IEO BRIEF

Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the GEF

Independent Evaluation Office
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality, one of the mainstays of environmental sustainability, and the subject of this evaluation.

KEY FINDINGS

1. There has been modest improvement in gender mainstreaming since the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5). Despite a dramatic reduction in gender-blind projects since the introduction of the policy on gender mainstreaming—from 64.0 percent to 1.3 percent—there has only been a slight increase in the percentage of projects rated gender sensitive or gender mainstreamed.

2. Projects that conducted gender analyses achieved higher gender ratings. The evaluation applied a weighted gender rating to compare projects' gender sensitivity. Projects that undertook a gender analysis at the design stage were rated considerably higher (scoring 2.97 out of 4.00) than the OPS6 cohort as a whole (1.68). Very few projects actually conducted gender analyses, despite this being one of the minimum requirements of the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming: only 15.7 percent of completed projects reviewed had completed a gender analysis prior to endorsement/approval by the GEF Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

3. The policy has increased attention to—and the performance of—gender in GEF operations, but certain provisions and means of implementation are still unclear. The policy leaves too much room for interpretation on gender analysis, and on the respective implementation responsibilities of the GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat. Also, the inclusion of gender-disaggregated and gender-specific indicators in project results frameworks is highly variable across projects, as is the collection and use of gender-related data. The policy is not informed by or situated in wider human rights and gender equality norms governing international development frameworks, nor does it reference gender-related mandates or decisions issued by the conventions.

PURPOSE AND METHODS: This evaluation measured the extent and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in the Global Environment Facility's (GEF's) work since development of its gender policy. The evaluation team conducted an extensive portfolio review; assessed the GEF Secretariat's progress in meeting gender mainstreaming capacity-building requirements; and carried out a meta-analysis of GEF Agencies' gender mainstreaming policies, strategies, and action plans. The team interviewed key stakeholders in Ghana, Honduras, and the Philippines to cross-check and validate the data collected. Data were analyzed and triangulated to determine trends and formulate findings, conclusions, lessons, and recommendations.

WEB PAGE: https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/gender-mainstreaming-gef

CONTACT: Anna Viggh, Senior Evaluation Officer, Aviggh@thegef.org

ABOUT US: The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the GEF has a central role in ensuring the independent evaluation function within the GEF. www.gefieo.org

OPS6
SIXTH COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF THE GEF

4. Institutional capacity to implement the policy and achieve gender mainstreaming is insufficient. The GEF Secretariat's appointment of a dedicated gender specialist is widely recognized as having helped increase attention to gender equality and women's empowerment. However, this position is insufficient on its own to build wider staff competencies and capacities to support gender mainstreaming across GEF programming and processes.

5. The GEF's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) has been an effective framework for implementing the policy. The GEAP has facilitated implementation of policy requirements, and key stakeholders concur that it has been a good directive. In the context of the time frame of the current GEAP (2015–18) and the updating of the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming, a strong action plan facilitates strategic priority setting and can drive the GEF's institutional agenda on gender mainstreaming.

6. The GEF Gender Partnership is slowly developing into an effective platform for building a wider constituency on gender and the environment. The partnership has brought together gender focal points and practitioners in the GEF Agencies, other climate funds, the secretariats of relevant conventions, and other partners. It has become an important forum for leveraging a wide range of skills and experiences on gender equality and women's empowerment from across the GEF and its partners. It has facilitated a number of reviews, helping to build evaluative evidence on gender and the environment. It plans to produce a series of tools that will strengthen the GEF's capacity to mainstream gender systematically in projects and support gender-specific achievements.

BACKGROUND

Adopted in May 2011, the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming expresses the GEF's commitment to enhancing the degree to which the GEF and its Agencies promote gender equality. It commits the GEF to address the link between gender equality and environmental sustainability toward incorporating gender mainstreaming in its policies, programs, and operations. Prior to adoption of the policy, references to gender within GEF guidance and templates was limited, as were gender-related requirements demanded of the GEF Agencies. Agencies are now required to have policies or strategies in place that satisfy a set of minimum requirements for ensuring gender mainstreaming. The policy also requires the GEF Secretariat to strengthen its own capacity for supporting gender mainstreaming, and to periodically assess the GEF Agencies for compliance. Following a recent review—and in part informed by this evaluation—a revised policy was submitted to the GEF Council in November 2017. The 2015–18 GEAP aims to implement gender mainstreaming at both the corporate and focal area levels.

CONCLUSIONS

Gender performance trends. While gender performance has improved since the policy's introduction (figure 1), only 13.9 percent of projects at entry were found to have undertaken a gender analysis/social assessment with gender elements. Almost half did not mention either a gender analysis being planned or completed, and none of the enabling activities indicated that one would take place. No projects lacking a gender analysis or social assessment were rated as gender mainstreamed, and less than 5 percent of these projects were rated as gender sensitive.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization's portfolio scores comparatively higher than others (table 1), largely due to the relatively high proportion of its projects (71.1 percent) that benefited from a gender analysis.

Projects completed during OPS6 were rated slightly higher than those from OPS5 (table 2). Yet the OPS6 gender score of 0.71 means that sampled projects are, on average, still not reaching the gender-aware rating. Given that the OPS6 data are slightly younger, it is likely that changes in gender policies of GEF Agencies and general advances in gender equality have had a positive—albeit small—influence.

Best practice across GEF Agencies and other climate funds. A meta-analysis of approaches to gender mainstreaming identified the following best practices:

- Gender policies acknowledge gender equality not only as a human rights or development objective, but as an essential cornerstone for achieving sustainable development

FIGURE 1: Quality-at-entry gender rating

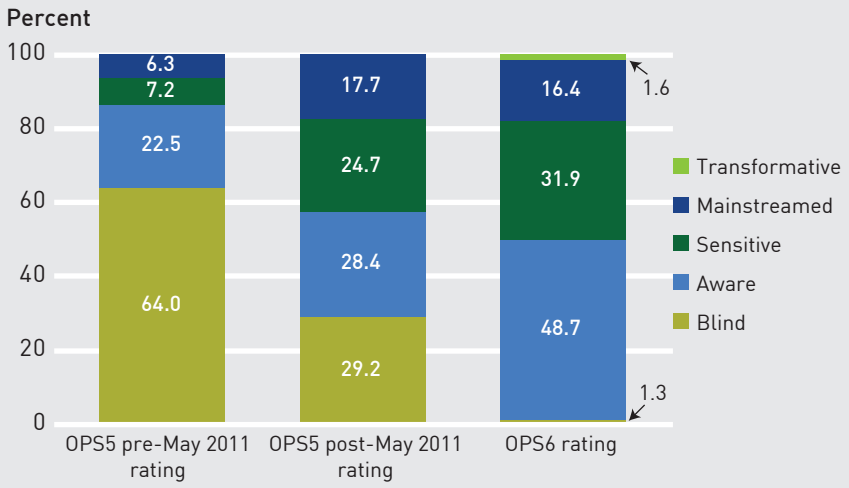

TABLE 1: Weighted gender rating score by GEF Agency

Agency	No. of projects	Score
FAO	18	1.67
UNDP	127	1.58
UNEP	76	1.66
UNIDO	38	2.03
World Bank	21	1.33

NOTE: FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN; UNDP = UN Development Programme; UNEP = UN Environment Programme; UNIDO = UN Industrial Development Organization.

- Integrating gender policies with corporate strategic plans and results helps mainstream gender at the highest levels
- Gender analysis is the foundation on which systematic gender mainstreaming rests and should be a mandatory element of any project design
- Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's participation at all levels of decision making
- The seniority of gender advisers and focal points, and the location of gender units, is crucial for translating gender policies and communicating the importance of gender mainstreaming to institutions' work
- Gender mainstreaming needs to be viewed as an institutionwide mandate for which all staff are responsible
- Dedicated and adequate human and financial resources are provided to implement gender policies, strategies, and plans
- Establishing a reliable system for tracking financial data on gender equality enhances institutional accountability
- Establishing gender ratings at project entry, implementation, and completion can help in monitoring and assessing institutional change projects contributions to gender equality
- Systemwide accountability for translating gender mainstreaming into practice lies at the highest levels

> **"Gender mainstreaming in GEF operations has progressed, but much more needs to be done before the GEF can show that paying attention to gender leads to better results."**
>
> *—Anna Viggh, IEO Senior Evaluation Officer*

Future trends and directions. The evaluation identified several key trends and directions among the GEF Agencies:

- **Introducing a mix of incentives can enhance institutional performance on gender mainstreaming.** Some Agencies are experimenting with performance-based initiatives such as regional gender awards; other funding mechanisms are assigning more weight to projects that have well-designed gender elements.
- **Ensuring quality during implementation.** Some Agencies have revised their reporting and support mechanisms to ensure better tracking and measuring of gender impacts, and to increase the availability of gender specialists.
- **Measuring outcomes rather than outputs or processes.** Qualitative indicators are being applied to measure dimensions of change in women's lives, such as access to information and participation in decision making.
- **Beyond gender mainstreaming.** Nearly all Agency gender approaches focus on addressing the root causes of gender inequality to achieve transformative and lasting change in the lives of women—going beyond gender mainstreaming in the project cycle and tackling social norms, attitudes, and behaviors at the household, community, and national levels.

Performance of the policy and the GEAP. While the policy acknowledges that gender mainstreaming advances the GEF goal of attaining global environmental benefits as well as that of gender equity and social inclusion, it stops short of providing a compelling rationale for why gender matters in environment-focused interventions. It also does not provide a rationale as to how the inclusion of gender equality in environmental projects would generate benefits beyond project effectiveness and efficiency. Moreover, it does not reference the gender-related mandates or decisions of the five conventions the GEF serves. Because it was issued without a results or accountability framework, there are no requirements for the GEF Secretariat to track and assess progress against any targets or benchmarks; nor are clear roles assigned to oversee overall progress or report on obligations to senior management or the GEF Council.

TABLE 2: Completed projects' gender rating for OPS6 and OPS5 baseline

	OPS6 cohort		OPS5 baseline	
Rating	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0. Gender blind	113	45.4	169	60.1
1. Gender aware	102	41.0	68	24.2
2. Gender sensitive	28	11.2	17	6.0
3. Gender mainstreamed	6	2.4	27	9.6
4. Gender transformative	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	249	100	281	100.0
Weighted score	0.71		0.65	

GENDER RATING SCALE

- **Gender blind.** Project does not demonstrate awareness of the roles, rights, responsibilities, and power relations associated with gender.
- **Gender aware.** Project recognizes the economic/social/political roles, rights, entitlements, responsibilities, obligations, and power relations socially assigned to men and women, but might work around existing gender differences and inequalities, or does not sufficiently show how it promotes gender equality.
- **Gender sensitive.** Project adopts gender-sensitive methodologies (a gender analysis is undertaken, gender-disaggregated data are collected, gender-sensitive indicators are integrated in monitoring and evaluation) to promote gender equality.
- **Gender mainstreamed.** Project ensures that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to most, if not all, activities. It assesses the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs, in any area and at all levels.
- **Gender transformative.** Project goes beyond gender mainstreaming and facilitates a critical examination of gender norms, roles, and relationships; strengthens or creates systems that support gender equity; and/or questions and changes gender norms and dynamics.

Agencies have aligned their own policies and plans with GEF requirements. However, several noted that their own corporate requirements exceed those of the GEF policy. GEF Agencies acknowledged that the policy needed to be updated and aligned more closely with international best practice standards.

More positively, the GEAP has served as a framework and mandate for implementing policy. It has advanced the GEF's efforts to systematically integrate gender, and has established a results framework to support accountability and better monitoring of its progress. One of its most significant achievements has been the establishment of the GEF Gender Partnership, which is seen as an important forum for leveraging members' skills and experiences on gender equality and women's empowerment; and provides partners with a space to share knowledge, learning, and best practice as well as discuss common issues, challenges, and solutions.

Comparison with other climate funds. Other climate finance mechanisms—in particular, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund—have recently made concerted efforts to integrate gender into their institutions and operations. The Climate Investment Funds do not yet have a gender policy, but are guided by two successive gender action plans.

Two crucial differences distinguish the GEF's plan with those of the GCF and the Adaptation Fund: (1) the other funds prioritize and outline the detailed role of their respective boards in overseeing policy implementation and monitoring; and (2) their plans specifically address resource allocation and budgeting, holding them accountable for implementing gender policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The GEF Secretariat should consider revising its policy to better align with best practice standards. The policy should be anchored in the gender-related decisions of the conventions and in the GEF Agencies' own best practice standards. The Secretariat should consider that policies grounded in rights-based frameworks tend to result in more effective gender mainstreaming. It should also consider using the GEF Gender Partnership as the vehicle for stakeholder engagement in updating its policy. The policy should provide greater guidance on gender analysis, and on the respective responsibilities of the GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat.

2. The GEF Secretariat with its partners should develop an action plan for implementation of the gender policy in GEF-7. An appropriate gender action plan should support implementing any revised policy on gender mainstreaming, while continuing to focus on developing and finalizing comprehensive guidelines, tools, and methods. The plan should be developed and implemented in collaboration with the GEF Gender Partnership, drawing on the knowledge and best practice standards of GEF Agencies, other climate funds, the secretariats of relevant conventions, and other partners. Analyzing the associated links between gender equality and project performance across GEF programmatic areas would also support mainstreaming.

3. To achieve the objectives of institutional strengthening and gender mainstreaming, the GEF Secretariat should ensure that adequate resources are made available. During GEF-7, the Secretariat's institutional and staff capacity on gender mainstreaming will need strengthening: resources should be leveraged from within the GEF Agencies that have a strong institutional gender focus and expertise.

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1818 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20433
Website: www.gefieo.org • email: gefevaluation@thegef.org
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