

Evaluation of GEF Engagement with Indigenous Peoples



Indigenous peoples make valuable contributions to the GEF with their in-depth, varied, and locally rooted knowledge and their understanding of ecosystem management.

Accounting for no more than 5 percent of the global population, indigenous peoples are invaluable stewards of biological diversity. Their homelands harbor more than three of every four species of life on the planet. Recognizing these peoples' vital role in formulating sound environmental policy, the GEF has increasingly sought their counsel and expertise; the GEF's commitment in this regard is reflected in a proliferation of IP-focused projects, mechanisms for engagement, and publications.

KEY FINDINGS

The GEF has taken significant steps to better engage IP in its projects over the years (figure 1), addressing the peoples' rights to their lands and resources, and recognizing the importance of their traditional knowledge and innovations. The GEF recognizes IP as integral to its mission, as well as to the sustainability of the lands and natural resources on which they—and ultimately all of

us—depend. Following are some of the key findings from this analysis.

1. The GEF's increasing engagement with IP is reflected in **426 of its projects**, representing 10 percent of all approved projects since the GEF's pilot phase in 1991. These projects have received more than **\$2.5 billion in GEF grants**.
2. Nearly 90 percent of the GEF's IP investments have focused on projects in **Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa** (figure 2).
3. Though more than half of the projects involving IP are associated with the biodiversity focal area, that **focus is shifting**, particularly toward those projects **addressing climate change**.
4. Despite the more frequent inclusion of IP in the GEF's projects, their respective **role remains limited**, and the number of "peoples-driven" projects remain in the minority.

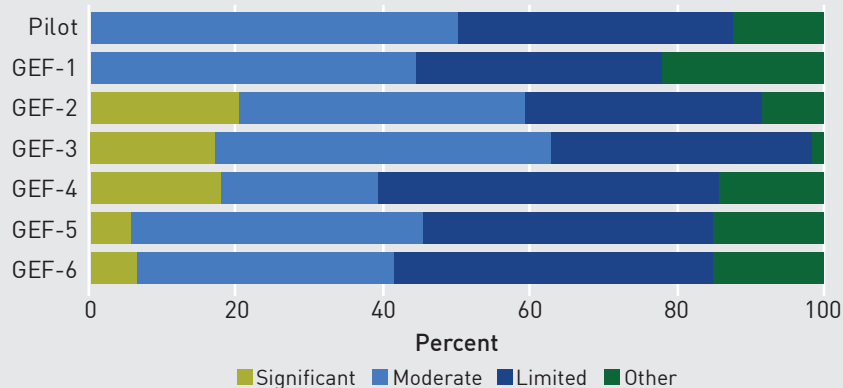
PURPOSE AND METHODS: This review analyzes the Global Environment Facility (GEF's) historical engagement with indigenous peoples (IP) in hopes of transforming lessons learned into better practices, and to recommend new roles and initiatives for these peoples in GEF-7. The evaluation was conducted from February to August 2017, using portfolio analyses, online surveys, and interviews.

WEB PAGE: <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-engagement-indigenous-peoples-ips-2017>

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

FIGURE 1: Degree of IP involvement in GEF projects, by GEF replenishment period



NOTE: Data for GEF-6 are as of September 30, 2016.

- Seventy-five percent of projects involving IP are rated as moderately satisfactory or above, roughly **on par with the whole of the GEF's portfolio**.
- The **performance of the IP portfolio has improved** since the GEF's pilot phase, with 90 percent of the projects rated as moderately satisfactory or above in the latest full assessment.
- IP project outcomes have been rated most highly on those focused on **land degradation, climate change, and biodiversity**, with more than half of the

projects showing moderate or greater likelihood of being sustainable.

8. The Small Grants Programme (SGP) is the GEF's primary source of funding for its engagement with IP—approximately 15 percent of the 20,300 SGP grants from 1992 to 2016 benefited indigenous organizations or communities. Accessing SGP grants remains hampered by administrative and language hurdles.

BACKGROUND

The GEF's engagement with IP has grown in step with its understanding of the links between these cultures and the biological richness of their homelands. With an estimated population of 370 million, IP constitute no more than 5 percent of the global population, occupying just 22 percent of the world's land surface. Yet these indigenous homelands contain some 80 percent of the planet's biological diversity, and 95 percent of the world's cultural diversity.

Moreover, lands under indigenous tenure harbor vast forests, storing upwards of 54 billion tons of carbon, a capacity equaling Earth's yearly emissions of carbon dioxide. The forests of IP constitute critical reservoirs of carbon otherwise buffering the ongoing rise of atmospheric greenhouse gases. Empowering IP to manage their own

lands thus lends itself not only to the preservation of biodiversity, but to the prevention of climate change.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Indigenous peoples are important stakeholders in the GEF's mission to tackle global environmental issues.

Empowering IP to manage biodiversity in their own territories offers more enduring and cost-effective ways to protect biodiversity, as well as reducing poverty, strengthening governance, and achieving greater equality.

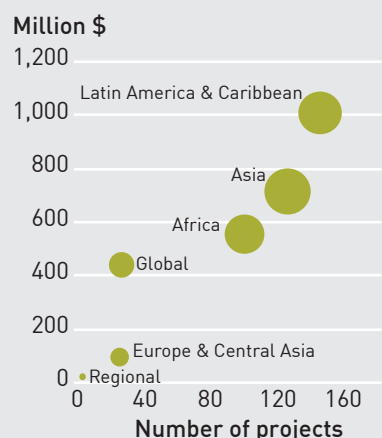
2. Recognition of IP by national governments is axiomatic to the application of IP's rights. In some countries, the absence of IP recognition presents a significant challenge to the GEF partnership. This can pose problems for accurately assessing the GEF's engagement with IP.

3. At the partnership level, the participation of IP is well secured in the GEF's consultation arrangements, and is advancing the GEF's engagement with IP. Consultations between the Indigenous Peoples' Task Force resulted in 2012 in the [Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples](#), a useful guide reinforcing GEF policy toward indigenous peoples.

4. In general, GEF Agencies are in alignment with the obligations under GEF Minimum Standard 4: Indigenous Peoples. Of the nine provisions of Minimum Standard 4, seven show high levels of consistency across the Agencies. In the few instances where GEF Agency safeguards appear to fall short, the GEF is expected to detect discrepancies as part of periodic compliance monitoring of the minimum standards.

5. Concerning the GEF safeguard on indigenous peoples, some restrictiveness and ambiguity exists around its approach to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). The GEF requires FPIC approaches from

FIGURE 2: Investment in and number of IP projects, by region



NOTE: GEF Project Management Information System

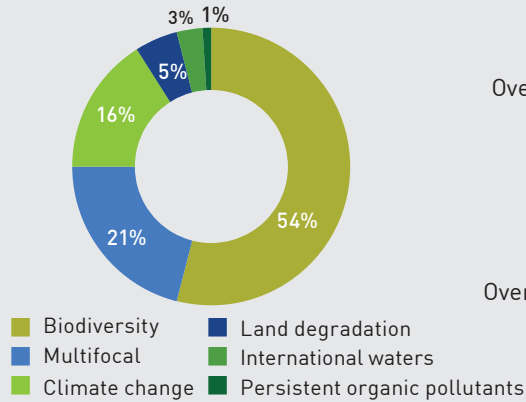
PORTFOLIO HIGHLIGHTS AND PERFORMANCE

426
projects

\$2.5 billion
in grant funding

\$12.9 billion
in cofinancing

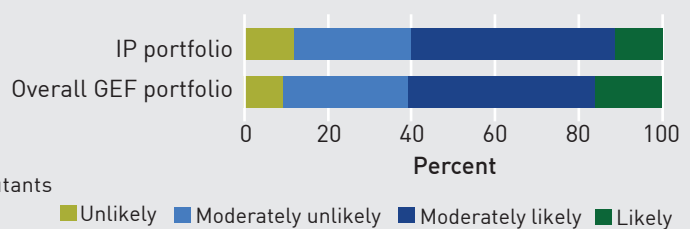
Distribution of GEF projects, by focal area



Projects with outcome ratings in the satisfactory range



Distribution of ratings on project sustainability



states that have ratified ILO C169, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention.

6. The GEF's ability to describe the application of Minimum Safeguard 4 and the benefits that flow from its engagement with IP is restricted by the lack of monitoring information.

Some adjustments to monitoring practices have recently been introduced to better track projects involving IP. What is being measured, though, are simple enumerations of projects involving IP; there is little in the way of qualitative information.

7. The Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Group (IPAG) provides relevant advice to the GEF Secretariat on IP issues.

The development of the IPAG has been a positive step for the GEF's engagement with IP. The IPAG has drawn together traditional and expert knowledge in dialogues among IP and the GEF in developing IP's capacity to engage in GEF projects and processes; in providing recommendations on financial arrangements to better support IP projects and project development; and in providing outreach with IP organizations and communities.

8. The GEF's ability to systematically gather evidence on elements of the GEF's IP engagement is

hampered by the lack of specificity within the GEF's Project Management Information System.

GEF projects that have an element of engagement with IP are not easily retrieved from the organizational database. Moreover, the quality of the information about IP engagement contained in terminal evaluations is extremely variable.

9. The SGP, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, is the primary vehicle for the GEF's engagement with IP.

Accessing SGP financing, however, still remains a challenge for some IP due to administrative and language hurdles, among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish and strengthen IP funding opportunities in GEF projects. The SGP, through which IP receive most of their GEF funding, remains limited in scale and scope. Strengthening the SGP would help, as would seeking funding opportunities outside

traditional GEF sources, such as the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund. The World Bank's Dedicated Grants Mechanism could serve as a funding model for the GEF.

2. Update policies and guidelines concerning IP to reflect the latest best-practice standards, including a rights-based approach to engagement. To better safeguard the rights of IP, the GEF should give special attention to those rights of self-determination and of FPIC. The GEF's engagement with IP should also reflect advances in traditional knowledge, land rights, and resource rights. Finally, the GEF should expand its own criteria for identifying IP, considering for example the merits and drawbacks of adopting such inclusive language as "indigenous peoples and local communities."

3. Review the role of the Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Group. To increase IPAG's effectiveness, the GEF should take steps to preserve knowledge of outgoing members and to prepare new ones for their task. One such step would

"The GEF ascribes great value to engaging with indigenous peoples, gaining their insights, and tailoring projects to meet their needs and aspirations."

—Baljit Wadhwa, IEO Senior Evaluation Officer

be to establish a comprehensive orientation for its members, paying special attention to foster intergenerational leadership. The GEF should review the existing scope and limitations of the IPAG's mandate and its relationship with the IP Focal Points.

4. Facilitate dialogue between IP and governments. One of the major hurdles to greater engagement of IP in GEF projects is their lack of acceptance by national governments. The GEF can help raise the prominence of IP in government programming by sharing their stories at GEF events, workshops, and council meetings.

5. Monitor the application of Minimum Standard 4 and the IP portfolio. There should be more tracking and reporting of environmental and social risks by agencies conducting projects of the GEF portfolio. Projects need to be tagged for systematic retrieval, and the IP engagement defined. Finally, the extent and type of IP engagement should be a standard evaluation question included in mid-term and terminal evaluations. ■

MILESTONES IN THE GEF'S FOCUS ON IP

1995: The GEF-NGO Network is formed, a consultative group renamed in 2013 as the [GEF-CSO \(Civil Society Organization\) Network](#), reflecting the wider participation of CSOs. The network now includes three IP focal points from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

2008: The GEF's first IP-specific publication, [Indigenous Communities and Biodiversity](#), is published, providing an overview of the GEF's IP engagement with regard to policies and operations, project financing, and work with the Convention on Biological Diversity's Conference of the Parties.

2011: The agenda-setting Indigenous Peoples' Task Force (IPTF) is formed; subsequent development of the [GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards](#).

2012: The GEF Council adopts the [Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples](#). The GEF publishes [Issue Paper on Indigenous Peoples, Prepared by the Indigenous Peoples Task Force to the GEF](#), which sets GEF policy options for IP in five key areas and calls for the establishment of a rights-based approach to the GEF's engagement with IP.

2013: The [GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group \(IPAG\)](#) meets for the first time.

2016: [User Guide: Indigenous Peoples and GEF Project Financing](#) is published, detailing the SGP and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, and encouraging applications by IP organizations and networks. [25 Years of the GEF](#) is published, containing an overview of the policies and impacts of GEF-financed projects on IP.

