terminal evaluations, an assessment of international waters projects' quality at entry, an online survey, field visits, and key informant interviews.

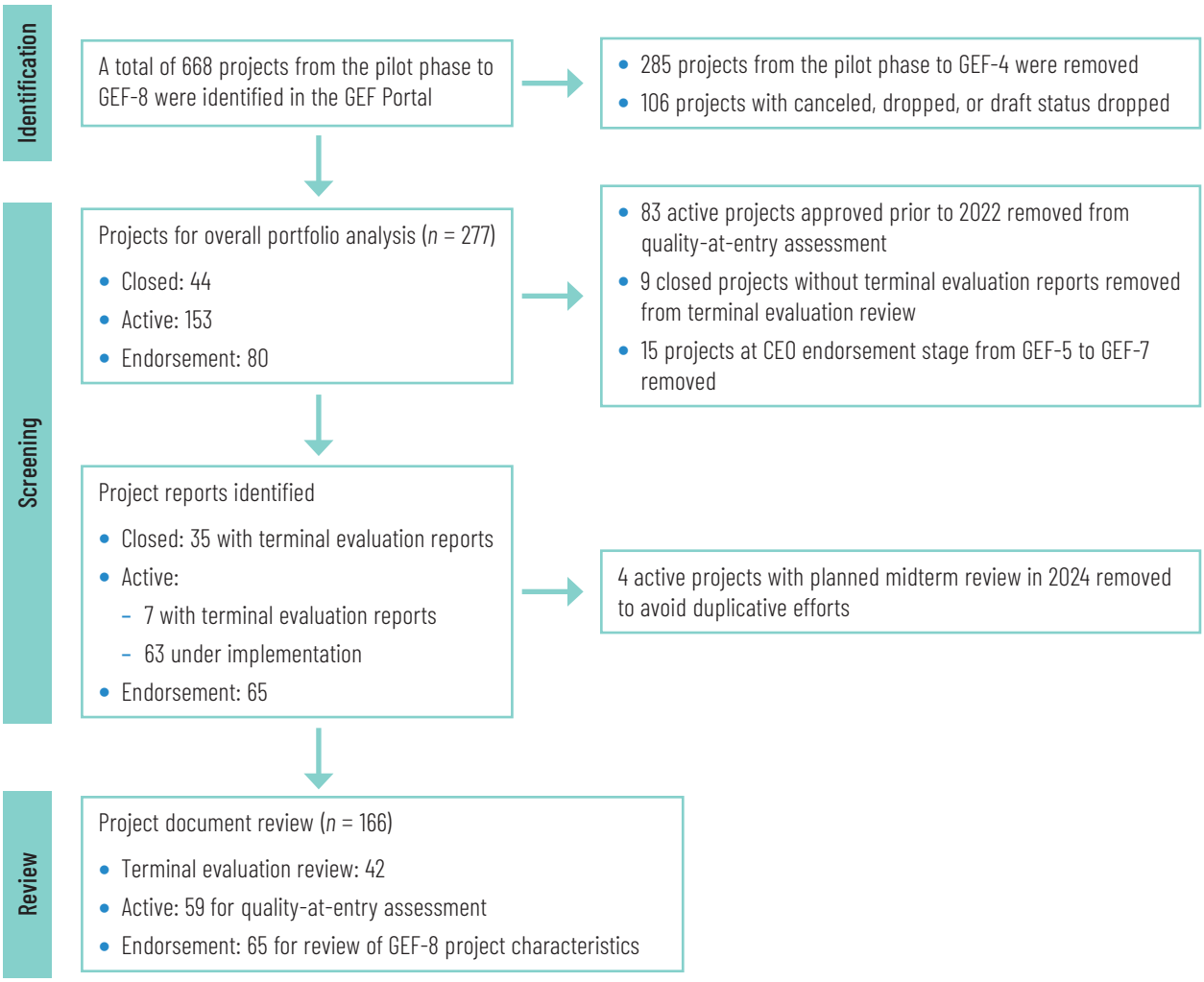
- A **portfolio review** was conducted, involving quantitative and qualitative analysis of international waters project data from the GEF Portal, annual performance reports, and terminal evaluation reports submitted by the GEF Agencies. Descriptive analysis focused on recent trends in the number, size, geographic distribution, total funding and cofinancing amount per GEF replenishment period of international waters projects; and project ratings on overall performance, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) design and implementation.
- A **quality-at-entry assessment** addressed the extent to which recently approved projects have been designed to address project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability by reviewing project activities, expected benefits, project designs and approaches, stakeholder engagement, knowledge management, and alignment with GEF programming directions.
- Key informant interviews elicited a broad range of key stakeholder experiences and perceptions of the international waters focal area and projects. These interviews were conducted either through online platforms or in person. Annex C provides a list of key informants.
- An **online survey** was completed by 70 participants at the GEF's 10th International Waters Conference (IWC10) to explore stakeholder perceptions of the comparative advantages, strengths, weaknesses, financial sustainability, and policy coherence of the GEF's funding of international waters projects. Annex D provides a summary of the survey findings.
- **Field visits** were conducted to perform a case study on policy coherence and participate in IWC10. These visits helped verify terminal evaluation findings, identify key international waters informants, and collect additional primary data.

The portfolio review looked at a total of 277 projects implemented with GEF financing from GEF-5 to GEF-8, covering a full range of stages from recently designed to completed. A total of 42 projects with terminal evaluations were closely examined on their outcomes, sustainability, M&E, and quality of implementation and execution. Fifty-nine projects currently under implementation were included in the detailed review of project documents to assess their quality at entry. Additionally, 65 GEF-8 projects awaiting at the CEO endorsement stage were assessed for their basic project characteristics—such as project modality (e.g., child, stand-alone) and focal area (international waters or multifocal)—to identify any emerging trends. The program framework document for the Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Program (CHO-IP) and its theory of change were also reviewed to provide an example of how integrated programs differ from stand-alone international waters projects. The process of identifying and selecting the evaluation portfolio of projects is outlined in figure 2.1. The data were downloaded from the GEF Portal on December 10, 2024; this was the cutoff date for inclusion in the evaluation portfolio.

2.3 Theory of change

Although the international waters focal area has developed and implemented a systematic approach toward fulfilling its mandate, this approach was not driven by an explicit overall or generic theory of change. The international waters focal area commenced its work before theories of change were widely used, either within the GEF or more broadly among the international development and environmental management communities. Because such theories have been helpful in assessing the extent to which interventions are progressing toward their long-term

Figure 2.1 Portfolio selection process for international waters evaluation

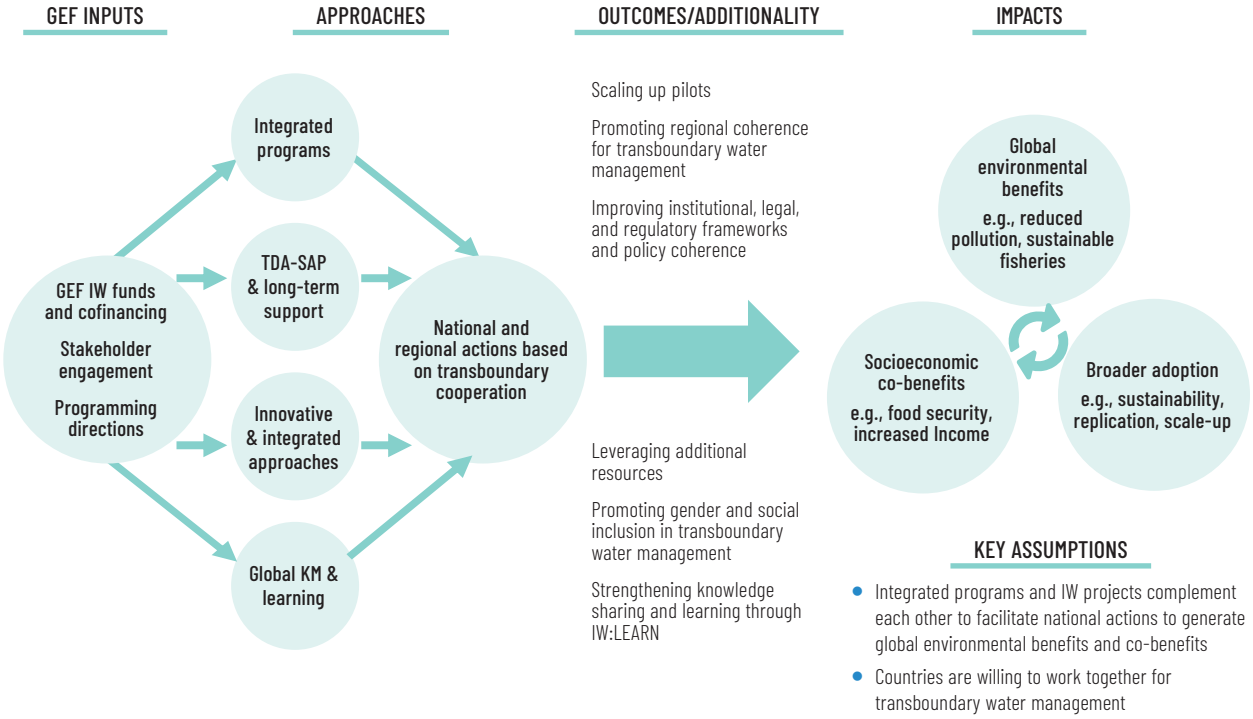


intentions, they are now a widely used tool for evaluation of complex issues such as portfolio achievements over time.

The GEF IEO developed a retrospective theory of change for the present international waters focal area evaluation. This theory of change aimed to illustrate how global environmental benefits and other impacts can be generated through the focal area (figure 2.2). In accordance with the GEF's strategic evolution, integrated programs were incorporated into the pathway to facilitate national interventions addressing key global environmental issues (e.g., hypoxia). The theory of change illustrates a complex and cyclical process based on GEF inputs, project approaches, additionality, and impacts.[1]

[1] International waters projects have been implemented across various types of transboundary waterbodies. One notable subject of investment within this focal area is LMEs. Additionally, international waters interventions can potentially yield peace co-benefits, as briefly mentioned later in this report. International waters focal area programs and projects are particularly sensitive to political environments, as they involve the cooperative management of transboundary water resources by two or more countries.

Figure 2.2 Theory of change for GEF international waters focal area evaluation



Note: IW = international waters; KM = knowledge management; TDA-SAP = transboundary diagnostic analysis-strategic action program.

2.4 Data constraints

This evaluation had several data constraints:

- The latest outcome data were for GEF-6 projects, because more recent projects were still under implementation or did not yet have a completed terminal evaluation. To address this issue, quality-at-entry assessment was conducted to obtain relevant information for projects still under implementation.
- Missing data and/or terminal evaluation reports hindered the comprehensive analysis of evaluative evidence.
- GEF-8 is currently ongoing, and the international waters project count and financing amount for this GEF cycle have not been finalized. The evaluation portfolio included available project data up to December 10, 2024.
- Not all terminal evaluation reports included complete data for every project characteristic or variable; this prevented the evaluation from reviewing nine closed projects.

To overcome these data limitations, the evaluation collected primary data through field visits and interviews with a wide range of relevant stakeholders including government officials, civil society organizations, implementing and executing partners, and members of the GEF Secretariat. These firsthand sources were complemented by an IWC10 participant survey and an extensive review of project documents and portfolio data. These mitigation measures also contributed to identifying and synthesizing relevant findings to address transboundary waterbodies, which are often highly context-specific and require tailored approaches.

3 Portfolio analysis

3.1 Evolution of GEF strategic priorities in international waters

The GEF established the international waters focal area in 1995 with a specific commitment to address issues of transboundary cooperation in waterbodies shared by two or more countries (GEF 1995). The international waters focal area aims to promote the collective management of transboundary water systems by facilitating policy, legal, and institutional reforms, as well as investments for ecosystem conservation and the sustainable use of ecosystem services.

The strategic priorities of the international waters focal area have evolved in response to global priorities and emerging issues. GEF-5 and GEF-6 strategically focused on transboundary cooperation on surface and groundwater basins, marine fisheries, coastal pollution reduction, LMEs, foundational capacity building, research, and portfolio learning (GEF 2011; GEF Secretariat 2014). GEF-5 added a strategic objective to address marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. The most recent GEF replenishment cycles (GEF-7 and GEF-8) identified blue economy, ABNJ, and water security as key priority areas (GEF Secretariat 2018, 2022). Details of this process are shown in table 3.1 and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Since the adoption of the GEF operational strategy in 1995, the international waters focal area has focused primarily on building international cooperation for the management of transboundary water systems. It has contributed through such activities as regional dialogues, joint fact-findings by countries, and regional agreements to inform coherent national actions. The international waters focal area has also provided flexibility to test new and innovative ideas through demonstration projects, which informed the development of new focal areas (e.g., chemicals and waste) in the GEF. Over the past decade, the international waters focal area's strategic directions and approaches evolved to address many relevant international waters issues, as shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Strategic objectives of the international waters focal area from GEF-5 to GEF-8

GEF-5	GEF-6	GEF-7	GEF-8
• Catalyze multistate cooperation to balance conflicting water uses in transboundary surface and groundwater basins while considering climatic variability and change • Catalyze multistate cooperation to build marine fisheries and reduce pollution of coasts and LMEs while considering climatic variability and change • Support foundational capacity building, portfolio learning, and targeted research needs for ecosystem-based, joint management of transboundary water systems • Promote effective management of marine ABNJ	• Catalyze sustainable management of transboundary water systems by supporting multistate cooperation through foundational capacity building, targeted research, and portfolio learning • Catalyze investments to balance competing water uses in the management of transboundary surface and groundwater and enhance multistate cooperation • Enhance multistate cooperation and catalyze investments to foster sustainable fisheries, restore and protect coastal habitats, and reduce pollution of coasts and LMEs	• Strengthen national blue economy opportunities to reduce threats to marine and coastal waters • Improve management in ABNJ • Enhance water security in freshwater ecosystems	• Accelerate joint action to support a sustainable blue economy • Advance management in ABNJ • Enhance water security in shared freshwater ecosystems

Sources: GEF 2011; GEF Secretariat 2014, 2018, 2022.

Note: ABNJ = area beyond national jurisdiction; LME = large marine ecosystem.

The GEF-5 international waters strategy outlined four objectives addressing multistate cooperation in marine and freshwater bodies, ABNJ, and knowledge management. This programming cycle explicitly emphasized climatic variability and change as a key transboundary concern and aimed to address multiple stresses of international waterbodies together rather than thematic or issue-specific approaches.

The GEF-6 international waters strategy promoted three objectives to enhance sustainability of transboundary water management, balance competing uses of surface and groundwater, and address key environmental issues in international waters. The focal area aimed to achieve these objectives through strengthening ecosystem services in melting high-altitude glaciers; promoting conjunctive management of surface and groundwater; contributing to the nexus of water, food, energy, and ecosystem security; ameliorating ocean hypoxia; protecting coastal habitat; and promoting sustainable fisheries.

The GEF-7 international waters strategy contained three objectives related to blue economy, ABNJ, and water security. The concept of blue economy suggests that oceans serve as potential areas for sustainable development by involving new and existing sectors, such as tourism, renewable energy, fisheries, coastal development, and marine transport. To promote blue economy opportunities, GEF-7 investments focused on three strategic actions: sustainable coastal and marine ecosystems, fisheries management, and pollution reduction. GEF-7 also reaffirmed ABNJ as an explicit focus of GEF international waters interventions to address key issues in the open oceans. The strategy also focused on water security through information exchange and early warning systems; regional and national cooperation on transboundary freshwater basins; and investments for the security of water, food, energy, and the environment.

The GEF-8 international waters strategy incorporates three objectives. As with GEF-7, GEF-8 investments focus on blue economy, ABNJ, and water security. A key difference between GEF-7 and GEF-8 is support to integrated programs. The GEF-8 programming directions underscored how six integrated programs would contribute to the international waters focal area.[1]

Throughout these strategic shifts, the GEF's fundamental focus on transboundary cooperation in marine and freshwater ecosystems has remained. The international waters focal area has continued to address relevant international waters issues by employing TDA and SAPs as key tools to promote transboundary water management based on agreements to participate among stakeholder countries. TDA provides an opportunity for countries to conduct joint fact-finding and scientific analysis to identify common threats in transboundary water systems. This analysis leads to the development of SAPs, politically endorsed documents that highlight strategic interventions to address the transboundary water threats identified in a region. The nature of these international waters interventions has centered around capacity building, improved assessment of environmental issues and solutions, strategic planning, policy reforms, and investments for transboundary cooperation; they have contributed to strengthening collaboration among countries and informing national actions.

[1] These six programs are the Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program; the Greening Transportation and Infrastructure Development Integrated Program; the Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Program; the Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Program; the Blue and Green Islands Integrated Program; and the Elimination of Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains Integrated Program.

3.2 Trends in GEF grant allocations

The evaluated international waters portfolio includes a total of 277 projects from GEF-5 to GEF-8 at different stages of project implementation. Specifically, the portfolio consists of 76 projects from GEF-5, 61 projects from GEF-6, 67 projects from GEF-7, and 73 projects from GEF-8 (table 3.2). Across these replenishment cycles, 80 projects are at the CEO endorsement stage, 153 projects are under implementation, and 44 projects are closed. In total, over $1.75 billion in GEF grants has been mobilized.

Comparing the shares of project numbers and funding by region and lead GEF Agency reveals some regional gaps and Agency concentrations between GEF-5 and GEF-8. Over 20 percent of the portfolio projects and grants are dedicated to, individually, the Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions, but only 10 percent of projects and 7 percent of grants are allocated to the Europe and Central Asia region (table 3.3). Historical political instability and conflicts in some European and Central Asian countries at least partially account for the small share of GEF projects and grants from GEF-5 to GEF-8. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was the GEF Agency with the largest shares of international waters projects and grants, accounting for 28 percent of each; it was followed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), with 19 percent of projects and grants; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with 16 percent of projects and 15 percent of grants); and the World Bank, with 12 percent of projects and 15 percent of grants.[2]

[2] This Agency concentration largely mirrors that in the overall GEF portfolio between GEF-5 and GEF-8 (n = 2,778 as of December 10, 2024), with UNDP leading with 36 percent of grants, followed by UNEP (16 percent of grants), the World Bank (14 percent of grants), and FAO (12 percent of grants).

Table 3.2 Number of international waters portfolio projects and amount of GEF funding by project status and period

GEF period	CEO endorsement stage		Active		Closed		Total	
	Number	Funding (million $)	Number	Funding (million $)	Number	Funding (million $)	Number	Funding (million $)
GEF-5	6	23.2	37	288.7	33	179.6	76	491.6
GEF-6	8	18.2	42	290.1	11	36.1	61	344.4
GEF-7	1	0[a]	66	437.1	0	0	67	437.1
GEF-8	65	421.3	8	60.1	0	0	73	481.5
Total	80	462.7	153	1,076.1	44	215.8	277	1,754.6

Source: GEF Portal.

Note: Funding amounts are the sum of the latest-stage project financing amount plus project preparation grant amount and fee.

a. As of this writing, no funding was listed in the GEF Portal for the Common Oceans—Sustainable Utilization and Conservation of Biodiversity in Areas beyond National Jurisdiction project (GEF ID 10548).

Table 3.3 Distribution of international waters portfolio projects and GEF funding by region and Agency

Region/Agency	Projects		GEF funding	
	Number	Percent	Million $	Percent
Region				
Africa	61	22	446.6	25
Asia	67	24	399.6	23
Europe and Central Asia	28	10	130.4	7
Latin American and the Caribbean	57	21	393.2	22
Regional	10	4	54.3	3
Global	54	19	330.3	19
GEF Agency				
African Development Bank	7	3	48.8	3
Asian Development Bank	4	1	18.7	1
Conservation International	11	4	73.0	4
Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean	6	2	28.3	2
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	4	1	19.9	1
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	45	16	263.5	15
Inter-American Development Bank	4	1	28.5	2
International Union for Conservation of Nature	14	5	94.5	5
United Nations Development Programme	77	28	491.0	28
United Nations Environment Programme	53	19	329.9	19
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	11	4	56.7	3
World Bank	32	12	256.1	15
World Wildlife Fund-US	9	3	45.8	3

Source: GEF Portal.

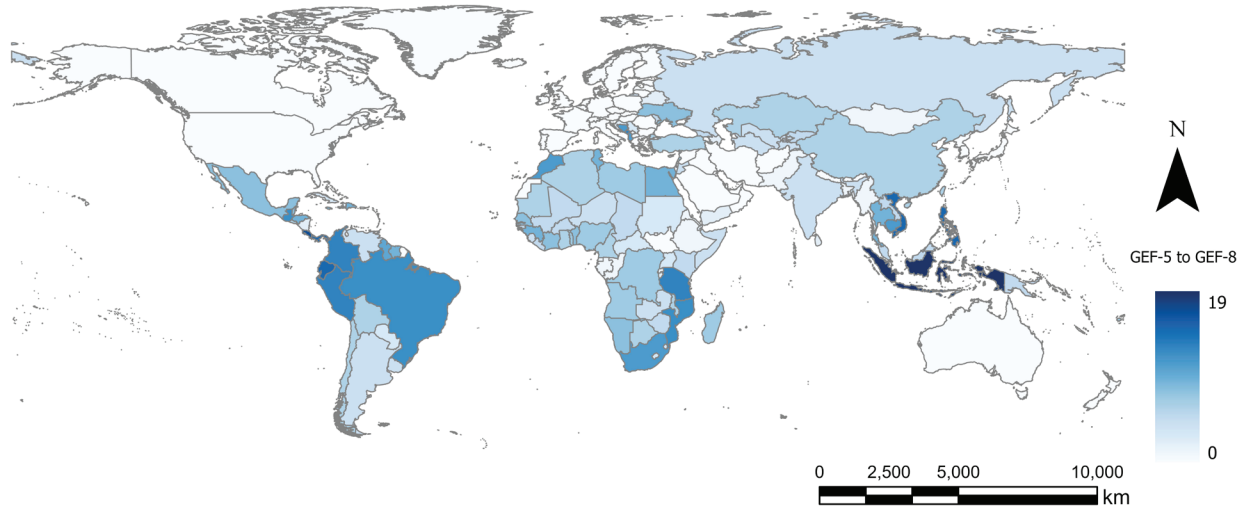
Note: Funding amounts are the sum of the latest-stage project financing amount plus project preparation grant amount and fee.

A review of country coverage by 230 GEF international waters project—83 percent of the evaluation portfolio—identified 140 partner countries. This suggests that the GEF has covered a large share of its potential project countries between GEF-5 and GEF-8. Map 3.1 illustrates the total number of projects per country, ranging from 1 to 19 projects. Twenty countries had at least 10 GEF international waters projects during these GEF programming cycles. The 10 countries with the most GEF international waters projects are Indonesia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, the Philippines, Viet Nam, Colombia, Montenegro, Peru, and Tanzania. See annex E for the full distribution of international waters projects by country and replenishment period.

The number of international waters projects in each country and subregion has often fluctuated from one programming cycle to another. For example, while the number of international waters projects has been relatively stable across GEF programming cycles in such countries as Colombia and Ecuador, other countries, such as the Philippines and Montenegro, have recorded several international waters projects in one programming cycle, followed by less international waters-related activity thereafter. Additionally, there has been shifting subregional project concentration across Africa, with some concentration in West Africa in GEF-5, in North Africa in GEF-6, and in Southern and Eastern Africa in GEF-7 and GEF-8. Such fluctuations and changes in allocation should not be interpreted as a lack of coherence or planning. The international waters focal area must adapt to changing priorities, which may necessitate concentrating resources in some regions at the expense of others.[3] However, these findings underscore the need for long-term strategic planning for resource allocations to address the most significant transboundary water issues across time, regions, and countries.

[3] The international waters focal area is not part of the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR), which contributes to supporting GEF recipient countries consistently across GEF replenishment periods. GEF projects may also span multiple replenishment periods.

Map 3.1 Distribution of GEF international waters portfolio projects between GEF-5 and GEF-8



Source: GEF Portal; shape files provided by the World Bank.

Note: *n* = 230. Projects that only indicated "regional" or "global" in the country name list in the GEF Portal were not included in the analysis (*n* = 41). Parent projects were not included to avoid double counting (*n* = 6).

3.3 Trends in cofinancing

The international waters focal area has continued to mobilize considerable cofinancing across its recent programming cycles. A total of $16.98 billion in cofinancing is expected for evaluation portfolio projects (table 3.4). Cofinancing amounts ranged from $5.98 billion in GEF-5 to $3.94 billion in GEF-8.

Table 3.4 Promised cofinancing by project status and replenishment cycle ($ billion)

GEF period	CEO endorsed	Active	Closed	Total
GEF-5	0.13	4.01	1.84	5.98
GEF-6	0.18	3.06	0.33	3.56
GEF-7	0	3.50	0	3.50
GEF-8	3.59[a]	0.35	0	3.94
Total	3.90	10.91	2.17	16.98

Sources: GEF Portal; project identification forms for GEF-8 projects at Chief Executive Officer (CEO) endorsement stage (*n* = 26).

Note: Cofinancing is amount promised at CEO endorsement.

The average cofinancing ratio for the international waters portfolio exceeds that for the overall GEF portfolio over the GEF-5 to GEF-8 time frame, although this may change as more projects are approved. Specifically, the overall international waters portfolio has maintained a grant-cofinancing ratio of 1:9.7 (figure 3.1), compared to 1:7 for the overall GEF portfolio (*n* = 2,584). Although the more recent replenishment periods (GEF-7 and GEF-8) mobilized less cofinancing than earlier periods (GEF-5 and GEF-6), an analysis of promised and materialized cofinancing amounts for closed projects (*n* = 44) found that 25 percent did not meet their expected cofinancing amount. The high cofinancing ratios in GEF-5 and GEF-6 are therefore partially attributed to overestimation of cofinancing.

Figure 3.1 Cofinancing ratios from GEF-5 to GEF-8

Source: GEF Portal. *n* = 277.

3.4 Enabling activities

An emerging area of work led by the international waters focal area is providing technical support to countries on the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ).[4] While the international waters focal area had not previously served as the financing mechanism for any specific international convention, the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement in 2023 presented an opportunity for the GEF to facilitate BBNJ ratification and early implementation as part of the financial mechanism.

The international waters portfolio for this evaluation includes three enabling activity projects to facilitate ratification and early implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. Two projects—one led by FAO and one by UNDP—were approved in June and October 2024; the third, led by UNEP, was approved in February 2025. Under these three umbrella enabling activities, a total of 27 countries across multiple regions and small island developing states (SIDS) are provided with technical assistance to ratify and implement the BBNJ Agreement. UNEP, UNDP, and FAO lead

[4] United Nations, Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction.

one project each. Over $4.7 million has been mobilized as grants for these projects (table 3.5).

3.5 Growth in multifocal area activities

The international waters portfolio underwent a significant shift from GEF-7 to GEF-8, marked by a rise in multifocal area, national, and child projects within integrated programs. The share of focal area–specific international waters projects dropped from 81 percent in GEF-7 to 27 percent in GEF-8, while multifocal area projects with international waters contributions rose from 19 percent to 73 percent. Similarly, stand-alone international waters projects declined from 91 percent to 29 percent, with child projects increasing from 9 percent to 71 percent. This transformation reflects active participation of the international waters focal area in four integrated programs: the Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Program; Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution; Eliminating Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains; and the Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes programs. Collectively, these integrated programs account for 49 child projects, representing 67 percent of the GEF-8 international waters portfolio.

There is a clear trend toward increased financial allocations for multifocal area, national, and child projects, aligning with the GEF's strategic emphasis on integration. GEF grants for multifocal area projects with international waters elements rose significantly from $104 million to $352 million (figure 3.2). In earlier cycles, regional projects dominated the international waters focal area in both number and funding. However, GEF-8 marked a shift, with national projects receiving the largest share ($265 million), followed by regional ($149 million) and global projects ($68 million). Funding for child projects also grew substantially, from $28 million in GEF-7 to $329 million in GEF-8. Additionally, full-size project grants increased steadily, from $322 million in GEF-6 to $470 million in GEF-8.

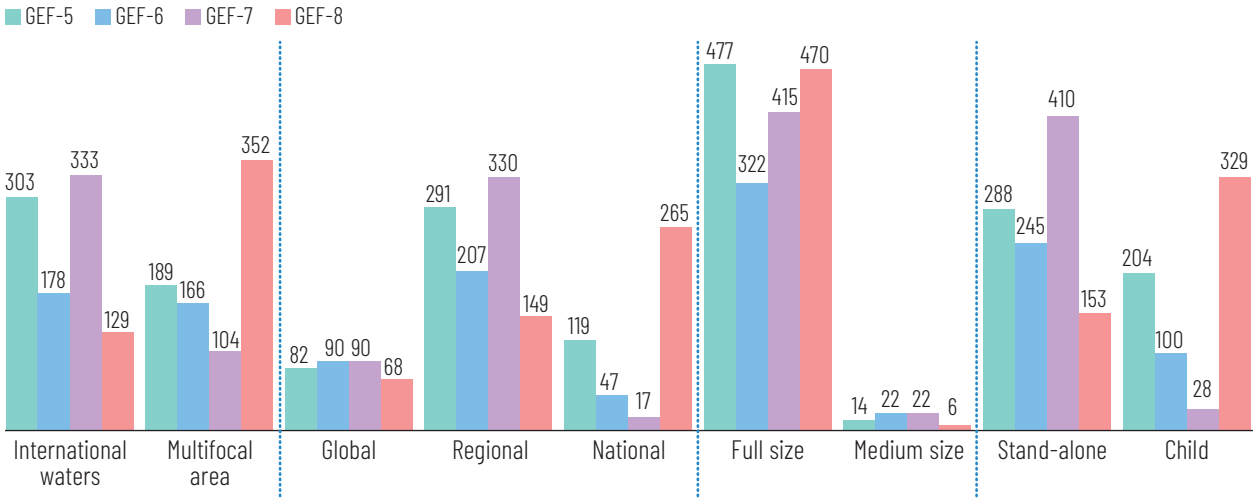
In GEF-8, the international waters focal area accounts for approximately 47 percent of GEF funding for multifocal area projects with international waters–funded components. It is followed by biodiversity (29 percent), chemicals and waste (10 percent), climate change (9 percent), and land

Table 3.5 Countries supported by GEF-8 international waters enabling activities

Project	GEF ID	GEF Agency	Countries
Enabling Activities to Support the ratification and early implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (EA-BBNJ)	11821	United Nations Environment Programme	Cambodia, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Liberia, Maldives, Mozambique, Nigeria, Panama, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia
Enabling Activities to Support the ratification and early implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (EA-BBNJ)	11820	United Nations Development Programme	Belize, Cabo Verde, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Mexico, Philippines, Tanzania, Uruguay
Enabling Activities to Support the ratification and early implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (EA-BBNJ)	11656	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Colombia, Marshall Islands, Morocco, Palau, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Vanuatu

Source: GEF Portal.

Figure 3.2 GEF grant allocation by focal area, geographic scope, project size, and project type (million $)



Source: GEF Portal.

degradation (4 percent). Notably, 83 percent of international waters funding for multifocal area projects is directed toward integrated programs. The remaining international waters funds support other objectives such as blue economy, ABNJ, and water security.[5]

3.6 Approaches and typologies

A review of 42 terminal evaluations from GEF-5 and GEF-6 indicates that most international waters projects incorporated at least one integrated approach, such as integrated water resources management (IWRM), integrated coastal management, or ridge to reef (R2R). Based on such integrated approaches, 66.7 percent of these recently evaluated projects covered marine waterbodies, and 54.8 percent supported freshwater bodies (table 3.6). Approximately 48 percent of international waters projects used the TDA-SAP approach to strengthen transboundary water management. Pollution and fisheries were the most common thematic issues covered—by 64.3 percent and 47.6 percent of the projects, respectively. These findings highlight the alignment of project focus and strategic objectives in GEF-5 and GEF-6.

At the strategic level, GEF international waters projects generally fall into three core types, each offering distinct opportunities. The first type focuses on specific transboundary waterbodies or regions, with interventions sustained over an extended period within the same geographic area. As an example, the project Scaling up the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA; GEF ID 5405, UNDP) was built on the foundation of three earlier projects. The first of these was a regional project addressing marine pollution, and the second focused on developing intergovernmental and multisectoral partnerships; it became known as the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA). The third project facilitated implementation of the SDS-SEA, a regional framework to guide actions

[5] Of $352 million in grants for multifocal area projects, the international waters focal area accounts for $166 million, including $137 million for integrated programs and $29 million for international waters objectives, as of December 2024.

Table 3.6 Project characteristics of evaluated projects in GEF-5 and GEF-6

Characteristic	No.	Percent
Water type/location		
Marine	28	66.7
Fresh water	23	54.8
Large marine ecosystems	13	31.0
Rivers	13	31.0
Open oceans	4	9.5
Marine protected areas	4	9.5
Coastal	4	9.5
Aquifer/groundwater	3	7.1
Lake	2	4.8
TDA-SAP		
TDA-SAP planning or implementation	20	47.6
Project focus		
Pollution	27	64.3
Fisheries	20	47.6
Small island developing states	12	28.6
Plastics	6	14.3
Areas beyond national jurisdiction	4	9.5
Integrated approach		
At least one approach used	22	52.4
Integrated water resources mgmt	12	28.6
Integrated coastal management	7	16.7
Ridge to reef/source to sea	7	16.7

Source: Terminal evaluation reports for 42 GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects.

Note: TDA-SAP = transboundary diagnostic analysis-strategic action program.

for sustainable coastal and marine environments in East Asia. Together, these three projects contributed to building a foundation of governance, partnership, and ownership.

Based on this long-term project engagement, the SDS-SEA project successfully demonstrated catalytic effects through the incorporation of integrated coastal management approaches and tools into the SAPs of LMEs, including the Yellow Sea, the Arafura and Timor Seas, the Bay of Bengal, and LMEs in Africa. Additionally, the Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank was developed for regional knowledge management and was linked to the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN).[6] Other projects demonstrated how TDA and SAP development and implementation were conducted over multiple projects in the same geographic regions.

The second type of project focuses on a specific transboundary water issue, applying targeted interventions across different geographic regions over time. For example, the Sustainable Management of Bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean Trawl Fisheries (GEF ID 5304, FAO) and two earlier projects focused on reducing bycatch in bottom trawl fishing in different countries and regions. The first of these earlier projects developed bycatch reduction devices as a global project. The second, the CTI Strategies for Fisheries Bycatch Management (GEF ID 3619, FAO), addressed policy, legal, and institutional frameworks and identified more selective fishing gear through field trials and enhanced information management. Building on the experience and lessons of its predecessors, the Latin American project strengthened collaboration through the regional strategy on the management of bycatch and discards, conducted trawl gear trials, and established multistakeholder platforms to manage fishery bycatch in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The third project type focuses on knowledge management and evidence generation at the global level. For example, several IW:LEARN projects established a knowledge management platform for the international waters focal area by facilitating learning exchanges (e.g., twinning), knowledge sharing, biennial international waters conferences, regional workshops, and a central

[6] IW:LEARN has served for many years as a knowledge management hub for the international waters focal area by promoting international waters-related events, providing a repository of knowledge products, and summarizing international waters project information through interactive maps.

website. Implementation of the now-completed GEF-5 IW:LEARN initiative alone (GEF ID 5729) led to the adoption of at least one new management approach in 47 international waters projects, underscoring the replication and uptake of good practices. Similarly, UNEP's Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP): Aquifers, Lake/Reservoir Basins, River Basins, Large Marine Ecosystems, and Open Ocean to Catalyze Sound Environmental Management (GEF ID 4489) conducted the first global comparative assessment of five transboundary waterbodies. These examples demonstrate the GEF's contributions to global knowledge management and evidence generation on transboundary water management.

Each of the three international waters project types has made marked contributions to advancing transboundary cooperation and improving water management. Long-term engagement through GEF international waters projects in specific geographic areas has fostered strong partnerships and multisectoral coordination, indicating transboundary coherence in pursuit of shared water management goals. The issue-specific approach has enabled the testing of innovative tools across regions, offering valuable insights for replication and scaling. Additionally, the GEF's global projects position it as a potential hub for knowledge management and evidence generation on transboundary water issues. These pronounced strengths across the three project streams present an opportunity for the GEF to reflect on strategic priorities and determine which types of interventions to emphasize moving forward.

3.7 Review of ongoing projects

The evaluation reviewed 59 ongoing projects, which were relatively early in their active implementation stage. Most of the projects reviewed originated from GEF-7 (81 percent), GEF-8 (14 percent) and GEF-6 (5 percent). Regional representation ranged from 6.8 percent in Europe and Central Asia (4 projects) to 22 percent in Asia (13 projects). FAO (27 percent) and UNDP (25 percent) were the leading GEF Agencies, jointly covering most projects. Approximately 75 percent were international waters projects, with the remaining 25 percent being multifocal area projects. In terms of scope, 73 percent were regional, 22 percent global, and 5 percent national. Over 81 percent of the reviewed projects were stand-alone interventions, with child projects accounting for the remainder. Nearly 90 percent were full-size projects, 6.8 percent were medium-size projects, and 3.4 percent were enabling activities. These GEF-8 enabling activities were a first for the international waters focal area and were specifically related to the BBNJ Agreement.

About 79 percent of the projects include institutional capacity strengthening, and 67 percent focus on policy and regulatory reform (table 3.7). While only 25 percent incorporate innovative financial instruments, several projects demonstrate innovative financing approaches. For example, Caribbean BluEFin (Caribbean Blue Economy Financing Project; GEF ID 10782, UNEP) established regional financing models—a blue carbon facility, a blue credit/debit card, and digital payments for marine protected areas—based on the existing Caribbean Sustainable Finance Architecture. This architecture includes national conservation trust funds and the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund. These mechanisms aim to generate sustainable funds for multiple countries at the regional level. Similarly, the global coordination project for the Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution integrated program mobilized cofinancing through equity investment. The Build Back a Blue and Stronger Mediterranean (GEF ID 10685, Conservation International) project benefited from the MedFund, a financing mechanism to enhance the financial sustainability of project interventions in marine protected areas in the Mediterranean.

The quality-at-entry assessment indicates that stakeholder engagement remains a key strength of the international

Table 3.7 Project characteristics of quality-at-entry assessment portfolio

Characteristic	No.	Percent
Enabling environment		
Institutional capacity strengthening	41	78.9
Policy and regulatory reform	35	67.3
Innovative financial instruments	13	25.0
Stakeholder engagement		
Gender mainstreaming	51	98.0
Private sector	45	86.5
Civil society	44	84.6
Indigenous Peoples	12	23.1
Water types/locations		
Marine	30	57.7
Coastal	25	48.1
Fresh water	23	44.2
River	20	38.5
Aquifer	11	21.2
Areas beyond national jurisdiction	8	15.4
Lake	6	11.5
TDA-SAP		
TDA-SAP planning or implementation	32	61.5
SAP implementation	24	46.2
TDA-SAP planning	19	36.5
Innovation and knowledge management		
Knowledge management	52	100
Innovation	31	59.6
Project focus		
Pollution	35	67.3
Behavior change	35	67.3
Fisheries	32	61.5
Small island developing states	16	30.8
Plastics	11	21.2
Programming directions		
Blue economy	27	51.9
Areas beyond national jurisdiction	8	15.4
Water security	20	38.5

Source: GEF project documents for 52 ongoing projects.

Note: TDA-SAP = transboundary diagnostic analysis-strategic action program. The assessment did not include child projects under integrated programs or enabling activities. A single project can be counted in multiple response categories.

waters focal area. Nearly all projects (98 percent) include gender mainstreaming across project components, while about 87 percent engage the private sector, and about 85 percent involve civil society organizations. International waters projects consistently promote stakeholder participation throughout project planning, implementation, financing, completion, and knowledge management. Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, when applicable, was noted in 23 percent of projects.

Ongoing GEF international waters projects demonstrate a fairly balanced focus between marine and freshwater systems, although groundwater remains underrepresented. About 58 percent of current projects are marine related, and about 44 percent address fresh water, with grant allocations of $201 million and $180 million, respectively.[7] About 48 percent include coastal areas. Groundwater or aquifer-related projects account for about 21 percent, indicating that roughly half of the freshwater projects address transboundary groundwater issues. Transboundary rivers are the most common freshwater focus, yet groundwater and conjunctive water management (CWM) continue to pose challenges in international river basins.[8] While IW:LEARN identifies over 450 transboundary aquifers globally, the GEF has supported work in only 14. For example, the UNEP/GEF MedProgramme recently convened national dialogues with Albania, Montenegro, Morocco, and Tunisia to strengthen information sharing and capacity building in key coastal aquifers (e.g., Buna-Bojana, Ras Jebel, and Rhiss-Nekor). There is clear potential for the GEF to increase its emphasis on transboundary groundwater in

[7] The total exceeds 100 percent because one project—Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's Natural Capital, Building Resilience and Supporting Region Wide Investments for Sustainable Blue Socio-Economic Development (PROCARIBE+; GEF ID 10800)—has an explicit focus on both marine and freshwater bodies—an example of international waters projects connecting freshwater and marine waterbodies through integrated approaches (e.g., source to sea).

[8] CWM is the integrated planning and coordinated use of different water sources, especially surface water and groundwater.

future programming, acknowledging that not all transboundary aquifers are located in GEF-eligible countries.

As in previous cycles, current GEF international waters projects continue to apply the TDA-SAP process, with over 61 percent including TDA-SAP planning or SAP implementation. All projects incorporate knowledge management components, often linked to IW:LEARN and cross-project learning. For instance, the project Implementing the Strategic Action Programme of the Drin Basin to Strengthen Transboundary Cooperation and Enable Integrated Natural Resources Management (GEF ID 10881, UNDP) explores innovative tools such as remote sensing, pollution modeling, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to enhance transboundary monitoring. Similarly, the Global Partnership for Mitigation of Underwater Noise from Shipping (GEF ID 10890, UNDP) is developing a toolkit to assess underwater noise pollution—a growing issue, especially in the Caribbean.

The GEF-7 and GEF-8 programming directions explicitly cited blue economy, ABNJ, and water security as key objectives. The quality-at-entry assessment estimated the share of projects aligned with these priorities: 51.9 percent focus on blue economy, 15.4 percent on ABNJ, and 38.5 percent on water security. Reflecting these strategic objectives, the international waters portfolio addresses a broad range of topics, including pollution reduction (67.3 percent), behavior change (67.3 percent), and fisheries (61.5 percent). Additionally, 30.8 percent of the projects target SIDS.

3.8 Engagement with the Clean and Healthy Oceans Integrated Program

In light of the GEF's strategic shift toward integrated programming, it is important to understand the link between the international waters focal area and the CHO-IP. The CHO-IP addresses marine hypoxia by tackling coastal pollution through four key outcomes:

- Dialogue, science, and knowledge management improved to inform decision-making and accelerate collaborative action to alleviate marine hypoxia
- Policy, regulation, and investment frameworks strengthened to promote achievement of marine hypoxia pollution reduction targets
- Best management practices adopted and amplified that emphasize nature-based solutions and achievement of marine hypoxia reduction targets
- Integrated program progress, impact, and contributions to marine hypoxia reduction effectively monitored, evaluated, and widely reported.

The CHO-IP program framework document describes how its outputs build on the foundational work of the international waters focal area. For example, Output 2.3 ("assist LME countries to strengthen and adopt strategic action programs and regional norms designed to reduce hypoxia, including zonation and validation of existing TDA, SAPs, and blue economy plans") demonstrates how the TDA-SAP process provides a platform for addressing hypoxia at national and regional levels. Additionally, Output 2.1 emphasizes the promotion of regional or LME-level agreements and strategies, reinforcing the programmatic continuity with previous international waters efforts.

The CHO-IP Global Coordination Project (GEF ID 11353) was designed to play a vital role in coordinating and consolidating data from child projects for coherent evidence generation, policy formulation, and environmental conservation efforts. According to the program framework document, the global coordination project will engage those countries, LMEs, and regions that are not directly part of the child projects to join relevant dialogues and knowledge management activities. The previous and ongoing SAPs serve as the foundation for such collaborations.

The child projects focus on raising public awareness of nutrient pollution and hypoxia, generating scientific evidence to inform decision-making, strengthening the enabling environment (e.g., policies, regulatory

frameworks, financing) and knowledge management with a specific emphasis on good management practices. The CHO-IP covers 14 countries and 10 LMEs (table 3.8).

Some of the program indicators suggest that the CHO-IP measures results at regional or subregional levels and covers policy coherence. More specifically, the fourth indicator requires at least three countries to be involved in collaboration for coastal zone hypoxia reduction. The seventh and eighth indicators present opportunities to achieve policy coherence across multiple sectors through regulatory and policy frameworks. Additionally, the 10th indicator addresses LME-wide nutrient pollution and coastal hypoxia reduction strategies, which can inform policy and regulatory reform in multiple countries.

Table 3.8 Countries and large marine ecosystems/gulfs covered by the Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Program

Country	LME/gulf covered	DIN load
Jordan	Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba)	0–100,000
Thailand	Gulf of Thailand	100,100–250,000
Peru	Humboldt Current	100,100–250,000
Panama	Pacific Central-American Coastal (Parita Bay)	250,100–500,000
Moldova	Black Sea	250,100–500,000
Madagascar	Agulhas Current	500,100–750,000
Venezuela, República Bolivariana de	Caribbean Sea	750,100–1 million
St. Kitts and Nevis	Caribbean Sea	
Grenada	Caribbean Sea	
Trinidad and Tobago	Caribbean Sea	
Viet Nam	South China Sea (Gulf of Tonkin)	1–2.5 million
Mexico	Gulf of Mexico	1–2.5 million
Sri Lanka	Bay of Bengal	2.5–5 million
Maldives	Bay of Bengal	

Sources: Adapted from Lee, Seitzinger, and Mayorga 2016; GEF Portal.

Note: DIN = dissolved inorganic nitrogen; LME = large marine ecosystem.

What has not been elucidated in the program framework document and child projects is the contributions of integrated programs to strengthening transboundary cooperation, which represents the fundamental difference between international waters focal area projects and integrated program child projects. While the global coordination project is expected to facilitate coordination within integrated program countries and with neighboring countries, dedicated project interventions to strengthen collaborative relationships among the countries that share transboundary waterbodies are limited. The objectives of integrated program initiatives and international waters focal area initiatives are not the same, despite their potential complementarity. These differences are corroborated by stakeholder interviews. Although many integrated program initiatives address important global issues, including hypoxia, they cannot fully address them from international waters perspectives. When integrated programs only involve single countries without a specific transboundary intervention, meaningful collective action and transboundary cooperation may not be promoted.

A comparison of LMEs covered by the CHO-IP and the projected nitrogen load in LMEs suggests that GEF project sites may not be fully matched with high-pollution areas (table 3.8). While four child projects covered three LMEs (the Bay of Bengal, the South China Sea, and the Gulf of Mexico) with a high level of projected dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) load, other child projects covered LMEs with a relatively low DIN load (e.g., the Red Sea, the Gulf of Thailand, and the Humboldt Current). Because nutrient pollution is not the only risk factor that informed CHO-IP country selection, this finding does not negate the importance of the program's interventions or the contributions of international waters projects that have addressed hypoxia and other land-based sources of pollution. Still, it points to an opportunity from an international waters perspective to focus on a limited number of LMEs with high pollution levels by involving all relevant countries to address hypoxia and strengthen transboundary cooperation.

4 Portfolio performance

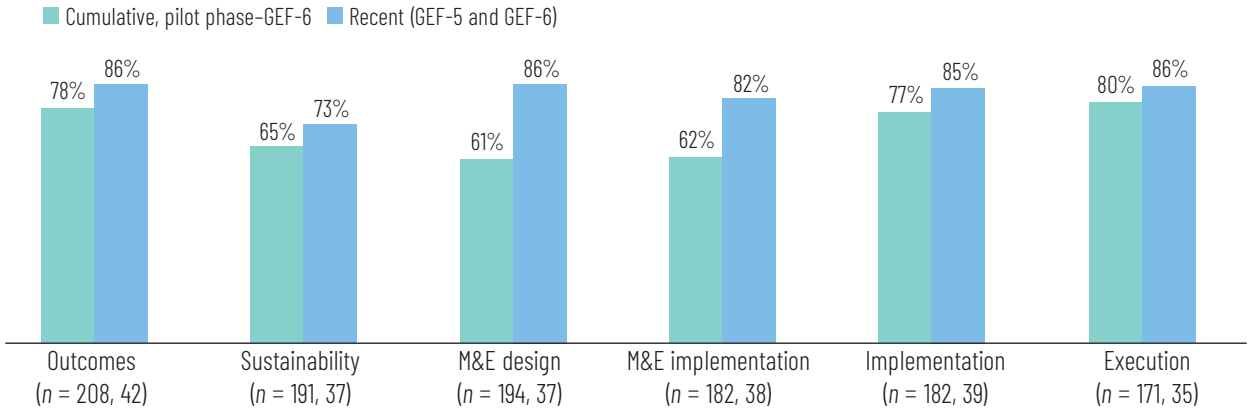
4.1 Overall trends

International waters project performance has improved over time as demonstrated by performance ratings from terminal evaluations for GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects. The proportion of projects with ratings in the satisfactory/likely range was consistently larger among GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects than for the cumulative average of all international waters projects from the pilot phase to GEF-6 (figure 4.1). This trend held true across all measures on outcomes, likelihood of sustainability, quality of M&E at design and implementation, implementation quality, and execution quality. For recent projects (GEF-5 and GEF-6), approximately 86 percent received a project rating in the satisfactory range for outcomes, and 73 percent in the likely range for sustainability. The largest difference was observed in the quality of M&E at design. The cumulative proportion of projects with a positive rating was 61 percent, with 86 percent of recent projects receiving a rating in the satisfactory range.

A comparison of completed international waters projects from GEF-5 and GEF-6 with the overall GEF portfolio shows that project ratings for international waters activities are broadly comparable with those in the overall portfolio, and that the international waters focal area is notably stronger regarding sustainability and M&E design and implementation (figure 4.2). It appears likely that the detailed preparation processes of TDA-SAPs provide a strong foundation for sustainability, as well as help define important areas for M&E attention and how best to assess these.

Terminal evaluations of projects from GEF-5 and GEF-6 reported a high level of relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness. The proportion of projects with a moderately satisfactory rating or higher was 98 percent for relevance, 88 percent for efficiency, and 95 percent for effectiveness, suggesting that most international waters projects addressed globally, regionally, and nationally relevant transboundary water issues with high efficiency and effectiveness.

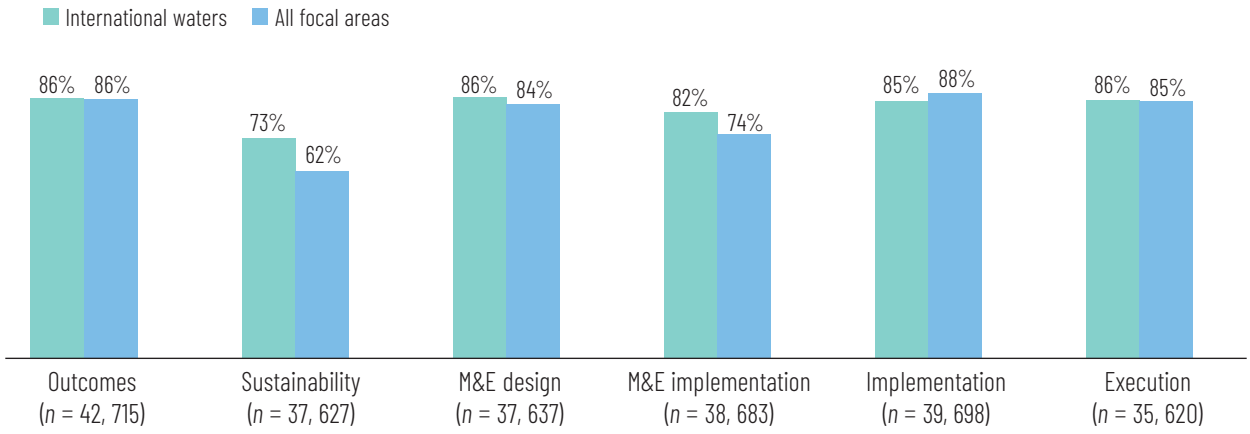
Figure 4.1 Percentage of cumulative versus recent international waters projects with performance ratings in the satisfactory/likely range



Source: Terminal evaluation reports.

Note: M&E = monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 4.2 Percentage of GEF-5 and GEF-6 international waters and overall GEF portfolio projects with performance ratings in the satisfactory/likely range

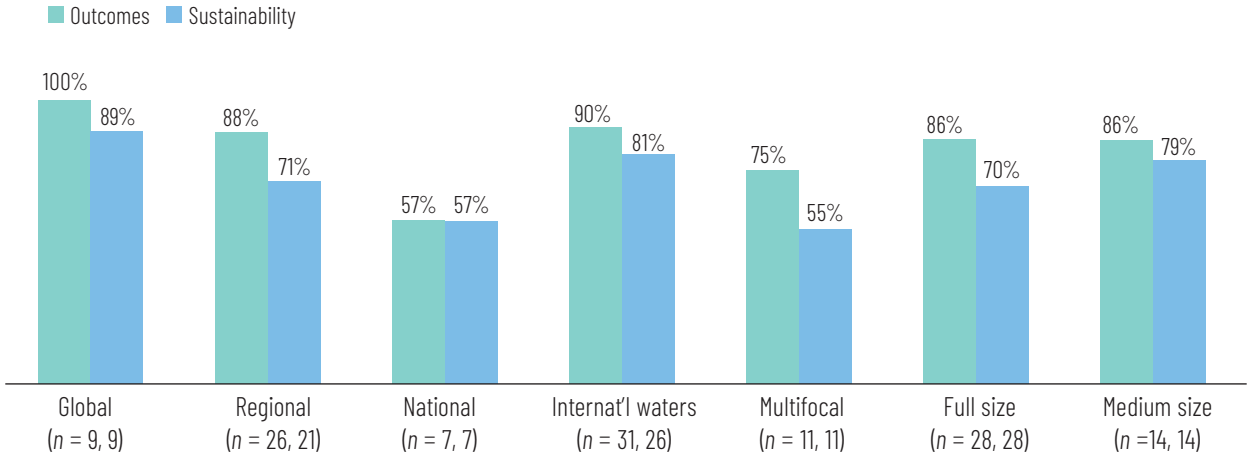


Source: Terminal evaluation reports.

Analysis of terminal evaluations also showed that on average, national projects received lower outcome (*n* = 7) and sustainability (*n* = 7) ratings than global and regional projects (figure 4.3). Despite the limited sample size in this evaluation, the findings are consistent with the previous international waters focal area study, which indicated the underperformance of national projects compared to regional projects (GEF IEO 2018).[1] Also, multifocal area projects had lower outcome and sustainability ratings than international waters projects. Project size did not affect the outcomes, while the likelihood of sustainability was higher in medium-size projects than in full-size projects.

[1] Underperformance was concentrated in R2R projects.

Figure 4.3 Percentage of all GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects with outcome and sustainability ratings in the satisfactory/likely range, by project scope, focal area, and size



Source: Terminal evaluation reports.

A thematic analysis of the key findings, conclusions, and lessons of 42 terminal evaluations for international waters and multifocal area projects provided insights into why some projects were not as successful as others with regard to outcomes and sustainability. Some of the common issues observed in these GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects were limited communications and coordination among projects and stakeholders; gaps in M&E, including insufficient tracking of cofinance and socioeconomic benefits; and overly ambitious project designs. For example, the terminal evaluation report for Conserving Biodiversity and Enhancing Ecosystem Functions through a "Ridge to Reef" Approach in the Cook Islands (GEF ID 5348, UNDP) stressed that the project scope was too broad to be strategic or realistic and was unlikely to achieve outcomes on water, land, and coastal management in one project. Sustainability was consequently in serious question because unfinished work from the project had to be listed in the exit strategy. Another R2R terminal evaluation report—for Testing the Integration of Water, Land, Forest & Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Pacific Island Countries (GEF ID 5404, UNDP)—similarly called attention to the oversized and overambitious design, which included regional and national interventions across 14 Pacific SIDS. These findings suggest that multifocal area projects particularly need a realistic number and scale of interventions to avoid developing integrated projects at the expense of their effectiveness and sustainability. More information can be found in annex F.

4.2 Progress toward impacts

Several international waters projects have demonstrated catalytic effects for sustaining and scaling up results beyond the GEF project period. One notable example is the Transforming the Global Maritime Transport Industry towards a Low Carbon Future through Improved Energy Efficiency (GloMEEP; GEF ID 5508, UNDP) project, which aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting more energy-efficient shipping. A key outcome of GloMEEP was the 2017 establishment of the Global Industry Alliance—a public-private partnership, under which 16 private companies each committed $20,000 per year to facilitate low-carbon shipping. The alliance has supported research and development, technology

demonstration, global dialogues, and capacity-building activities, creating a self-sustaining model that attracted additional private sector participation. Following the completion of the GEF project, the International Maritime Organization and the government of Norway continued providing support through the GreenVoyage2050 project in 2019, ensuring long-term impact of GloMEEP's initiatives.

The Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Chu and Talas River Basins (GEF ID 5310, UNDP) project showed the early impact of GEF partnerships and institutional strengthening to sustain transboundary water management beyond the GEF-funded project period. This project focused on TDA-SAP development for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan from 2014 to 2018. By project closure, SAP approval by these countries was still pending. Leveraging the existing partnerships and follow-up support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Chu-Talas Water Commission was able to continue facilitating SAP approval processes without additional GEF investment. The SAP was eventually approved in 2023 to guide national actions.

4.3 Monitoring: coverage of GEF core indicators

While the GEF's core indicators enable overall monitoring of international waters performance, this evaluation found them inadequate to measure progress against strategic objectives. The international waters focal area primarily addresses the GEF's seventh and eighth core indicators by measuring the number of shared water ecosystems under new or improved cooperative management and the extent of globally overexploited marine fisheries that have moved to more sustainable levels in million metric tons (GEF 2022).[2] Additionally, the following four subindicators provide measures of specific aspects of transboundary water management:

- Level of TDA-SAP formulation and implementation
- Level of regional legal agreements and regional management institution(s) to support its implementation
- Level of national/local reforms and active participation of interministerial committees
- Level of engagement in IW:LEARN through participation and delivery of key products.

The evaluation's findings suggest that the international waters focal area can continue improving its target setting, reporting, and recording of results. At least 126 projects, or 45 percent of the evaluation portfolio, reported a target for the relevant core indicator (table 4.1). Because core indicator monitoring was introduced in 2018 and updated in 2019, none of the projects from GEF-5 set such targets.

Evidence suggests that several GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects achieved their core indicator targets. Four projects reported their core indicator targets at project design and achieved them at midterm review. Three projects also set targets and met them at terminal evaluation. Two projects reported results at midterm review and at terminal evaluation while missing a target. Two projects only reported their indicator results at terminal evaluation without having a target. A total of 11 projects collectively improved transboundary cooperation in 14 shared water ecosystems.

GEF-8 has also employed indicators, including the number of LMEs with reduced pollution and hypoxia, the number of people benefiting from transboundary water management, marine protected areas or areas under improved management in millions of hectares, and areas of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity in millions of hectares. Although

[2] Some GEF international waters stakeholders interviewed said that additional and more robust indicators are needed to adequately and properly evaluate whether the GEF international waters focal area is working in the highest-risk situations.

Table 4.1 Status of core indicator monitoring by GEF replenishment period

GEF period	Number of projects with a target	Total targets	Number of projects with data available[a]	Midterm review/terminal evaluation results
GEF-6	25	34	10	13
GEF-7	56	78	1	1
GEF-8	45	50	0	0
Total	126	162	11	14

Source: GEF Portal.

a. Additional data are expected to be available in the GEF Portal over time.

it is important to measure these quantitative indicators, they do not directly measure strategic objectives related to blue economy, ABNJ, and water security. Additionally, the effectiveness of transboundary cooperation has not been monitored over time, as it requires monitoring beyond the time span of a single project. The transition from international waters tracking tools to core indicators has diminished the opportunity to use various process indicators of transboundary cooperation. While the CHO-IP has established a program-level monitoring framework, direct measurement of transboundary cooperation or specific international waters benefits will be limited. These findings suggest that the international waters focal area needs additional metrics to monitor evolving international waters strategic objectives and international waters benefits supported by integrated programs and child projects.

4.4 GEF interventions in water security

The Evaluation of the GEF's Approach to and Interventions in Water Security (GEF IEO 2024) highlighted the criticality and relevance of water to all the focal areas of the GEF. The evaluation assessed 283 projects with total GEF funding of $1.56 billion and cofinancing of $13.42 billion. The GEF supported water security interventions mainly through the international waters (30 percent), climate change (29 percent), and multifocal areas (26 percent). The evaluation findings noted that the GEF enhanced water security primarily through facilitating infrastructural improvements (e.g., solar-based water pumps, small-scale irrigation systems) and strengthening the enabling environment through policy development, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge generation.

The evaluation concluded that international conventions and the GEF's focal areas address water security issues through their specific environmental focus rather than promoting a holistic approach to the issue. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Convention on Biological Diversity address water from the perspectives of climate change, agriculture and land management, and ecosystems, respectively. In the GEF-8 results framework, the international waters focal area directly measures transboundary water governance, while the land degradation focal area addresses the impacts of water resources on land management and restoration. Other GEF focal areas—biodiversity, climate change, and chemicals and waste—do not include freshwater-related indicators. This siloed approach has resulted in limited availability of evidence of the GEF's overall contributions to water security.

Coherence between the GEF and other actors' water security projects has not been fully attained due to limited coordination at the national, subnational, and implementation levels.

Multiple instances were noted where other water security initiatives were implemented in the same geographic areas as GEF projects without any coordination. The coordination challenge resulted from different project timelines, different goals, and the lack of a responsible entity to facilitate coordination on water security. Water-related issues in ecosystems, socioeconomic development, and natural disasters are often handled by different ministries, whereas coordination on water security requires multisectoral engagement.

Some water infrastructure continued to benefit project communities beyond the project period through operations and maintenance with locally available materials. However, efforts on the enabling environment—such as technical report writing, governance reforms, and capacity-building activities—showed mixed results with respect to sustainability. Additionally, GEF project activities have not been scaled up or reached broader adoption to adequately address water security issues in project countries and regions. A key recommendation from the water security evaluation was to create sustainable financing mechanisms for scaling up successful interventions.

Water security projects have increasingly focused on gender inclusion. They have done so by promoting women's participation in water decision-making bodies, including gender perspectives in water policy and governance, and targeting women for microloan programs. Limited attention has been paid to other vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, refugees, and minority ethnic groups. Private sector engagement has also been limited in previous and current water security projects.

4.5 Contributions to regional interventions

The GEF's Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation of the Lower Mekong River Basin Ecosystem revealed the high relevance of water to key environmental issues in this transboundary waterbody in Southeast Asia (GEF IEO 2023). The evaluation findings suggested that Mekong River communities face inadequate water supplies for irrigation and drinking due to overharvesting and salinization of aquifers; limited baseline data availability on water quality, wetlands, and riverine habitat; loss of ecosystem services resilience due to altered water recharge and river flows; reduced livelihood benefits from unsustainable harvesting of fisheries; and lower food security from reduced water availability.

The findings also suggested that GEF interventions contributed to transboundary, national, and local water resource management, which facilitated multiple uses of water for agriculture, ecosystem services, and human consumption. The international waters focal area projects specifically focused on freshwater resource management in binational river basins and water security in the Mekong River Delta Transboundary Aquifer.

The evaluation stressed the transformative impacts of the GEF's multifocal area efforts in a transboundary setting. Over two-thirds of projects addressed water resource availability by promoting landscape-level planning and management, resulting in restoration of forest cover and watershed stability, diversification of agricultural production, livelihood improvements, and ecosystem service protection. These outcomes led to some of the transformative changes in local communities, such as increased access to irrigation and drinking water services; inclusion of women and Indigenous People in projects focusing on water availability, food security, and ecosystem resilience; and increased recognition that sustainable practices can enhance income and ecosystem services when water is available.

Successful implementation of regional dialogues for transboundary water management and international cooperation has been documented. For example, an experience note capturing lessons from IW:LEARN describes how regional dialogues led to the development of guidelines and communities of practice in Central America

(Yasuda and Tabora 2024). Box 4.1 outlines key enabling factors for successful regional dialogues.

4.6 Plastic pollution

The GEF has directly addressed plastic pollution in international waters and multifocal area projects through a wide range of interventions. These include global and regional assessments, infrastructure development, private sector engagement, capacity building for behavioral change, community-based cleaning activities, and knowledge management. All of these initiatives contributed to shaping the Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution integrated program, which focuses on upstream and midstream interventions.[3] Notably, the international waters project Addressing Marine Plastics—A Systemic Approach (GEF ID 9681, UNEP) laid the groundwork for this program by offering a roadmap and emphasizing systemic actions to address plastic pollution.

The global and regional transboundary water assessments undertaken by GEF-supported projects have generated quantitative evidence of plastic pollution and informed strategic actions. The TWAP, for instance, conducted the first global assessment of transboundary waters, including rivers, aquifers, lakes, LMEs, and open oceans. As part of this assessment, the TWAP estimated the risk levels from floating plastic debris in 66 LMEs based on quantitative models (Eriksen et al. 2014; Lebreton, Greer, and Borrero 2012) and informed the GEF's strategic actions in relation to marine plastic pollution (UNEP EO 2018). A project covering the Yellow Sea LME—Implementation of the Yellow Sea LME Strategic Action Programme for Adaptive Ecosystem-Based Management (GEF ID 4343, UNDP)—reported that the TDA identified microplastics (plastics less than 5 mm) as a key environmental issue and called for a regional strategy. These projects provide examples of how the GEF has contributed to generating key information and evidence to inform actions on plastic pollution.

[3] Upstream efforts include the elimination of unnecessary plastic products and the promotion of sustainable alternatives. Midstream efforts focus on extending the life cycle of plastics through circular systems, such as reuse, repair, and resale.

Box 4.1 Enabling regional dialogue to facilitate transboundary water management

Regional dialogues play a vital role in promoting transboundary cooperation and successful knowledge dissemination efforts. They also have resulted in the creation of communities of practice for further cooperation and information sharing on transboundary water management. For example, GEF projects in the Drin River Basin have demonstrated how regional dialogues can contribute to fostering political will, establishing the Drin Core Group as a decision-making and coordination mechanism for the region.

A recent experience note produced by IW:LEARN and the Global Water Partnership summarizes key processes through which the Central American Commission on Environment and Development and the Global Water Partnership initiated annual regional multistakeholder dialogues in 2019 and facilitated the development, finalization, and validation of regional guidelines in 2023 to guide transboundary water management in Central America. These guidelines identify four enabling factors for successful implementation of regional dialogues and their further replication: (1) effective facilitators to manage regional dialogues, (2) use of existing political and economic processes, (3) promotion of social learning, and (4) assurance of sustainable financing by leveraging cofinancing from partners.

To further facilitate, replicate, and share experiences from regional dialogues, a massive open online course on governance for transboundary freshwater security has been made available to the public.

Source: Yasuda and Tabora 2024.

Plastic pollution projects have demonstrated the importance of local communities as a catalyst for change. Evidence suggests that local communities, women, and youth successfully promoted and conducted cleaning campaigns in coastal villages, plastic waste collection, and innovative reuse of plastic materials. In Indonesia, an evidence-based behavior change project—Capturing Coral Reef and Related Ecosystem Services (GEF ID 4690, World Bank)—equipped local communities and women with relevant knowledge and tools to lead plastic waste management activities, such as plastic waste collection and production of decorative items from plastic bottles. Stakeholders reported that local communities were able to set their own objectives and drive project activities as active agents rather than passive beneficiaries (CCRES 2018).

The sustainability of community-level interventions can prove to be difficult, however. The R2R Integrated Environmental Management of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Catchment (GEF ID 5663, UNDP) project presented a key issue with sustainability of community-level interventions. This project conducted cleanup campaigns in 26 villages, which led to the collection of over 350 tonnes of solid waste, including plastics. After the project period, however, the mangroves and shores at project sites were polluted again with plastic bottles and other solid wastes. While regular cleanup campaigns by communities and youths were recommended in the terminal evaluation, it remained unclear what models and approaches can be owned, managed, and sustained by key stakeholders—the local government, local communities, women, youths, and private sector partners.

The SDS-SEA project also contributed to knowledge management by creating the Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank to share knowledge and lessons from PEMSEA. PEMSEA has been supported by the GEF for the past three decades and recently mobilized external resources to implement a marine plastic project in the Philippines and Timor-Leste. While the GEF is not the main financial contributor to this project, PEMSEA's successful resource mobilization from non-GEF sources can be viewed as a result of the GEF's long-term institutional support.

4.7 Policy coherence

Policy coherence is an important priority in the GEF-8 programming directions. International waters projects have historically focused on facilitating coherent policies and actions across multiple countries and sectors. The primary tool used by the international waters focal area to achieve policy coherence across countries has been the TDA-SAP process. The TDA is a research-based, participatory process that identifies priority issues to be addressed in a shared waterbody; the SAP is a plan of action agreed upon by the countries on how they will address these issues, jointly and/or within their respective countries. Box 4.2 presents a case study highlighting how GEF international waters projects contributed to promoting policy coherence through the TDA-SAP approach in Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Over 90 countries have undertaken SAPs, which represent politically endorsed frameworks for coherent regional and national actions. Of 52 ongoing projects reviewed in this evaluation, 60 percent include either TDA-SAP development or its implementation, suggesting that the international waters focal area has taken tangible steps to promote transboundary cooperation and coherent water management at regional levels. In addition, the international waters focal area's Common Oceans interventions in ABNJ also aim to achieve coherence among policies of regional fisheries management organizations, area-based governance mechanisms, and other multilateral regulatory institutions to develop a cross-sectoral ABNJ management framework at the global, regional, and national levels.

Recent strategic shifts by the GEF to integrated programming underscore the importance of regional and national-level policy coherence to address key environmental issues with transboundary implications. For example, a pollution

Box 4.2 Case study: Policy coherence on the Kura River

The Kura River is the largest river in the Caucasus region and an important source of fresh water for Azerbaijan and Georgia. After providing support for a transboundary diagnostic analysis–strategic action program (TDA-SAP) in 2009, the GEF funded an SAP implementation project that ran from 2016 to 2021. The project used integrated water resources management (IWRM) as its primary approach, with an aim to address the water-energy-food-ecosystem security nexus in Georgia and Azerbaijan. IWRM is also the approach used by the European Union's Water Framework Directive, with which both countries wanted to align. Conjunctive water management was identified as a critical component by the project's steering committee to resolve conflicts arising from lack of data on water resources in both countries.

Through the project, the two countries agreed—for the first time—on monitoring standards for both water quality and quantity; these were also aligned with international standards. The agreement included establishing monitoring stations for both surface and groundwater, from which the two countries would regularly exchange data. Before the project, the countries had neither assessed their groundwater resources nor developed a management plan for them. Regular meetings strengthened cooperative relationships and enabled a common technical language not only between technical staff of the two countries, but also for the government agencies within the countries dealing separately with water quality and quantity.

At the strategic level, the project hosted quarterly national policy meetings with various water-related sectors, many of which had never participated in transboundary water initiatives. These sectors were represented in national advisory groups which, along with the technical working groups on water quality and quantity, served as prototype intersectoral bodies and approaches toward improved policy coherence.

In 2023, Georgia enacted a new water law based on IWRM, which integrates the various water-related EU directives, such as those on water protection, pollution, and flooding. Water resources management is mandated to shift from administrative boundaries to basin-defined boundaries by 2026. In 2020, Azerbaijan also used IWRM principles to form a multisectoral water commission, which coordinated the country's various water-related agencies to respond to extreme drought and saltwater intrusion in the Kura River. The commission eventually recommended the integration of all water-related functions into a single agency. In 2023, a state water resources agency was established, bringing together the functions of managing drinking water supply, irrigation, amelioration, and water reservoirs—including the management of water-related emergencies and disasters—under one umbrella.

reduction project in the Black Sea (GEF ID 10563, World Bank) explicitly included an output to promote policy harmonization on pollution prevention in Georgia, Moldova, and Türkiye. A child project of the Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Program (GEF ID 11197) identified the absence of policy instruments and frameworks as key barriers to address plastic pollution and included a policy framework to facilitate alignment of economic, social, and environmental policies in project countries. Furthermore, CHO-IP includes a few relevant program-level indicators that provide insights into policy coherence across the agriculture, municipal, and industrial sectors. However, national-level policy coherence across sectors has not been explicitly measured or reported on at the portfolio level.

The international waters focal area's transboundary mandate provides an opportunity to promote policy coherence. The majority of IWC10 survey respondents perceived the international waters focal area as an effective channel for the GEF to promote policy coherence by integrating and harmonizing environmental objectives with policy

instruments in fisheries, tourism, agriculture, and other sectors (annex D).

The international waters focal area has also historically supported tools to enhance national-level policy coherence to implement the SAPs. Despite not measuring national-level policy coherence at the portfolio level, the international waters focal area has been supporting tools and approaches that can promote policy coherence across different water-related sectors and uses, such as municipal drinking water, sewage, fisheries, tourism, and ecosystem protection. Examples of these tools and approaches are IWRM, integrated coastal management, blue economy, marine spatial planning, source-to-sea (S2S), and CWM. The following paragraphs present some instances in which these tools have been adopted and the ongoing challenges in using them to promote policy coherence.

Marine spatial planning is a science-based process used to manage and allocate marine space for various human activities while ensuring the sustainable use of marine resources. It involves mapping marine environments; identifying competing uses; and developing plans to balance ecological, economic, and social objectives and reduce conflicts. In the Caribbean LME, which the GEF has supported since 2009, marine spatial planning is being applied in a wide range of areas, from small-scale pilots, to bays, to the full exclusive economic zone of the Dominican Republic and the Mesoamerican Reef spanning Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras. The Western Indian Ocean LME countries have embedded marine spatial planning in decisions implementing the Nairobi Convention.[4] However, implementing marine spatial planning at the regional level has faced some obstacles due to language barriers among countries, different levels of readiness for marine spatial planning, differences in institutions and legislation, territorial disputes, insufficient interaction with other regions in Africa, and a lack of technical and financial capacity for implementation.

S2S links the various ecosystems, sectors, administrative units, and stakeholders through which water flows from its source to its multiple users and ultimately to the open ocean. It scales up earlier area-based management frameworks, such as marine spatial planning, integrated coastal zone management, integrated watershed management, and an ecosystem-based approach. S2S thus promotes cooperation between upstream and downstream stakeholders, as well as coordination among different sectors within the same area; this could contribute to increased coherence of policies covering these sectors and geographical areas. Through GEF capacity-building support for member states, the Conference of the Parties to the Nairobi Convention recently adopted a decision on S2S and has included this approach in its 10-year Regional Integrated Programme (2025–35), which covers the Western Indian Ocean LME.

CWM aims to integrate the management of surface waters and groundwater, which is particularly critical for climate change adaptation. Colombia is adopting CWM by building on a reformulated and more inclusive national IWRM policy. It has moved to make its national development plan more coherent with environmental objectives by organizing its land use planning around water and environmental justice. Because it is relatively new compared to other approaches, implementation challenges have arisen with CWM, and were specified in national dialogues in the Mediterranean LME. These challenges include the fragmentation of data and lack of data exchange among countries. The findings show that a regulatory framework for transboundary water management is a prerequisite for harmonized data exchange and management. There is often a lack of implementation of existing national water laws, an absence of efficient multisectoral institutional coordination for joint decision-making, and a failure to

[4] The Nairobi Convention is a regional agreement focusing on the sustainable management of the marine and coastal environments of the Western Indian Ocean.

include the energy sector—which plays a significant role in flood regulation.

4.8 Socioeconomic co-benefits

Evidence from several terminal evaluations demonstrates that international waters activities have helped generate socioeconomic co-benefits. For example, a terminal evaluation on Implementation of Global and Regional Oceanic Fisheries Conventions and Related Instruments in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (GEF ID 4746; UNDP, FAO) reported that it had contributed toward an average 6.25 percent increase in fisheries sector employment from 2010 to 2019. Other terminal evaluations noted additional socioeconomic co-benefits including increased employment and learning opportunities for women (Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, GEF ID 4581, FAO), improved economic conditions for fishers (Global Sustainable Supply Chains for Marine Commodities, GEF ID 5271, UNDP), and improved food security (Sustainable Groundwater Management in SADC Member States, GEF ID 4966, World Bank). A recent GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel information note has also suggested that the GEF's investments in transboundary cooperation facilitate marine and freshwater management as well as contribute to generating socioeconomic and peace co-benefits (GEF STAP 2024).

Measurement of socioeconomic co-benefits has lacked a systematic approach, with missing or inconsistent indicators across projects that make it difficult to compare results or aggregate findings. The Enhanced Water Security and Community Resilience in the Adjacent Cuvelai and Kunene Transboundary River Basins (GEF ID 10565, UNDP) project in southern Africa has tracked the number of farms with improved conditions due to sustainable land management practices. In another example, the Expanding Blue Economy Benefits and the Conservation of Critical Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services by Managing Surf Ecosystems (GEF ID 10931, United Nations Industrial Development Organization) project in Costa Rica, Panama, and Peru has measured the number of fishers and postharvest workers in artisanal fisheries who have benefited from increased market access, improved prices, or other economic incentives. The challenge lies in identifying viable socioeconomic indicators that can be used in a diverse operating context to demonstrate the overall impact of the international waters focal area.

4.9 Sustainability planning

The development of sustainability plans for the benefits of international waters projects has often been limited or initiated too late. A review of terminal evaluations from 42 GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects suggested that less than 30 percent of these developed sustainability or exit plans. Among 52 ongoing international waters projects assessed, 56 percent did not explicitly indicate the steps they would take to develop sustainability plans; and 34 percent would develop sustainability or exit plans in the latter half of GEF support, which does not provide enough time to take concrete actions or support development and strengthening of necessary institutions. However, a few more recent project proposals have specified that sustainability plans will be developed earlier. For example, an ABNJ project in the Sargasso Sea commits to developing its exit strategy and sustainability plan before its midterm review. Similarly, an SAP implementation project in Ecuador and Peru aims to develop a postproject sustainability strategy during its second year of implementation.

A critical aspect of sustainability of benefits concerns financial aspects. Several projects under implementation have committed to developing detailed financial sustainability plans. One example of this development is an FAO-led project for the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries in the North Brazil Shelf LME. This project will prepare a financial sustainability plan

during its final year. A UNDP-led project in the Limpopo River Basin will develop a financial sustainability plan for the Limpopo Watercourse Commission Secretariat by the end of the project. Given the long life cycle of many international waters projects, creating a specific sustainability plan early in the implementation process will enable its refinement throughout the project's life.

4.10 Innovation and inclusion

Terminal evaluations of GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects called attention to several examples of innovative technologies used in international waters projects. The Yellow Sea LME SAP project, for instance, employed integrated multitrophic aquaculture technology. This technology enhances aquaculture productivity and reduces water pollution by utilizing a food chain in the ocean. The knowledge and experience from this project were shared with three Caribbean countries through a learning exchange facilitated by IW:LEARN. Additionally, three projects utilized constructed wetlands, where polluted water is naturally treated through physical filtration and biological purification. A project in the Kura River Basin reported that a pilot site of constructed wetlands achieved an 85 percent reduction in nitrogen levels. These examples demonstrate how the international waters focal area has adopted innovative technologies to reduce environmental stresses.

However, increasing and monitoring innovative and transformative projects has proven difficult because it is essential to maintain the central focus of the international waters focal area on promoting transboundary water cooperation. Stakeholders with knowledge of the GEF's project screening process reported several obstacles to incorporating innovation in the focal area, including a limited number of proposed innovative or transformative projects, a lack of clarity in theories of change, and low quality of project identification forms (PIFs). Despite these challenges, IWC10 noted new approaches in the use of technologies (e.g., DNA monitoring, modeling to facilitate scenario-based planning) that have the potential to be embraced in future GEF projects.

The international waters focal area has maintained a high level of gender inclusion and mainstreaming across GEF replenishment periods. Terminal evaluations from projects in the Drin River Basin reported that approximately 30 percent of the decision-making body—the Drin Core Group—and 60 percent of its expert working groups were women. A terminal evaluation for a global ABNJ capacity-building project similarly stressed that women accounted for 43 percent of the regional leader's program, which aimed to strengthen the capacity of leaders from SIDS and developing countries for ABNJ interventions. The Pacific SIDS fisheries project featured the publication of Moana Voices, collections of firsthand experiences and narratives by women aimed at mainstreaming gender in the fisheries sector.

Ongoing GEF international waters projects provide examples of how youth engagement, gender mainstreaming, and local community participation can be achieved. The Groundwater for Deep Resilience (GEF ID 10970, FAO) project exemplifies how GEF projects can organize groundwater interventions with a great deal of youth involvement. This project facilitates a pan-continental youth forum on groundwater management in Africa by engaging young people in dialogues, capacity building, networking, and communication activities. Youth ambassadors will also be identified to ensure that various social media platforms are used to disseminate groundwater-related information and news to young populations. The Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's natural Capital, Building Resilience and Supporting Region Wide Investments for Sustainable Blue Socio-Economic Development (PROCARIBE+; GEF ID 10800, UNDP) project in Latin America and the Caribbean includes specific measures to address gender mainstreaming and youth participation. It aims to ensure that at least 30 percent of small grants projects are women-led and 10 percent

are youth-led. The Using Marine Spatial Planning in the Gulf of Guinea for the implementation of Payment for Ecosystem Services and Coastal Nature-based Solutions (GEF ID 10875, International Union for Conservation of Nature) project in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo has demonstrated gender mainstreaming efforts through dedicated engagement of women in income-generating activities.

Despite some success at the individual project level, the international waters focal area has generally struggled to engage private sector partners. This difficulty is evidenced by the IWC10 survey and project evaluations. IWC10 participants perceived the lack of private sector engagement as the major weakness of the international waters focal area (annex D). Stakeholder interviews brought to the fore several factors potentially contributing to this issue:

- Limited private sector expertise within the GEF Secretariat
- Time-consuming processes to approve some private companies for project participation
- The long-term nature of international waters projects without early economic returns on investments.

4.11 Challenges

One of the most persistent challenges for projects in the international waters focal area concerns how to achieve a balance between quality and time efficiency in project planning and implementation. Government stakeholders reported that GEF Agencies sometimes do not involve all relevant ministries in project proposal development, consequently leaving some ministries uninformed and weakly engaged with the intervention. Proposal documents may be presented to the ministry directly responsible for dealing with the GEF, for the purpose of obtaining government approval and signature, without seeking meaningful contributions from other ministries toward proposal development.

Another important factor that is sometimes ignored is to allow adequate time to coordinate with indigenous communities or other affected parties. This important process may seem slow and, in some cases, the project timeline may be too short to achieve all the desirable coordination and project setup activities. Stakeholder interviews with GEF Implementing and executing Agencies reinforced this finding, with reports that the limited time available to them for proposal submission has sometimes reduced the possibility of adequate stakeholder engagement. These findings indicate that adequate time for the development of project proposals and other relevant documents is an important aspect of ensuring ownership of project planning processes by countries.

The timely development and approval of international waters projects were reported to be equally important to avoid major project gaps and loss of momentum on the ground. Stakeholder interviews consistently noted that (1) the current GEF process does not allow GEF Agencies to submit a project proposal and receive timely approval without a significant project gap, (2) the current system does not allow GEF Agencies to use ongoing project funds to develop a proposal for a subsequent project, and (3) a terminal evaluation must be completed before submitting a new proposal to the GEF. These conditions were said to have specifically affected the Caribbean LME, Caribbean LME Plus, and PROCARIBE+ projects—each of which had a significant project gap, resulting in staff turnover and a loss of institutional memory. Affected stakeholders assessed that the GEF is losing money from such project gaps because GEF Agencies later need to explain what was previously completed to new players and rebuild momentum, using valuable project time during the startup phase of new activities. This problem could have been prevented if project transition had occurred without any gap.

Stakeholder interviews conducted by the GEF IEO also identified persistent challenges stemming from a relative paucity of robust international waters indicators. The GEF-8 core indicators for the international waters focal area are

the number of shared water ecosystems under new or improved cooperative management and globally overexploited marine fisheries moved to more sustainable levels. Despite the importance of tracking international waters results quantitatively, this indicator does not provide adequate insight into the quality of such cooperative management. Additionally, the international waters focal area has not conducted a critical review on the effectiveness of transboundary legal and institutional arrangements in generating environmental benefits beyond the project period.

A range of evidence suggests that GEF international waters projects have not adequately focused on supporting the transboundary systems with the highest risk. According to the latest statistics from IW:LEARN, GEF international waters projects have been involved with at least 44 of 310 international river basins and 13 of 450 international aquifers. A global comparative baseline assessment of 286 transboundary international river basins used a suite of indicators to determine which international waters situations posed the highest risks (UNEP-DHI and UNEP 2016a). These indicators measured environmental stress, nutrient pollution, biodiversity extinction, floods and drought, legal frameworks, and hydro-political tension. Similar studies have been done for transboundary international aquifers, transboundary international lakes, and transboundary international marine systems.[5] These studies suggest that GEF international waters activities have not covered many of the locations with the highest environmental risks. A list of GEF-supported transboundary river basins and those with the highest risks can be found in annex G.

Upgrading the GEF Portal could further enhance the efficiency of international waters project management processes. International waters stakeholders underlined some of the issues associated with the GEF Portal site. For instance, project geolocations need to be entered on the portal site one by one (i.e., entering longitude and latitude); this has been time-consuming for Agencies when they need to enter information for many projects. Another issue is a lack of specificity regarding error messages on the GEF Portal. When an error message appears, users cannot tell where the error is, what the error is, and why it is an error. While these examples are not only applicable to the international waters focal area, GEF Agencies lose time due to these administrative bottlenecks.

The evaluation found that two international waters-supported programs have faced challenges due to inadequacies in communications and knowledge management. Three terminal evaluations of Common Oceans ABNJ Program projects reported that limited communications and knowledge sharing within and between child projects represent a missed opportunity for programmatic synergy and stakeholder engagement.[6] The terminal evaluation of the Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (GEF ID 4660; FAO, UNEP) concluded that deep-sea and tuna fishery projects could have collaborated on monitoring, surveillance, and capacity development activities. Yet, such synergistic interactions were limited. The terminal evaluations for the ABNJ tuna fishery and global capacity-building projects also suggested that tailored communications and knowledge sharing to specific interest groups and stakeholders (e.g., regional fisheries management organizations) did not occur due to the lack of a communication strategy and a dedicated knowledge management mechanism for the program. These gaps in communications and knowledge sharing led to missed opportunities to encourage the stakeholder participation necessary for broader discussions on ocean management.

[5] The TWAP also conducted a similar analysis for transboundary aquifers and groundwater systems of SIDS, transboundary lakes and reservoirs, LMEs, the open ocean, and transboundary cross-cutting water systems.

[6] Two separate terminal evaluations for the R2R program suggested that communications were limited for stakeholder engagement and internal project coordination.

An emerging challenge in the international waters focal area is how to best measure international waters-related benefits in multifocal area projects within integrated programs. A strategic shift occurred from GEF-5 to GEF-8 with a major emphasis on multifocal area projects and integrated programming. While this change presented substantial advantages in addressing key environmental issues more holistically, cogent concerns have been raised. Stakeholder interviews suggested that despite the financial contributions of the international waters focal area to integrated programs, regional and global international waters priorities may not be adequately addressed in integrated programs' child projects. Additionally, individual country priorities and interests do not necessarily align with the mandate of the GEF international waters focal area to demonstrate international waters-related transboundary benefits. Consequently, the international waters focal area may not be able to produce the same level of international waters benefits in transboundary waterbodies if its resources are incrementally allocated to integrated programs.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The international waters focal area has been relevant to national, regional, and global priorities, as evidenced by terminal evaluations and previous GEF IEO evaluations on water security, the Lower Mekong River Basin, and integrated programs. Evaluation findings suggest that marine and freshwater imbalances previously identified by the GEF IEO did not persist. However, there are only a limited number of GEF international waters projects dedicated to groundwater, and transboundary waterbodies with the highest risks are not always covered, indicating potential for further strengthening the GEF international waters focal area's relevance.

The international waters focal area addressed pollution reduction and sustainable fisheries as the most common thematic issues from GEF-5 to GEF-8 while promoting integrated programming approaches and strengthening the enabling environment. The majority of GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects incorporated at least one integrated approach, such as IWRM, integrated coastal management, and R2R. Among the currently active projects, key intervention areas include knowledge management, institutional capacity building, and policy and regulatory strengthening. An emerging area of work led by the international waters focal area is providing technical support to countries on the BBNJ Agreement. While the focal area had not been attached to any specific international convention, the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement in 2023 presented an opportunity for it to conduct related enabling activities in GEF-8 and future support for implementation once the agreement enters into force.

The performance of international waters focal area projects has improved in recently completed GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects. The proportion of GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects achieving performance ratings in the satisfactory/likely range on all evaluation criteria—outcomes, sustainability, M&E at design and implementation, project implementation, and project execution—exceeded the cumulative results from the pilot phase to GEF-6. These

performance results were also comparable to or better than the overall GEF portfolio.

In contrast to regional projects, some national and multifocal projects in the international waters focal area have underperformed. While the overall proportion of projects with an outcome rating in the satisfactory range was 86 percent, national and multifocal area projects had lower proportions at 63 percent and 75 percent, respectively. This issue will need to be addressed with the shift toward greater integration of international waters activities. In addition, the GEF IEO evaluation on water security noted that water has not been measured across all focal areas, making it difficult to demonstrate the GEF's synergistic impact.

The international waters focal mandate on transboundary cooperation has not been fully integrated or reflected in the integrated programs in GEF-8 and cannot replace dedicated international waters projects. From GEF-5 to GEF-8, GEF investments in the international waters focal area have expanded from primarily supporting stand-alone international waters projects to contributing to national and multifocal area projects, integrated programs, and enabling activities for the BBNJ Agreement. While this strategic shift presented opportunities to generate multiple environmental benefits, such competing priorities could dilute or reduce the focal area's principal priority on transboundary cooperation—which has been promoted through long-term support for specific waterbodies, application of innovative approaches in multiple regions, and knowledge and evidence generation at the global level.

The GEF's core indicators are inadequate in measuring and demonstrating international waters-related transboundary benefits and socioeconomic co-benefits. While subindicators address the status of TDA-SAP, regional agreements, national/local reforms, multisectoral coordination, and IW:LEARN engagement, multifocal area projects in integrated programs do not emphasize these international waters benefits. Additionally, the quality and effectiveness of transboundary cooperation and agreements in producing global environmental benefits have not been monitored or measured. Furthermore, the measurement of socioeconomic co-benefits has lacked a systematic approach, with indicators that are missing or inconsistent across projects, making it difficult to compare results or aggregate findings.

The international waters focal area has supported knowledge management by disseminating the impacts, successful practices, and key lessons of projects through IW:LEARN. The current upgrading of the IW:LEARN website is expected to further strengthen knowledge sharing within the GEF and with external audiences. The recent IWC10 also provided a platform for international waters stakeholders to exchange their knowledge and experience.

While the international waters focal area has continued to emphasize gender inclusion and mainstreaming across GEF replenishment periods, private sector engagement has been a key weakness. Both terminal evaluations and project documents for ongoing projects provided successful examples of gender inclusion and mainstreaming in leadership roles, capacity building, and knowledge dissemination. While there has been limited success, private sector engagement has been recognized as a key weakness among international waters stakeholders, as evidenced in the IWC10 survey responses.

The international waters focal area has faced the difficulty of pursuing time efficiencies while ensuring adequate stakeholder engagement and project ownership by countries. Timely project approval and implementation are vital to continue strengthening transboundary cooperation without a major project gap. However, excessive pursuit of shortening the project preparation timeline could result in limited stakeholder engagement and ownership by project countries. The evaluation also noted how the GEF Portal has been a hindrance to time efficiency on a technical level.

Financial sustainability is vital to facilitate long-term transboundary water management. Yet, the degree of sustainability planning varies by project. Given that GEF

international waters projects have faced challenges with gaps between projects, the current tendency to leave sustainability and exit plan development until the end of the project implementation period is not effective or adequate. Furthermore, financial sustainability planning requires adequate training on available financing models and options.

The international waters focal area's transboundary mandate provides an opportunity to promote policy coherence. Inherently, the mandate seeks coherence in water-related management policies across countries, so that the degree of protection and regulation of resources in these waterbodies approaches a degree of uniformity and consistency. The TDA-SAP approach has consistently promoted regional and transboundary coherence among stakeholder countries. The IWC10 survey also identified the GEF international waters focal area as an effective channel for the GEF to promote policy coherence by integrating and harmonizing environmental objectives with policy instruments in fisheries, tourism, agriculture, and other sectors.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should continue to carefully assess all new international waters-supported projects to ensure that its core mandate of transboundary cooperation remains central to all investments.

Recommendation 2: To enhance the financial sustainability of international waters projects, the GEF Secretariat should support stakeholder training on innovative financing models and promote the development of comprehensive sustainability plans early in the project cycle. The international waters focal area should also ensure an early and sustained emphasis on capacity building, delivering targeted training to a broad range of stakeholders and actively engaging private sector partners.

Recommendation 3: The GEF Secretariat should establish guidance for Agencies and national partners to enhance monitoring of the effectiveness of transboundary cooperation arrangements and relevant socioeconomic co-benefits using quantitative indicators and qualitative approaches. This would be particularly pertinent where transboundary arrangements are associated with integrated programs.

Annex A

Evaluation portfolio

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
4343	EAS: Implementation of the Yellow Sea LME Strategic Action Programme for Adaptive Ecosystem-Based Management	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	7.6	C
4452	Standardized Methodologies for Carbon Accounting and Ecosystem Services Valuation of Blue Forests	GEF-5	UNEP	Global	IW	4.6	A
4483	Enabling Trans-boundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Extended Drin River Basin	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	4.6	C
4489	A Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme: Aquifers, Lake/Reservoir Basins, River Basins, Large Marine Ecosystems, and Open Ocean to Catalyze Sound Environmental Management	GEF-5	UNEP	Global	IW	5.2	C
4533	Development of Tools to Incorporate Impacts of Climatic Variability and Change in Particular Floods and Droughts into Basin Planning Processes	GEF-5	UNEP	Global	IW	4.3	C
4581	Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)	GEF-5	FAO	Global	MF	27.6	C
4582	ABNJ: Strengthening Global Capacity to Effectively Manage Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)	GEF-5	FAO	Global	MF	1.0	C
4658	Integrated Adaptive Management of the West Bering Sea Large Marine Ecosystem in a Changing Climate	GEF-5	UNDP	Russian Federation	IW	3.4	C
4659	LME-EA: Coastal Resources for Sustainable Development: Mainstreaming the Application of Marine Spatial Planning Strategies, Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use	GEF-5	WB	Viet Nam	MF	6.5	C
4660	ABNJ: Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)	GEF-5	FAO	Global	MF	7.7	C
4680	LCB-NREE: Lake Chad Basin Regional Program for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Energy Efficiency (PROGRAM)	GEF-5	AfDB	Regional	MF	0.0	A

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
4690	Capturing Coral Reef and Related Ecosystem Services (CCRES)	GEF-5	WB	Regional	IW	4.5	C
4746	Implementation of Global and Regional Oceanic Fisheries Conventions and Related Instruments in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS)	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	10.2	C
4748	Improving Lake Chad Management through Building Climate Change Resilience and Reducing Ecosystem Stress through Implementation of the SAP	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	6.2	A
4766	Implementation of Eco-industrial Park Initiative for Sustainable Industrial Zones in Vietnam	GEF-5	UNIDO	Viet Nam	MF	3.5	C
4795	ARCTIC: Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) for Major Arctic Rivers to Achieve Multiple Global Environmental Benefits	GEF-5	UNEP	Russian Federation	MF	1.8	E
4796	ARCTIC: Improvement of Environmental Governance and Knowledge Management for SAP-Arctic Implementation	GEF-5	UNEP	Russian Federation	MF	1.4	E
4799	Implementing Integrated Measures for Minimizing Mercury Releases from Artisanal Gold Mining	GEF-5	UNIDO	Regional	MF	1.0	C
4856	Ocean Partnerships for Sustainable Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation - Models for Innovation and Reform	GEF-5	WB	Global	MF	9.6	C
4932	Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (IWEco)	GEF-5	UNEP	Regional	MF	21.1	A
4940	Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Protection of the Western Indian Ocean from Land-based Sources and Activities (WIO-SAP)	GEF-5	UNEP	Regional	IW	11.1	A
4953	Mano River Union Ecosystem Conservation and International Water Resources Management (IWRM) Project	GEF-5	IUCN	Regional	MF	6.6	A
4966	Sustainable Groundwater Management in SADC Member States	GEF-5	WB	Regional	IW	8.3	A
5110	LME-EA: Applying Knowledge Management to Scale up Partnership Investments for Sustainable Development of Large Marine Ecosystems of East Asia and their Coasts	GEF-5	WB	Regional	IW	1.0	C
5133	Senegal River Basin Climate Change Resilience Development Project	GEF-5	WB	Regional	MF	16.0	A
5208	R2R: Advancing Sustainable Resources Management to Improve Livelihoods and Protect Biodiversity in Palau	GEF-5	UNEP	Palau	MF	3.9	A
5269	Adriatic Sea Environmental Pollution Control Project (I)	GEF-5	WB	Regional	IW	6.8	C
5271	Global Sustainable Supply Chains for Marine Commodities	GEF-5	UNDP	Global	IW	5.7	A
5278	Strengthening Global Governance of Large Marine Ecosystems and their Coasts through Enhanced Sharing and Application of LME/ICM/MPA Knowledge and Information Tools	GEF-5	UNDP	Global	IW	2.6	C

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
5281	LME-EA Philippine Rural Development Program	GEF-5	WB	Philippines	MF	7.0	A
5284	Integrated Water Resources Management in the Puyango-Tumbes, Catamayo-Chira and Zarumilla Transboundary Aquifers and River Basins	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	4.1	C
5293	Save the Source: Catalyzing Market Transformation of Breweries from a Major Natural Resource Consuming Industry to a Pro-active Steward for Resource Efficient Cleaner Production	GEF-5	UNIDO	Russian Federation	MF	6.4	E
5301	Enabling Country of the Transboundary Syr Darya Basin to Make Sustainable Use of their Ground Water Potential and Subsurface Space with Consideration to Climate Variability and Change	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	3.6	E
5304	Sustainable Management of Bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean Trawl Fisheries (REBYC-II LAC)	GEF-5	FAO	Regional	IW	6.0	C
5310	Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Chu and Talas River Basins	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	1.1	C
5348	Conserving Biodiversity and Enhancing Ecosystem Functions through a "Ridge to Reef" Approach in the Cook Island	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	MF	4.4	A
5381	R2R: Implementing a "Ridge to Reef" Approach to Protecting Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functions in Nauru (R2R Nauru)	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	MF	2.7	C
5393	Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	2.3	C
5397	R2R: Integrated Sustainable Land and Coastal Management	GEF-5	FAO	Regional	MF	4.8	A
5398	Implementing a "Ridge to Reef" Approach to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Sequester Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Fiji (Fiji R2R)	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	MF	7.7	A
5400	Targeted Research for Improving Understanding of the Global Nitrogen Cycle towards the Establishment of an International Nutrient Management System INMS	GEF-5	UNEP	Global	IW	6.2	A
5401	Establishment and Operation of a Regional System of Fisheries Refugia in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand	GEF-5	UNEP	Regional	IW	3.1	A
5404	R2R: Testing the Integration of Water, Land, Forest & Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Pacific Island Countries	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	10.6	A
5405	EAS: Scaling up the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	10.6	C
5452	Guangdong Agricultural Pollution Control	GEF-5	WB	China	IW	5.1	C

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
5487	Integrated Development for Increased Rural Climate Resilience in the Niger Basin	GEF-5	AfDB	Regional	MF	12.5	A
5490	LME-AF Strategic Partnership for African Fisheries: Proposals for AN African Fisheries Reform Mechanism	GEF-5	WB	Regional	IW	2.5	E
5508	Transforming the Global Maritime Transport Industry towards a Low Carbon Future through Improved Energy Efficiency	GEF-5	UNDP	Global	MF	2.0	C
5513	Western Indian Ocean Large Marine Ecosystems Strategic Action Programme Policy Harmonization and Institutional Reforms (SAPPHIRE)	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	11.3	A
5517	R2R Implementing an Integrated Ridge to Reef Approach to Enhance Ecosystem Services, to Conserve Globally Important Biodiversity and to Sustain Local Livelihoods in the FSM	GEF-5	UNDP	Micronesia	MF	4.9	A
5526	Support to the Cubango-Okavango River Basin Strategic Action Programme Implementation	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	6.3	A
5535	Improving IWRM, Knowledge-based Management and Governance of the Niger Basin and the Iullemeden-Taoudeni/Tanezrouft Aquifer System (NB-ITTAS)	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	13.8	A
5538	Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea	GEF-5	UNEP	Regional	IW	15.3	A
5542	Catalyzing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of Shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CMLE+)	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	13.0	C
5544	R2R Reimaanlok Looking to the Future: Strengthening Natural Resource Management in Atoll Communities in the Republic of Marshall Islands Employing Integrated Approaches (RMI R2R)	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	MF	4.1	A
5550	R2R Implementing a Ridge to Reef Approach to Protect Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functions	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	MF	3.9	A
5551	Resilient Islands, Resilient Communities	GEF-5	FAO	Regional	MF	4.9	A
5552	Application of Ridge to Reef Concept for Biodiversity Conservation, and for the Enhancement of Ecosystem Service and Cultural Heritage in Niue	GEF-5	UNDP	Niue	MF	4.3	A
5556	West Balkans Drina River Basin Management	GEF-5	WB	Regional	IW	4.6	C
5561	GEF Mainstreaming Integrated Water and Environment Management	GEF-5	WB	China	IW	9.7	C
5622	LME-EA Coral Triangle Initiative Project (COREMAPIII-CTI)	GEF-5	WB	Indonesia	MF	10.0	A
5663	R2R Integrated Environmental Management of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Catchment	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	MF	1.8	C

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
5674	Lakes Edward and Albert Integrated Fisheries and Water Resources Management Project	GEF-5	AfDB	Regional	IW	8.3	A
5729	GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resources Network IW LEARN	GEF-5	UNDP	Global	IW	5.1	C
5748	Integrated Water Resources Management in the Titicaca-Desaguadero-Poopo-Salar de Coipasa (TDPS) System	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	6.7	A
5753	Realizing the Inclusive and Sustainable Development in the BCLME Region through the Improved Ocean Governance and the Integrated Management of Ocean use and Marine Resources	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	11.2	A
5765	Integrated Transboundary Ridges-to-Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef	GEF-5	WWF-US	Regional	IW	9.2	A
5768	Enabling Transboundary Cooperation for Sustainable Management of the Indonesian Seas	GEF-5	FAO	Regional	IW	4.2	A
5771	Improving Mangrove Conservation across the Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape (ETPS) through Coordinated Regional and National Strategy Development and Implementation	GEF-5	WWF-US	Regional	IW	2.0	C
5772	Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of African Network of Basin Organization (ANBO), Contributing to the Improved Transboundary Water Governance in Africa	GEF-5	UNDP	Regional	IW	2.1	C
5787	Bizerte Lake Environmental Project Lagoon and Marine de Pollution	GEF-5	EBRD	Tunisia	IW	2.0	A
5827	Coordination of the Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction ABNJ Program	GEF-5	FAO	Global	IW	0.5	C
5905	First South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Governance and Shared Growth Project (SWIOFish1)	GEF-5	WB	Regional	IW	15.5	A
6920	Implementation of the Arafura and Timor Seas Regional and National Strategic Action Programs	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional/ Global	MF	10.1	A
6952	Implementation of the Strategic Action Program of the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem	GEF-6	UNEP	Mexico	IW	13.2	A
6962	Advancing IWRM Across the Kura River Basin through Implementation of the Transboundary Agreed Actions and National Plans	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	5.5	C
6964	Volta River Basin Strategic Action Programme Implementation Project	GEF-6	WB	Regional	IW	7.4	C
6970	Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Program (PROP)	GEF-6	WB	Regional	MF	6.3	C
6993	Integrated Solutions for Energy, Water, Energy and Land	GEF-6	UNIDO	Global	MF	2.0	C
8029	West Africa Regional Fisheries Program SOP C1	GEF-5	WB	Mauritania	IW	7.0	A
9054	Support to the Orange-Senqu River Strategic Action Programme Implementation	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	11.1	A

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
9060	CFI: Coastal Fisheries Initiative (PROGRAM)	GEF-6	FAO	Global	MF	0.0	E
9121	Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the White Drin and the Extended Drin Basin	GEF-6	UNDP	Kosovo	IW	1.0	C
9124	Coastal Fisheries Initiative- Latin America	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	MF	6.8	A
9125	The Coastal Fisheries Initiative Challenge Fund: Enabling Sustainable Private Sector Investment in Fisheries (CFI-CF)	GEF-6	WB	Global	IW	8.1	A
9126	Delivering Sustainable Environmental, Social and Economic Benefits in West Africa through Good Governance, Correct Incentives and Innovation	GEF-6	FAO	Global	MF	6.7	A
9128	The Coastal Fisheries Initiatives Global Partnership	GEF-6	FAO	Global	IW	2.8	A
9129	Eco-system Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in Eastern Indonesia (Fisheries Management Area (FMA)- 715, 717 & 718)	GEF-6	WWF-US	Indonesia	MF	10.5	A
9160	Regional Partnership for African Fisheries Policy Reform (RAFIP)	GEF-6	WB	Regional	IW	2.0	C
9165	Enabling Implementation of the Regional SAP for the Rational and Equitable Management of the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System (NSAS)	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	4.2	A
9246	Integrated Environmental Management of the Rio Motagua Watershed	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	MF	5.5	A
9359	Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Dniester River Basin	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	2.0	C
9360	West Africa Regional Fisheries Program, Additional Financing?	GEF-6	WB	Regional	IW	10.0	A
9391	The Global Environmental Commons. Solutions for a Crowded Planet	GEF-6	IUCN	Global	MF	2.0	A
9420	Strengthening Trans-boundary Cooperation and Integrated Natural Resources Management in the Songwe River Basin	GEF-6	AfDB	Regional	IW	6.6	A
9433	S3MR Sustainable Management of Madagascar's Marine Resources	GEF-6	WWF-US	Regional	MF	0.0	E
9446	Regional Project for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of Lake Chad: Enhancing Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Lake Chad Basin	GEF-5	AfDB	Regional	IW	6.3	A
9451	Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project	GEF-6	WB	Regional	MF	6.5	C
9540	GEF Metro Manila Flood Management Project Phase 1	GEF-5	WB	Philippines	IW	7.4	E
9545	Implementation of Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	MF	1.8	A

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
9563	Third South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Governance and Shared Growth Project (SWIOFish3)	GEF-6	WB	Seychelles	MF	10.4	A
9566	Integrated Management of Water Resources of the Mira-Mataje and Carchi-Guaitara, Colombia–Ecuador Binational Basins	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	4.0	A
9571	Promoting Accelerated Uptake of Environmental Technologies and Promotion of Best Practices for Improved Water, Chemicals, and Waste Management in the Black Sea Basin	GEF-6	EBRD	Regional	MF	6.2	E
9592	Catalysing Implementation of a Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of Shared Living Marine Resources in the Humboldt Current System (HCS)	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	8.2	A
9593	Management of Competing Water Uses and Associated Ecosystems in Pungwe, Busi and Save Basins	GEF-6	IUCN	Regional	IW	6.2	A
9594	Strengthening Trans-boundary Cooperation for Improved Ecosystem Management and Restoration in the Senegal delta (Mauritania and Senegal)	GEF-6	IUCN	Regional	IW	3.2	A
9601	CReW+: An Integrated Approach to Water and Wastewater Management Using Innovative Solutions and Promoting Financing Mechanisms in the Wider Caribbean Region	GEF-6	IDB	Regional	MF	15.3	A
9605	Building Partnerships to Assist Developing Countries Minimize the Impacts from Aquatic Biofouling (GloFouling Partnerships)	GEF-6	UNDP	Global	IW	7.3	A
9607	Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	MF	0.0	E
9654	Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in the East Asian Seas through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management in ASEAN Countries	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	8.8	A
9681	Addressing Marine Plastics - A Systemic Approach	GEF-6	UNEP	Global	IW	2.1	A
9684	Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hot Spots and Measuring Progress to Impacts	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	MF	14.6	A
9685	Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Managing the Water-Food-Energy and Ecosystems NEXUS	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	IW	3.7	A
9686	Mediterranean Sea Basin Environment and Climate Regional Support Project	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	MF	2.7	A
9687	Mediterranean Coastal Zones Climate Resilience Water Security and Habitat Protection	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	IW	7.2	A
9691	Financing Advanced Environmental Technologies in the Mediterranean Sea Region for Water Systems and Clean Coasts (EnviTeCC)	GEF-6	EBRD	Regional	MF	9.0	A

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
9692	Second South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Governance and Shared Growth Project (SWIOFish2)	GEF-6	WB	Madagascar	IW	6.4	A
9717	Mediterranean Pollution Hot Spots Investment Project	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	IW	5.2	A
9720	Developing Organizational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries (StewardFish)	GEF-6	FAO	Regional	IW	1.8	C
9767	Fostering Multi-country Cooperation over Conjunctive Surface and Groundwater Management in the Bug and Neman Transboundary River Basins and the Underlying Aquifer Systems	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	2.8	E
9770	Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme to Ensure Integrated and Sustainable Management of the Transboundary Water Resources of the Amazon River Basin Considering Climate Variability and Change	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	MF	12.1	A
9801	Danube River Basin Hydromorphology and River Restoration (DYNA)	GEF-6	WWF-US	Regional	IW	4.6	E
9906	West Africa Coastal Areas Resilience Investment Project	GEF-6	WB	Regional	MF	20.2	A
9909	Sustainable Management of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Programme	GEF-6	FAO	Regional	MF	0.0	E
9910	Reversing Ecosystem and Water Degradation in the Volta River Basin (REWarD-Volta River Basin)	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	IW	7.3	A
9911	Strengthening of the Enabling Environment, Ecosystem-based Management and Governance to Support Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem	GEF-6	UNEP	Regional	IW	4.6	E
9912	Enhancing Conjunctive Management of Surface and Groundwater Resources in Selected Transboundary Aquifers: Case Study for Selected Shared Groundwater Bodies in the Nile Basin	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	5.5	A
9919	Implementation of the SAP of the Dinaric Karst Aquifer System: Improving Groundwater Governance and Sustainability of Related Ecosystems	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	IW	5.3	A
9927	Building Resilience of Cambodian Communities Using Natural Infrastructure and Promoting Diversified Livelihood	GEF-6	UNEP	Cambodia	MF	0.6	A
9940	Towards Sustainable Management of the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME) – Initial Support to SAP Implementation	GEF-6	FAO	Regional	IW	1.8	A
9949	Setting the Foundations for Zero Net Loss of the Mangroves that Underpin Human Wellbeing in the North Brazil Shelf LME	GEF-6	CI	Regional	IW	0.6	C
9959	Long-term Financial Mechanism to Enhance Mediterranean MPA Management Effectiveness	GEF-6	CI	Regional	IW	0.9	C

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
10035	Preparing the Ground for the Implementation of the La Plata Basin Strategic Action Program	GEF-6	CAF	Regional	IW	2.0	A
10041	Managing Coastal Aquifers in Selected Pacific SIDS	GEF-6	UNDP	Regional	MF	5.5	A
10048	Water Funds A Conservation Climate Resilient Model for Stressed Watersheds in Latin America and the Caribbean	GEF-6	IDB	Regional	MF	1.8	A
10064	Demonstration Investments in Eco-Waste Infrastructure Solutions: Thanlyin and Ayeyarwady Watersheds (which cover Mandalay, Hpa-An and Mawlaymine)	GEF-6	ADB	Myanmar	IW	4.7	A
10069	Sustainable management of fisheries, marine living resources and their habitats in the Bay of Bengal region for the benefit of coastal states and communities	GEF-6	FAO	Regional	MF	9.7	A
10074	Enabling concerted Source to Sea management in the Paz River watershed	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	MF	1.7	A
10076	Towards Joint Integrated, Ecosystem-based Management of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA)	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	MF	7.3	A
10077	Strengthening the Resilience of Central Asian Countries by Enabling Regional Cooperation to Assess High Altitude Glacio-nival Systems to Develop Integrated Methods for Sustainable Development and Adaptation to Climate Change	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	6.4	A
10108	Fostering Water Security in the Trifinio Region: Promoting the formulation of a TDA/SAP for its transboundary Lempa River Basin.	GEF-7	UNEP	Regional	IW	5.0	A
10139	Implementation of the Guarani Aquifer Strategic Action Program: Enabling Regional Actions	GEF-7	CAF	Regional	IW	2.1	A
10172	Towards the Transboundary Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) of the Sixaola River Basin shared by Costa Rica and Panama	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	4.6	A
10182	Integrated Transboundary River Basin Management for the Sustainable Development of the Limpopo River Basin	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	6.2	A
10193	Fostering Water and Environmental Security in the Ma and Neun/Ca Transboundary River Basins and Related Coastal Areas	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	IW	8.2	A
10211	"BE-CLME+": Promoting National Blue Economy Priorities Through Marine Spatial Planning in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Plus	GEF-7	CAF	Regional	MF	6.4	A
10374	GEF IW:LEARN 5: Supporting Portfolio Coordination Within and Beyond the International Waters Focal Area, particularly in Small Island Developing States, Through Knowledge Sharing, Information Management, Partnership Building and Programmatic Guidance Serv	GEF-7	UNDP	Global	IW	6.1	A
10375	Blue Nature Alliance to expand and improve conservation of 1.25 billion hectares of ocean ecosystems	GEF-7	CI	Global	IW	23.0	A

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
10388	Biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management and enhanced water security in Lake Tanganyika basin	GEF-7	UNEP	Regional	MF	14.9	A
10394	Mainstreaming climate change and ecosystem-based approaches into the sustainable management of the living marine resources of the WCPFC	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	10.2	A
10401	Establishing a circular economy framework for the plastics sector in Ghana	GEF-7	UNIDO	Ghana	MF	7.2	A
10424	Strengthening the Blue Economy: the Economic Case, Science-Informed Policy, and Transparency	GEF-7	UNEP	Global	IW	2.0	A
10426	Facilitating dialogue and strengthening transboundary cooperation with legislators to improve marine governance	GEF-7	UNEP	Global	IW	2.0	A
10508	Integrated transboundary water resources management in the Corubal basin between Guinée and Guinée-Bissau	GEF-7	IUCN	Regional	IW	6.5	A
10520	Enhancing sustainability of the Transboundary Cambodia - Mekong River Delta Aquifer	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	IW	15.3	A
10531	Integrated watershed management of the Putumayo-Içá river basin	GEF-7	WB	Regional	MF	12.8	A
10546	Plastik Sulit: Accelerating Circular Economy for Difficult Plastics in Indonesia	GEF-7	ADB	Indonesia	MF	7.3	A
10547	Reduce marine plastics and plastic pollution in Latin American and Caribbean cities through a circular economy approach	GEF-7	UNEP	Regional	MF	7.2	A
10548	Common Oceans - Sustainable utilization and conservation of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction	GEF-7	FAO	Global	IW	0.0	E
10550	Binational and integrated water resources management in the MerÃn Lagoon Basin and Coastal Lagoons	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	IW	5.0	A
10553	Sava and Drina Rivers Corridors Integrated Development Program	GEF-7	WB	Regional	IW	8.0	A
10554	Transboundary cooperation for the conservation, sustainable development and integrated management of the Pantanal - Upper Paraguay River Basin	GEF-7	IDB	Regional	IW	8.4	A
10558	Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Black Sea - (FishEBM BS)	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	IW	5.2	A
10560	Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean - (FishEBM MED)	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	MF	7.5	A
10563	Blueing the Black Sea (BBSEA)	GEF-7	WB	Regional	IW	6.6	A
10565	Enhanced Water Security and Community Resilience in the Adjacent Cuvelai and Kunene Transboundary River Basins	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	11.5	A
10573	Blue Horizon: Ocean Relief through Seaweed Aquaculture	GEF-7	WWF-US	Regional	IW	6.2	A

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
10575	Coral Reef Rescue: Resilient Coral Reefs, Resilient Communities	GEF-7	WWF-US	Global	IW	7.2	A
10620	Strengthening the stewardship of an economically and biologically significant high seas area – the Sargasso Sea	GEF-7	UNDP	Global	IW	2.8	A
10622	Sustainable management of tuna fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the areas beyond national jurisdiction.	GEF-7	FAO	Global	IW	14.7	A
10623	Deep-sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach (DSF project)	GEF-7	FAO	Global	IW	4.6	A
10626	Global Coordination Project for the Common Oceans ABNJ Program	GEF-7	FAO	Global	IW	2.9	A
10628	Promoting Resource Efficiency and Circularity to Reduce Plastic Pollution for Asia and the Pacific	GEF-7	ADB	Regional	MF	2.1	A
10679	Management of Indonesian and Timor-Leste Transboundary Watersheds (MITLTW)	GEF-7	CI	Regional	IW	5.2	A
10685	Build back a blue and stronger Mediterranean	GEF-7	CI	Regional	IW	5.2	A
10697	Building and Enhancing Sectoral and Cross-sectoral capacity to support sustainable resource use and biodiversity conservation in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction	GEF-7	UNEP	Global	IW	2.6	A
10700	Implementation of the Strategic Action Programmes and the National Strategic Action Plans for the Integrated Water Resources Management in the Puyango-Tumbes, Catamayo-Chira and Zarumilla Transboundary Aquifers and River Basins	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	8.2	A
10703	Promoting the blue economy and strengthening fisheries governance of the Gulf of Thailand through the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (GoTFish)	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	MF	7.5	A
10712	Enhancing water-food security and climate resilience in volcanic island countries of the Pacific	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	IW	6.2	A
10725	Implementing Ecosystem Based Management approaches in the Black Sea LME	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	3.2	A
10740	Strengthening and Enabling the Micronesia Challenge 2030	GEF-7	WWF-US	Regional	IW	2.1	A
10778	Gulf of Fonseca Transboundary Management	GEF-7	WB	Regional	IW	5.2	A
10782	Caribbean BluEFin (Caribbean Blue Economy Financing Project)	GEF-7	UNEP	Regional	IW	6.2	A
10783	Pacific I2I Regional Project: Ocean Health for Ocean Wealth - The Voyage to a Blue Economy for the Blue Pacific Continent	GEF-7	UNEP	Regional	IW	15.3	A

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
10784	Enhancing the sustainable management of Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer System to ensure access to water for populations facing climate change (SMAS)	GEF-7	UNEP	Regional	IW	3.3	A
10794	Enhancing Environmental Security and Transboundary Cooperation in the Golok/Kolok River Basin	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	IW	4.2	A
10797	GEF Sustainable Groundwater Management In SADC Member States Project Phase 2	GEF-7	WB	Regional	IW	4.6	A
10799	Regional Initiative for Water and Environment in the transboundary basin of the Mono River (RIWE-Mono)	GEF-7	IUCN	Regional	IW	5.2	A
10800	Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments for sustainable Blue socio-Economic development (PROCARIBE+)	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	15.8	A
10805	Advancing transboundary co-operation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Dniester River Basin through implementation of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP)	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	6.2	A
10857	Strategies, technologies and social solutions to manage bycatch in tropical Large Marine Ecosystem Fisheries (REBYC-III CLME+)	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	IW	5.5	A
10865	Supporting Sustainable Inclusive Blue Economy Transformation in AIO SIDS	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	MF	9.2	A
10867	Towards Sustainable and Conversion-Free Aquaculture in Indonesian Seas Large Marine Ecosystem (ISLME)	GEF-7	ADB	Regional	IW	4.6	A
10873	Effectively Managing Networks of Marine Protected Areas in Large Marine Ecosystems in the ASEAN Region (ASEAN ENMAPS)	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	MF	12.9	A
10875	Using Marine Spatial Planning in the Gulf of Guinea for the implementation of Payment for Ecosystem Services and Coastal Nature-based Solutions	GEF-7	IUCN	Regional	IW	3.1	A
10881	Implementing the Strategic Action Programme of the Drin Basin to Strengthen Transboundary Cooperation and Enable Integrated Natural Resources Management	GEF-7	UNDP	Regional	IW	7.3	A
10890	Global Partnership for Mitigation of Underwater Noise from Shipping (GloNoise Partnership)	GEF-7	UNDP	Global	IW	2.0	A
10892	Towards Sustainable Phosphorus Cycles in Lake Catchments (uP-Cycle)	GEF-7	UNEP	Global	IW	2.1	A
10919	Enhancing capacity for the adoption and implementation of EAF in the shrimp and groundfish fisheries of the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (EAf4SG)	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	IW	1.8	A
10931	Expanding blue economy benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and ecosystem services by managing surf ecosystems	GEF-7	UNIDO	Regional	IW	2.1	A

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
10970	Groundwater for Deep Resilience in Africa (G4DR in Africa)	GEF-7	FAO	Regional	IW	6.0	A
10995	Integrated water resources management in the transboundary Bermejo River Basin	GEF-7	CAF	Regional	IW	6.6	A
11011	Mainstreaming Sustainable Marine Fisheries Value Chains into the Blue Economy of the Canary Current and the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystems	GEF-7	UNDP	Global	IW	11.0	A
11017	Supporting the Implementation of the National Action Plan on Marine Plastic Litter in the context of Green Recovery post-COVID 19 in Viet Nam	GEF-7	UNDP	Viet Nam	IW	2.1	A
11050	An Inclusive Approach for Harnessing Marine Ecosystem Services and Transforming to Sustainable Blue Economy in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (HESBERSGA)	GEF-8	UNEP	Regional	IW	7.6	E
11053	Implementation of the La Plata Basin SAP priorities through regional and national actions	GEF-8	CAF	Regional	IW	10.9	E
11108	Towards a better understanding of the Amazon Aquifer Systems for its protection and sustainable management	GEF-8	UNEP	Regional	IW	13.8	E
11113	Promoting sustainable fisheries management in the Red Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (RedSeaFish project)	GEF-8	FAO	Regional	IW	6.4	E
11143	Strengthening conservation and effective governance of Sierra Leone's critical forests in the Gola Forest Landscape	GEF-8	CI	Sierra Leone	MF	5.7	E
11144	Strengthening conservation and effective governance of Liberia's critical forests in the Northwest Liberia Landscape	GEF-8	CI	Liberia	MF	3.3	E
11146	Strengthening restoration and conservation of the ecological corridor of Mount Nimba (Bossou) and Ziama National Park in Guinea	GEF-8	IUCN	Guinea	MF	5.4	E
11147	Guinean Forests Regional Coordination and Learning Project	GEF-8	CI	Regional	MF	6.4	A
11166	Plastic Reduction in the Oceans: Sustaining and Enhancing Actions on Sea-based Sources (PRO-SEAS)	GEF-8	FAO	Global	IW	7.3	A
11170	Eliminating hazardous chemicals from supply chains - Eliminating hazardous chemicals from supply chains in Cambodia	GEF-8	UNEP	Cambodia	MF	6.2	E
11171	Eliminating hazardous chemicals from supply chains in Mongolia	GEF-8	UNDP	Mongolia	MF	3.4	E
11172	Bananas in Pakistan's Bioeconomy: Transforming Waste into Textile	GEF-8	FAO	Pakistan	MF	3.4	E
11173	Eliminating Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains in Peru	GEF-8	UNDP	Peru	MF	4.4	E

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11174	Eliminating Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains in Costa Rica	GEF-8	UNIDO	Costa Rica	MF	4.4	E
11175	Eliminating hazardous chemicals from supply chains in Ecuador	GEF-8	UNDP	Ecuador	MF	5.7	E
11176	Elimination of Hazardous chemicals from Supply Chains Integrated Programme in Trinidad and Tobago	GEF-8	UNEP	Trinidad and Tobago	MF	2.8	E
11177	Global replication to eliminate hazardous chemicals from supply chains	GEF-8	UNEP	Global	MF	8.9	A
11178	Eliminating hazardous chemicals from textile fashion supply chains in India	GEF-8	UNIDO	India	MF	8.0	E
11180	Strengthening integrated transboundary management of the Incomati and Maputo river basins	GEF-8	UNDP	Regional	IW	7.3	E
11182	Innovation ecosystem for the circularity of plastics, reduction of consumption, and disposal of single-use plastic in the HORECA sector (Plastic IP)	GEF-8	UNEP	Brazil	MF	8.3	E
11183	Reducing Single Use Plastic pollution in the food and beverage sector (SUPiFB) through a circular economy approach in Centre, Centre-Ouest and Hauts basin regions (Plastic IP)	GEF-8	UNEP	Burkina Faso	MF	2.8	E
11184	Promoting circular solutions for the food & beverage sector to tackle plastic pollution in Cambodia (Plastic IP)	GEF-8	UNEP	Cambodia	MF	2.8	E
11185	Reducing Single-use Plastics on Small-island Economies (RESPONSE - Plastic IP)	GEF-8	UNEP	Cook Islands	MF	6.4	E
11186	Circular solutions to plastic pollution in Costa Rica	GEF-8	UNDP	Costa Rica	MF	3.7	E
11187	Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution in the Dominican Republic	GEF-8	UNDP	Dominican Republic	MF	4.0	E
11188	Operationalizing and implementing circular economy solutions to minimize plastic waste and reduce plastic pollution from food and beverage packaging (Plastic IP)	GEF-8	UNEP	India	MF	8.3	E
11189	Jordan Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution IP Child Project	GEF-8	UNDP	Jordan	MF	4.6	E
11190	Promoting Circular Solutions to Single-Use Plastic Consumption in Lao PDR. (Plastics IP)	GEF-8	WWF-US	Lao PDR	MF	4.1	E
11191	Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution in Peru	GEF-8	UNEP	Peru	MF	4.6	E
11192	Circular solutions to plastic pollution in Morocco	GEF-8	UNIDO	Morocco	MF	6.4	E
11193	Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution in Nigeria	GEF-8	UNEP	Nigeria	MF	6.1	E
11194	Circular solutions to plastic pollution in the Philippines	GEF-8	UNIDO	Philippines	MF	8.6	E
11195	Support the management of plastic pollution in Senegal (Plastic IP)	GEF-8	UNDP	Senegal	MF	5.2	E
11196	Circular solutions to plastic pollution in South Africa	GEF-8	UNIDO	South Africa	MF	7.1	E

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
11197	Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution: Global Platform	GEF-8	UNEP	Global	MF	16.3	A
11245	Sustainable Management of the Mayombe, Oubangui and Maï Ndombe tropical forest Landscapes to facilitate conservation of natural resources, local development, food security and climate change mitigation in DRC	GEF-8	IUCN	Congo DR	MF	15.7	E
11246	Integrated Community-based Management of High Value Forest Ecosystems in Southwestern Central African Republic, to safeguard globally outstanding biodiversity, carbon stock and ecosystem services from key threats, particularly unsustainable land use practices	GEF-8	UNEP	Central African Republic	MF	8.4	E
11267	Beyond 30x30: Securing resilience in the Eastern Tropical Pacific through enhanced transboundary cooperation	GEF-8	CI	Regional	IW	14.7	E
11275	Guatemala Mesoamerican Forest IP Project: Securing benefits for the well-being of local communities and the ecosystems of the Maya Forest	GEF-8	IUCN	Guatemala	MF	11.0	A
11277	El Salvador Mesoamerican Forest IP Project: Promoting forest conservation and integrated water management in Trifinio	GEF-8	IUCN	El Salvador	MF	3.3	E
11278	Mesoamerica Critical Forest Biome IP Regional Coordination, Knowledge Sharing and Support Project	GEF-8	IUCN	Regional	MF	7.8	A
11282	Mainstreaming Climate-Resilient Blue Economy in the BCLME Region (BCLME IV Project)	GEF-8	UNDP	Regional	MF	10.7	E
11304	Enhancing transboundary fisheries management in the Lower Mekong Basin	GEF-8	IUCN	Regional	MF	11.0	E
11350	Enhancing water management and compliance to address hypoxia caused by nutrients, and other pollutants, into the Gulf of Tonkin (Vietnam)	GEF-8	FAO	Viet Nam	MF	4.0	E
11351	Conservation and sustainable development of the Maracaibo Lake basin as a contribution to the improvement of the large marine ecosystem of the Caribbean (Venezuela)	GEF-8	FAO	Venezuela, República Bolivariana de	MF	15.5	E
11352	Addressing marine hypoxia in the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem by reducing land-based agricultural pollution in the north-west of Sri Lanka	GEF-8	FAO	Sri Lanka	MF	2.8	E
11353	Global Coordination Project-Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Program	GEF-8	FAO	Global	MF	12.8	E
11354	Addressing marine hypoxia in the Gulf of Aqaba by reducing land-based sources of pollution in Jordan	GEF-8	EBRD	Jordan	MF	2.8	E
11355	Building a Blue-Green Economy in St. Kitts and Nevis	GEF-8	CI	St. Kitts and Nevis	MF	2.8	E
11356	Reducing coastal pollution in the Parita Bay in Panama	GEF-8	IDB	Panama	MF	3.0	E

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11357	Sustainable Nitrogen Management for a Clean & Healthy Ocean: Maldives as a SIDS regional catalyst	GEF-8	UNEP	Maldives	MF	4.1	E
11358	Improving Waste Management and Public Awareness for a Clean and Healthy Ocean (Grenada)	GEF-8	CI	Grenada	MF	5.2	E
11359	Seeding a Nutrient Pollution Reduction Strategy for the coastal waters of Thailand	GEF-8	UNEP	Thailand	MF	3.2	E
11360	Forging Partnerships for the Ocean: Reducing Water Pollution in Mexico through Sustainable Solutions	GEF-8	UNDP	Mexico	MF	13.8	E
11361	BBSEA Moldova WATERWISE (Wetlands and Terrestrial Ecosystem Restoration for Watershed Improvements and Sustainable Environments)	GEF-8	WB	Moldova	MF	8.1	E
11362	Nature based solutions to reduce coastal pollution in Peru	GEF-8	UNDP	Peru	MF	10.1	E
11363	Rehabilitation of the Beetham Wastewater Stabilization Ponds (WSP) (Trinidad and Tobago)	GEF-8	UNEP	Trinidad and Tobago	MF	3.2	E
11364	Green, blue and healthy investments to reduce land-based pollution affecting marine ecosystems in Madagascar	GEF-8	UNDP	Madagascar	MF	12.0	E
11379	Coordinated approach for Land Restoration in Vulnerable Ecosystems of Central Asia	GEF-8	FAO	Regional	MF	1.8	E
11380	Strengthening Integrated Water Management in Amu Darya, Zarafshon and Panj River Basins	GEF-8	FAO	Regional	IW	5.5	E
11381	Strengthening integrated Water Management in Syr Darya and Narin River Basins project	GEF-8	FAO	Regional	IW	4.6	E
11410	Strengthening integrated transboundary source-to-sea management of the Ruvuma River Basin and its coastal zones to ensure ecosystem health and livelihood security	GEF-8	IUCN	Regional	IW	7.3	E
11429	Blueing the Caspian Sea	GEF-8	WB	Regional	MF	11.9	E
11452	Program for improving sustainable marine fisheries opportunities in SADC – The Case of the Mozambique Channel	GEF-8	AfDB	Regional	IW	5.4	E
11520	Improving the source to sea governance to reduce the impacts on the transboundary large marine ecosystems in the SICA region	GEF-8	FAO	Regional	IW	18.4	E
11526	Promoting the Integrated Management of Sargassum: Building Resilient Tourism and Fisheries Sectors through the Conservation of Marine Ecosystems in Caribbean countries (SargMarine)	GEF-8	CAF	Regional	IW	0.3	E
11547	Unlocking the groundwater potential of the Kilimanjaro Water Tower	GEF-8	FAO	Regional	IW	0.2	E
11572	Strengthening Zambezi River Basin Management towards Climate Resilience and Ecosystem Health.	GEF-8	AfDB	Regional	IW	9.7	E

GEF ID	Project title	GEF period	GEF Agency	Country	Focal area	GEF grant (mil $)	Status
11656	Enabling Activities to Support the ratification and early implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (EA-BBNJ)	GEF-8	FAO	Regional	IW	0.7	A
11674	The Digital Seafood Revolution: Electronic catch documentation and traceability systems (eCDT) for sustainable and legal fisheries in Chile, Peru, and Ecuador	GEF-8	UNEP	Regional	IW	0.2	E
11820	Enabling Activities to Support the ratification and early implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (EA-BBNJ)	GEF-8	UNDP	Global	IW	1.6	A
11821	Enabling Activities to Support the ratification and early implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (EA-BBNJ)	GEF-8	UNEP	Global	IW	2.5	E
11831	Global and regional support to the BBNJ Agreement ratification process	GEF-8	FAO	Global	IW	4.6	E

Note: *GEF Agency:* ADB = Asian Development Bank, AfDB = African Development Bank, CAF = Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, EBRD = European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, IDB = Inter-American Development Bank, IUCN = International Union for Conservation of Nature, UNDP = United Nations Development Programme, UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme, UNIDO = United Nations Industrial Development Organization, WB = World Bank, WWF-US = World Wildlife Fund-US; *focal area:* IW = international waters, MF = multifocal; *status:* A = active, C = closed, E = Chief Executive Officer endorsement.

Annex B

Evaluation questions

Question	Information sources	Methodology
How relevant are the strategic priorities in GEF-7 and GEF-8 to global priorities in this focal area?	• GEF project documents • Journal articles • Gray literature • Terminal evaluations	Desk review
How have the international waters focal area strategies continued to align with country priorities?	• GEF project documents • Terminal evaluations	• Desk review • Key informant interviews
How has the international waters focal area demonstrated policy coherence in recent and ongoing projects?	• Terminal evaluations • Project stakeholders • International waters evaluations	• Desk review • Key informant interviews
To what extent has the international waters focal area made progress against the GEF-8 core indicator targets?	• GEF-8 Corporate Scorecard • GEF Secretariat	• Desk review • Key informant interviews
How has the international waters focal area produced health co-benefits?	• Terminal evaluations • Project stakeholders	• Desk review • Key informant interviews • Survey
To what extent did the international waters focal area projects achieve intended outcomes and project sustainability?	Terminal evaluations	Quantitative analysis of project ratings
How has the international waters focal area considered gender, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and youths?	• Terminal evaluations • Project stakeholders	• Desk review • Key informant interviews
How has the international waters focal area engaged with the private sector?	• Terminal evaluations • Project stakeholders	• Desk review • Key informant interviews
How has the international waters focal area promoted broader adoption and scaling up of key interventions for transformational change?	• Terminal evaluations • IWC10 materials • Project stakeholders	• Desk review • Direct observations • Key informant interviews
What innovations and technologies have the international waters focal area projects used?	• Terminal evaluations • IWC10 materials	• Desk review • Review of IWC10 materials

Note: IWC10 = 10th International Waters Conference.

Annex C

Interviewees

Saparis Soedarjanto, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia

Hadiyati Utami, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia

Sitti Hamdiyah, Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Indonesia

Prabowo P., Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Indonesia

Seyla Sok, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia

Ana Mponda, Ministry of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources, Mozambique

Gilbert Mawere, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate, and Rural Development, Zimbabwe

J. C., Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Fiji

Pablo Kok, Ministry of Environment, Uruguay

Jeffrey Griffin, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Lorenzo Galbiati, FAO

Lucilla Minelli, FAO

Louise Whiting, FAO

Tony Thompson, FAO

Isabelle Vanderbeck, United Nations Environment Programme

Vladimir Mamaev, United Nations Development Programme

Sonja Koeppel, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Diana Aripkhanova, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Mish Hamid, formerly with International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN)

Nagaraja Harshadeep, World Bank

Sara El Choufi, World Bank

Erin Jan L. Sinogba, Asian Development Bank

James Dalton, International Union for Conservation of Nature

Maha Ismail, Nile Basin Initiative

Susanne Schmeier, GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

Aki Mercelino, Conservation International

Olivia Reed, Conservation International

Yumiko Yasuda, formerly with Global Water Partnership

Will Griffiths, International Maritime Organization

Shirley Ann S. Pelep, Micronesia Conservation Trust

Madeline Beattie, Blue Nature Alliance

Ivan Zavadski, formerly with GEF International Waters Coordinator

Alfred M. Duda, formerly with GEF Secretariat Senior Advisor

Andrea Merla, formerly with GEF Secretariat

Astrid Hillers, GEF Secretariat

Andrew Hume, GEF Secretariat

Taylor Henshaw, GEF Secretariat

Mohamed Imam Bakarr, GEF Secretariat

Constantina Toli, IW:LEARN Director

Natalie Degger, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Patrick Debels, United Nations Office for Project Services

Annex D

Summary of IWC10 survey responses

The GEF's 10th International Waters Conference (IWC10) was held in Uruguay in September 2024. In conjunction with the conference, the GEF IEO conducted an online survey of participants to explore their perceptions of key strengths and weaknesses, comparative advantages, financial sustainability, and policy coherence of the international waters focal area.

The survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey, and IWC10 participants were invited to participate in the GEF IEO survey before, during, and after the conference. A total of 12 questions were included in the survey with an expected time requirement of 10 minutes. Key questions follow:

- In the projects that you were involved in, did the GEF support the integration/harmonization of policies and regulations across different sectors (e.g., environment with agriculture, fisheries, tourism, energy, waste management)?
- In your opinion, to what extent do the following GEF international waters focal area interventions have a comparative advantage over freshwater/marine interventions funded by other donors?
- In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of international waters focal area projects? Please rate each option as a strength, weakness, or neutral.
- In your opinion, how can international waters focal area interventions improve their financial sustainability?
- Is the international waters focal area an effective channel for the GEF to promote horizontal policy coherence (i.e., integration/harmonization of environmental objectives with policies and regulations for agriculture, fisheries, tourism, energy, waste management, and other sectors)?

A total of 70 participants provided valid responses to the survey. Of these, 42 respondents (60.0 percent) were from executing agencies or project management teams, 13 (18.6 percent) from GEF Agencies, 8 (11.4 percent) were international waters project stakeholders, 3 (4.3 percent) were consultants or service providers, 3 (4.3 percent) had never been involved in international waters projects, and 1 (1.4 percent) was from the GEF Secretariat.[1]

Of those people who have been involved in international waters projects and provided a valid response ($n = 56$), 47 people (83.9 percent) were involved in ongoing projects, 3 (5.4 percent) were involved in completed projects, and 6 (10.7 percent) were involved in both project types.

[1] If participants were with a GEF Agency but also selected another category of affiliation, they were coded as representing the GEF Agency. If participants chose multiple background categories including a GEF Agency but without an organizational email address, their role was not coded as being from the GEF Agency. Multiple people chose executing agencies and project management team. Consequently, a new category was created to cover both designations.

Policy coherence

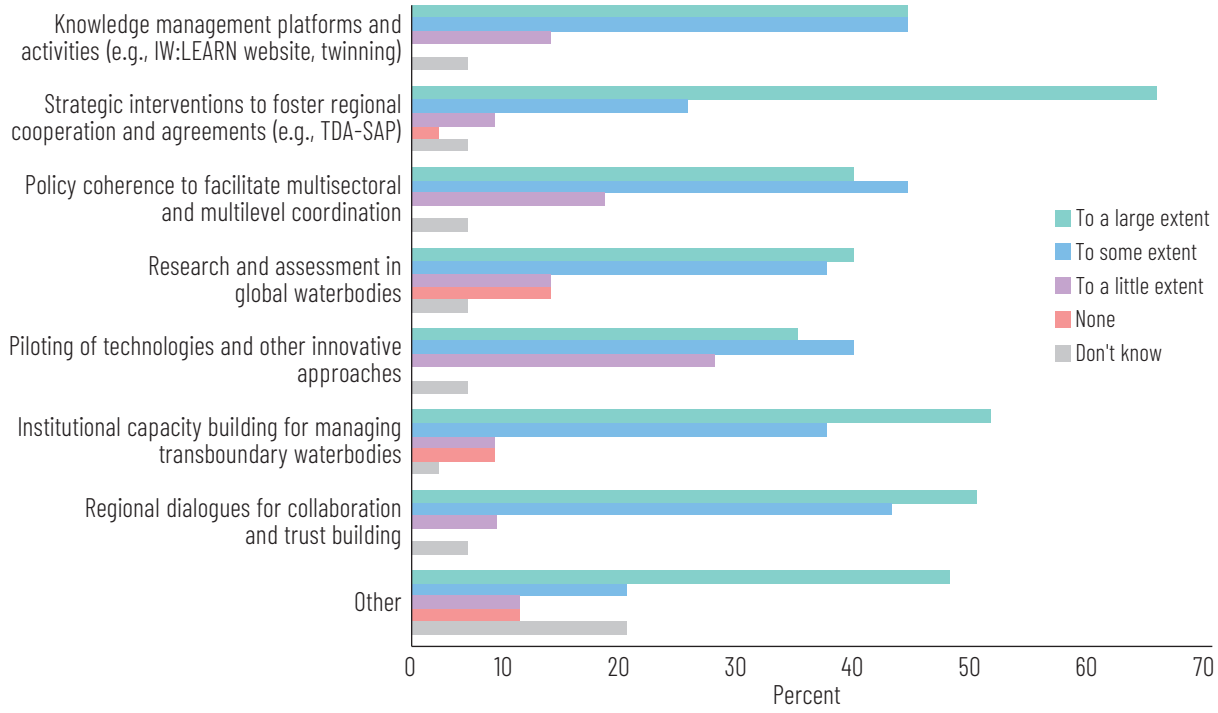
Of the 56 participants providing a valid response, 41 (73.2 percent) felt that the GEF supported the integration/harmonization of policies and regulations across different sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism, energy, and waste management. Eight people (14.3 percent) did not see this support, and seven people (12.5 percent) were not sure.

The international waters focal area was seen as an effective channel for the GEF to promote horizontal policy coherence by 35 people (83.3 percent) out of 42 valid responses. The remaining seven respondents (16.7 percent) were not sure if this focal area could be an effective platform for this purpose.

Comparative advantages

Figure D.1 presents the share of respondents who saw GEF international waters focal area interventions as having comparative advantages over freshwater and marine interventions supported by other donors in predefined categories. Over 62 percent of the 43 respondents identified strategic interventions to foster regional cooperation and agreements through the transboundary diagnostic analysis–strategic action program (TDA-SAP) process as a comparative advantage to a large extent. Institutional capacity building for managing transboundary waterbodies (48.8 percent), regional dialogues for collaboration and trust building (47.6 percent), and knowledge management platforms and activities (41.9 percent) were also the major comparative advantages perceived by respondents.

Figure D.1 IWC10 participant perceptions of comparative advantages of GEF international waters interventions over other donors



Source: 10th International Waters Conference (IWC10) participant survey.

Note: *n* = 43. TDA-SAP = transboundary diagnostic analysis-strategic action program.

While most respondents perceived all the predefined activities as a GEF comparative advantage at least to some extent, 25.6 percent of respondents identified piloting of technologies and other innovative approaches as a comparative advantage only to a little extent.

Strengths and weaknesses

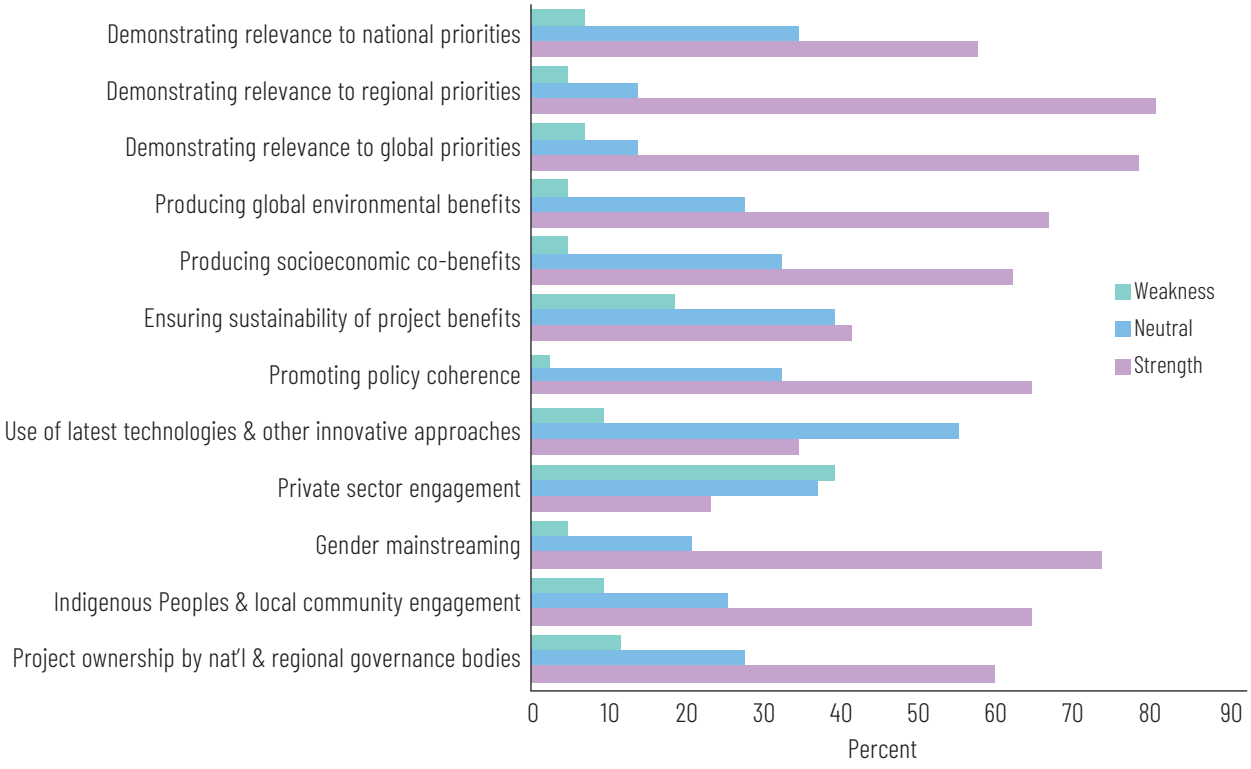
Figure D.2 presents survey respondent (n = 43) perceptions of international waters focal area strengths and weaknesses. While the majority of predetermined topics were seen as strengths of the international waters focal area, the top three strengths identified by respondents were demonstrating relevance to regional priorities (81.4 percent), demonstrating relevance to global priorities (79.1 percent), and gender mainstreaming (74.4 percent).

The top three areas of weakness cited were private sector engagement (39.5 percent), ensuring sustainability of project benefits (18.6 percent), and project ownership by national and regional governance bodies (11.6 percent). The majority of respondents (55.8 percent) were neutral about the use of the latest technologies and other innovative approaches.

Financial sustainability

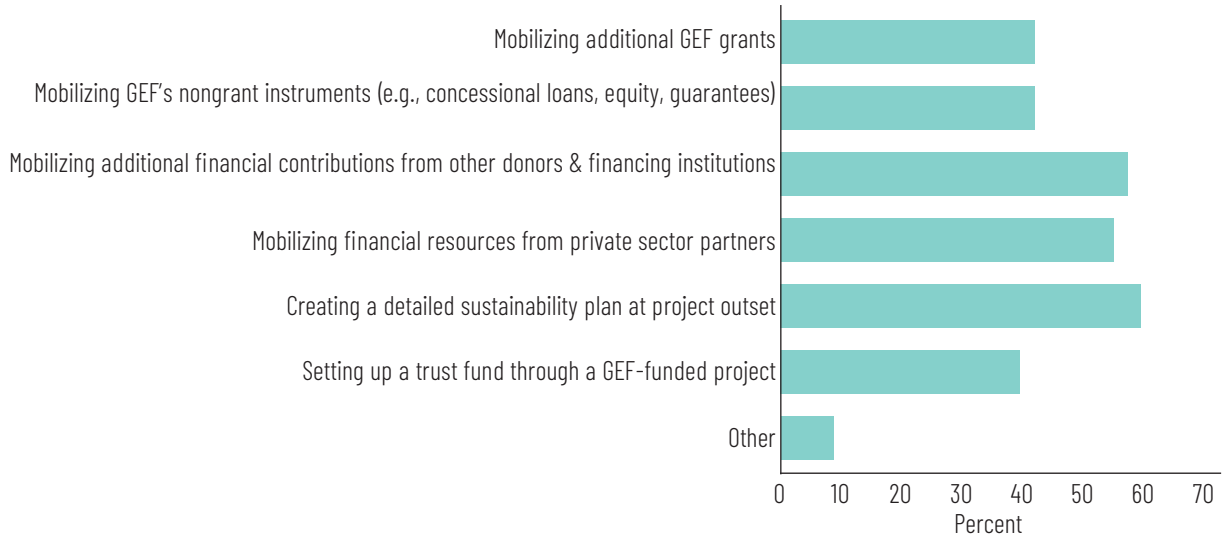
Figure D.3 presents survey respondent (n = 43) perceptions on how the international waters focal area can improve financial sustainability. From multiple options, the top three responses cited were creating a

Figure D.2 **IWC10 participant perceptions of international waters focal area strengths and weaknesses**



Source: 10th International Waters Conference (IWC10) participant survey; n = 43.

Figure D.3 IWC10 participant perceptions on how to improve the financial sustainability of international waters projects



Source: 10th International Waters Conference (IWC10) participant survey; *n* = 43.

detailed sustainability plan at project outset (62.8 percent), mobilizing additional financial contributions from other donors and financing institutions (60.5 percent), and mobilizing financial resources from private sector partners (58.1 percent).

Summary

The survey findings suggest that IWC10 participants generally recognize the contributions of GEF international waters projects to policy coherence and see the international waters focal area as an effective channel to promote horizontal policy coherence. While the survey did not directly explore the rationale behind such perceptions, integrated water resources management, marine spatial planning, and the source-to-sea approach could serve as effective channels to promote and achieve policy coherence.

The survey also highlighted the international waters focal area's unique expertise and comparative advantages in strategic interventions for transboundary cooperation, regional dialogues for trust building, institutional capacity building, and knowledge management. Piloting technologies and other innovative practices, however, may not be the main comparative advantage of the GEF international waters focal area. These findings suggest that the GEF's contributions to the international waters focal area and transboundary cooperation are unique compared to other donors and financing institutions.

The GEF international waters focal area's relevance to regional and global priorities and strengths in gender mainstreaming were also confirmed. At the same time, private sector engagement, project sustainability, and project ownership could be strengthened. Since international waters projects tend to require long-term engagement to produce visible results, private sector partners may not be fully attracted to the focal area.

The findings suggest that international waters projects could enhance their financial sustainability through developing a detailed sustainability assessment early in the project cycle and mobilizing financial resources from non-GEF sources. Because the quality-at-entry

analysis revealed that international waters projects tend to produce sustainability plans at the end of project implementation, this finding may be informative in guiding the financial sustainability planning of future international waters projects.

A key limitation of the survey was the limited number and types of respondents. Although the GEF IEO aimed to collect additional responses from IWC10 participants, only 70 people provided responses. Additionally, the survey only collected data from IWC10 participants; other donors and key stakeholders who did not attend the conference were not included. The findings, therefore, may not be representative of the entire international waters community.

Despite its limitations, the survey provided a useful insight into the perceptions of international waters stakeholders on key topics. The survey results could be synthesized with evidence from other information sources (e.g., project documents, terminal evaluations, portfolio data, and stakeholder interviews) to better inform how to improve project financial sustainability, maintain comparative advantages over other institutions, and address international waters focal area strengths and weaknesses in future projects. Early sustainability planning may be one of the concrete actions to be implemented in the near future.

Annex E

Country coverage of evaluation portfolio

Country	GEF-5	GEF-6	GEF-7	GEF-8	Total
Albania	1	9	1	0	11
Algeria	1	4	1	0	6
Angola	3	0	2	2	7
Antigua and Barbuda	2	1	1	0	4
Argentina	0	2	1	1	4
Azerbaijan	0	1	0	1	2
Bahamas	0	0	2	0	2
Bangladesh	0	1	0	0	1
Barbados	2	2	2	0	6
Belarus	0	2	0	0	2
Belize	2	2	2	2	8
Benin	2	4	2	0	8
Bolivia	1	2	1	2	6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2	8	1	0	11
Botswana	2	1	2	1	6
Brazil	2	3	4	3	12
Burkina Faso	2	2	0	1	5
Burundi	0	1	1	0	2
Cabo Verde	0	2	1	1	4
Cambodia	3	2	2	4	11
Cameroon	4	1	0	1	6
Central African Republic	2	0	0	1	3
Chad	4	1	0	0	5
Chile	0	2	2	2	6
China	6	0	0	0	6
Colombia	3	4	3	3	13
Comoros	2	0	2	1	5
Congo, Dem. Rep.	2	1	2	2	7
Congo, Rep.	0	1	0	0	1
Cook Islands	3	0	2	2	7
Costa Rica	4	1	6	6	17

Country	GEF-5	GEF-6	GEF-7	GEF-8	Total
Côte d'Ivoire	3	4	1	0	8
Croatia	1	1	0	0	2
Cuba	1	1	1	0	3
Djibouti	0	0	0	2	2
Dominica	1	1	0	0	2
Dominican Republic	2	1	2	4	9
Ecuador	4	3	3	5	15
Egypt, Arab Rep.	0	7	0	2	9
El Salvador	0	0	4	2	6
Equatorial Guinea	0	1	0	0	1
Eritrea	0	0	0	1	1
Eswatini	1	0	1	1	3
Ethiopia	0	1	0	0	1
Fiji	3	0	4	0	7
Gabon	0	1	0	0	1
Gambia, The	0	1	1	0	2
Georgia	0	2	3	0	5
Ghana	0	3	2	1	6
Grenada	2	2	1	2	7
Guatemala	2	3	5	2	12
Guinea	4	3	1	1	9
Guinea-Bissau	0	2	3	0	5
Guyana	1	4	4	1	10
Haiti	1	0	1	0	2
Honduras	2	2	4	1	9
India	0	1	1	2	4
Indonesia	9	4	6	0	19
Jamaica	2	2	3	2	9
Jordan	0	0	0	4	4
Kazakhstan	2	0	1	3	6
Kenya	2	1	0	2	5

Country	GEF-5	GEF-6	GEF-7	GEF-8	Total
Kiribati	3	0	2	0	5
Kosovo	0	1	0	0	1
Kyrgyz Republic	2	0	1	2	5
Lao PDR	1	1	1	2	5
Lebanon	0	6	1	0	7
Lesotho	1	1	1	0	3
Liberia	1	2	0	2	5
Libya	0	6	1	0	7
Madagascar	2	1	2	2	7
Malawi	1	1	2	2	6
Malaysia	1	2	2	0	5
Maldives	0	1	0	2	3
Mali	3	2	0	0	5
Marshall Islands	3	2	3	1	9
Mauritania	3	1	2	0	6
Mauritius	2	0	2	0	4
Mexico	3	2	1	2	8
Micronesia	3	0	3	0	6
Moldova	0	2	2	1	5
Mongolia	0	0	0	1	1
Montenegro	2	9	2	0	13
Morocco	0	8	2	1	11
Mozambique	3	1	3	5	12
Myanmar	0	1	0	0	1
Namibia	3	1	2	2	8
Nauru	3	0	2	0	5
Nicaragua	0	0	1	1	2
Niger	4	0	0	0	4
Nigeria	4	1	0	2	7
Niue	3	0	2	0	5
North Macedonia	1	0	0	0	1
Pakistan	0	0	0	1	1
Palau	3	1	3	1	8
Panama	2	1	7	5	15
Papua New Guinea	2	1	2	0	5
Paraguay	0	1	1	1	3
Peru	3	3	2	5	13
Philippines	9	1	3	2	15
Russian Federation	4	0	0	0	4

Country	GEF-5	GEF-6	GEF-7	GEF-8	Total
Rwanda	0	1	0	0	1
Samoa	2	0	2	0	4
São Tomé and Príncipe	0	2	1	0	3
Senegal	1	3	2	2	8
Serbia	1	1	1	0	3
Seychelles	3	1	2	1	7
Sierra Leone	1	2	0	1	4
Solomon Islands	2	1	4	1	8
Somalia	2	0	0	2	4
South Africa	4	1	3	3	11
Sri Lanka	0	1	0	1	2
St. Kitts and Nevis	2	2	1	1	6
St. Lucia	2	3	3	1	9
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2	3	1	0	6
Sudan	0	2	0	1	3
Suriname	2	3	3	1	9
Tajikistan	1	0	1	2	4
Tanzania	4	2	3	4	13
Thailand	3	1	4	1	9
Timor-Leste	2	1	2	0	5
Togo	0	4	3	0	7
Tonga	3	0	2	0	5
Trinidad and Tobago	3	1	4	3	11
Tunisia	1	7	1	0	9
Türkiye	0	2	4	0	6
Turkmenistan	0	0	1	3	4
Tuvalu	3	2	2	0	7
Uganda	1	1	1	0	3
Ukraine	0	4	4	0	8
Uruguay	0	1	1	2	4
Uzbekistan	0	0	1	3	4
Vanuatu	3	0	3	2	8
Venezuela, República Bolivariana de	0	1	1	2	4
Viet Nam	7	1	5	2	15
Yemen, Republic of	0	0	0	2	2
Zambia	1	0	2	1	4
Zimbabwe	1	1	2	1	5

Source: GEF Portal.
Note: *n* = 230. Those projects that only indicated regional or global in the country name list in the GEF Portal were not included in the analysis (*n* = 41). Parent projects were not included in the analysis to avoid double counting (*n* = 6).

Annex F

Thematic analysis of terminal evaluation reports

The GEF IEO conducted a thematic analysis to identify key themes and issues across GEF international waters projects. A total of 42 terminal evaluation reports from GEF-5 and GEF-6 were reviewed to synthesize qualitative evidence, focusing specifically on key findings, conclusions, and recommendations. NVivo12 was used to perform open coding and axial coding for the analysis. The analysis identified five themes (table F.1):

- **Theme 1:** International waters projects are complex and require long-term efforts and multiple projects to foster transboundary cooperation.
- **Theme 2:** International waters projects with a realistic project scope, clarity for action, and effective project management can be successful at the project level.
- **Theme 3:** International waters projects require solid sustainability measures based on a foundation of strengthened governance, partnerships, and ownership.
- **Theme 4:** International waters projects demonstrated strengths in knowledge management through evidence generation, knowledge sharing, and knowledge management platforms at regional and global levels.
- **Theme 5:** Remaining gaps in earlier international waters projects include limited communications and coordination among projects and stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation, and project design issues.

The international waters focal area requires long-term engagement and multiple projects to foster cooperative relationships among stakeholders; coordinate project interventions in a wide range of sociocultural, economic, political, and legislative contexts; and reach national and regional agreements to manage transboundary water. This complexity necessitates realistic project designs and adequate planning.

Some of the potential determinants of project success identified in the terminal evaluations include (1) a realistic project scope and time frame; (2) relevance to local, national, regional, and global priorities; (3) clarity for action by articulating stakeholder roles and responsibilities and setting realistic targets based on the project scope; and (4) project strategies and plans on sustainability, gender, communication, knowledge management, and stakeholder engagement to ensure cross-cutting themes are addressed throughout the project period. Based on the strengthened governance, partnerships, and ownerships from project interventions, international waters projects need solid sustainability measures—particularly on financial sustainability— to ensure long-term transboundary water management.

The terminal evaluation reports also documented successful practices and remaining gaps for future improvements. Key successes and strengths of the international waters focal area were found in knowledge management through evidence generation, knowledge sharing, and knowledge management platforms at regional and global levels. Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), for example, produced a knowledge bank; the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Plus (CLME+) website and the Drin Project website also demonstrate the potential utility of regional knowledge management hubs.

Table F.1 Top five themes identified in GEF-5 and GEF-6 international waters and multifocal terminal evaluation reports

Theme	Subtheme			
Theme 1: Complex nature of international waters projects requiring long-term engagement and stakeholder involvement (39)	1.1: Stakeholder engagement and coordination (34) • Gender, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples • Partnerships • Coordination • Multiple stakeholder engagement • Active project participation	1.2: Long-term engagement and time needed (17) • Building on foundation from the past • Time requirements	1.3: Complexity of international waters projects (13) • Transboundary work • Politics • Others	1.4: Ownership (8) • Factors to promote ownership • Ownership for sustainability • Country ownership • Hindrance to ownership
Theme 2: Potential determinants of international waters project success (41)	2.1: Realistic project design (37) • Clarity for action (M&E and roles and responsibilities) • Strategies, plans, and information • Realistic scope and workload • Relevance • Realistic time frame		2.2: Project implementation and management (36) • Adaptive management • Effective project governance and management • Capable project team and human resources management • Capacity building for effective project implementation • Capacity development for sustainability	
Theme 3: Considerations for the future (39)	3.1: Project sustainability (17) • Financial resource mobilization and management • Other aspects of sustainability		3.2: Future projects and key actions to be taken (30) • More emphasis on innovation and demonstration • Promoting and improving TDA-SAP • Implementing follow-up projects	
Theme 4: Demonstrated strengths in knowledge management (27)	4.1: Knowledge products, sharing, and platforms (25) • Knowledge products • Knowledge sharing • Knowledge management platforms		4.2: Learning (11) • Scope of learning • Community to community learning • Networks for learning • Communications	
Theme 5: Remaining gaps in international waters projects (23)	5.1: Overly ambitious project design (12) • Unrealistic project scope • Project delay and time limitations	5.2: Gaps in communications, knowledge management, and M&E (15) • Gaps in communications and coordination • Gaps in knowledge management • Gaps in M&E and reporting	5.3: Other project-related issues (14) • Limited project ownership • Financial challenges • Institutional, legislative, and political issues • Limited relevance • Limited technologies	

Source: Terminal evaluation reports for 42 GEF-5 and GEF-6 international waters and multifocal projects.

Note: Numbers in parentheses are number of times a given category was coded. M&E = monitoring and evaluation; TDA-SAP = transboundary diagnostic analysis-strategic action program.

Gaps include limited coordination within and between projects in a program, inadequate communications for stakeholder engagement, insufficient tracking of cofinance and socioeconomic benefits, and over-ambitious project designs for a given project time frame.

Annex G

Coverage of locations with high environmental risk

Table G.1 Watercourses with GEF involvement by coverage of types of environmental risk

Watercourse	Environmental stress	Nutrient pollution	Biodiversity extinction	Floods and droughts	Legal frameworks	Hydro-political tensions
Amazon						
Artibonite						
Asi/Orontes						
Bei Jiang/Hsi						
Chang Jiang (Yangtze)						
Da Yunhe River Basin and Grand Canal (Yellow and Yangtze)						
Danube						
Dnieper						
Dniester						
Drin						
Hai He River Basin						
Helmand						
Kura-Aras						
La Plata						
Lake Chad						
Lake Prespa						
Lake Titicaca/Poopó System						
Mekong						
Neretva						
Niger						
Nile						
Okavango						
Orange						
Rio Grande						
Rio São Francisco						
San Juan						
Senegal						

Watercourse	Environmental stress	Nutrient pollution	Biodiversity extinction	Floods and droughts	Legal frameworks	Hydro-political tensions
Shu-Chu						
Sixaola						
Talas						
Tumbes						
Tumen						
Volta						
Zarumilla						

Sources: IW:LEARN; UNEP-DHI and UNEP 2016a.

Note: Shading means that the TWAP River Basins study identifies a given watercourse as having the highest risks for the risk category (e.g., Amazon having the highest risk of biodiversity extinction).

Table G.2 **Highest-risk international river basins, as identified by TWAP River Basins study**

Risk type	Transboundary shared international watercourses with highest risks
Environmental stress	Cancoso/Lauca, Colorado, Dasht, Guadiana, Hamun-i-Mashkel/Rakshan, Hari/Harirud, Jordan, Kowl E Namaksar, Murgab, Rio Grande (North America), Tarim
Nutrient pollution	Bei Jiang/Hsi, Elbe, Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna, Jordan, Limpopo, Ma, Rhine, Seine
Biodiversity extinction	Amazon, Danube. Very high relative risk BCUs include Albania and Macedonia (Drin), China (Bei Jiang/His), Guatemala and Mexico (Grijalva), United States (Mississippi)
Exposure to floods and droughts	Atui, Baraka, Cancoso/Lauca, Colorado, Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna, Juba-Shibeli, Kowl E Namaksar, Lake Natron, Limpopo, Lotagipi Swamp, Maroni, Mekong, Okavango, Orange, Oueme, Rio Grande (North America), Saigon, Shu/Chu, Tarim
Legal frameworks	Alsek, Atui, Awash, BahuKalat/Rudkhanehye, Baker, Baraka, Bei Jiang/Hsi, Benito/Ntem, Cancoso/Lauca, Catatumbo, Coco/Segovia, Corantijn/Courantyne, Coruh, Dasht, Digul, Essequibo, Gash, Hamun-i-Mashkel/Rakshan, Han, Helmand, Irrawaddy, Juba-Shibeli, Kaladan, Komoe, Kowl E Namaksar, Nyanga, Ogooue, Oiapoque/Oyupock, Orinoco, Patia, Salween, San Juan, Sanaga, St. Paul, Stikine, Tami, Tarim, Tumen, Yalu, Yukon
Hydro-political tensions	Bei Jiang/Hsi, Benito/Ntem, Ca/Song-Koi, Drin, Irrawaddy, Lake Turkana, Ma, Mira, Mono, Ogooue, Red/Song Hong, Sabi, Saigon, Salween, San Juan, Sanaga, Tarim, Thukela, Vardar

Source: UNEP-DHI and UNEP 2016a, b.

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Independent Evaluation Office, Global Environment Facility
1818 H Street, NW • Washington, DC 20433, USA
www.gefieo.org
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