

Terms of Reference: Request for Expression of Interest

Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Engagement in Central Asia

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is requesting Expression of Interests from firms to assist the Office in the conduct of this evaluation.

Background

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the family of funds for the environment. It provides support to address global environmental concerns related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, and hazardous chemicals. Since its inception in 1991, the GEF has provided developing countries and countries with economies in transition more than US 27 billion in financing and is also an official financial mechanism to carry out the goals of several multilateral environmental conventions. This financing is implemented through a network of 18 accredited agencies (GEF Agencies).

The GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO) has a central role in ensuring the independent evaluation function within the GEF. Based in Washington DC, and administered by the World Bank, the GEF IEO is independent of its management as well as the management of the GEF. Its Director reports to the GEF Council, the GEF governing body. All contracts with the IEO are World Bank contracts. The IEO undertakes independent evaluations on a wide array of issues related to the relevance, performance, and results of GEF support. One such evaluation is the Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Engagement in Central Asia.

Purpose, Objectives and Questions

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide country-cluster evaluative evidence on GEF engagement and performance of GEF interventions in Central Asia in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan from GEF-5 to date.¹ The objectives are: a) assessing relevance, results and sustainability of GEF investments in the region, including contributions to transformational change; b) assessing GEF country and regional engagement approaches, including institutional arrangements and partnerships. Cross-cutting issues of private sector engagement and blended finance, women's empowerment and the whole of society approach will also be assessed. Reflecting on the GEF experience,

¹ The GEF is financed through four-year replenishment periods, such as GEF-5 (2010-2014), GEF-6 (2014-2018), GEF-7 (2018-2022), GEF-8 (2022-2026).

this evaluation also aims to provide lessons for future GEF programming and engagement in the region.

The above evaluation purpose and objectives translate into the following key evaluation questions:

1. **Relevance.** To what extent has GEF support been relevant to the main environmental challenges in Central Asia and are there any gaps? Has the design of GEF interventions been appropriate and innovative given the country and regional context?
2. **Effectiveness and Sustainability.** How effective have GEF-supported interventions in Central Asia been in producing results at the project, country, and regional levels? To what extent do GEF interventions contribute to positive transformational change² in Central Asia? To what extent are the benefits of GEF interventions in Central Asia likely to continue over time?
3. **Private sector.** Have GEF-supported interventions been involved in the private sector engagement and with what results? Is there appetite for blended finance among government and GEF Agencies, and are there existing models that the GEF could implement?
4. **Women's empowerment and the whole of society approach.** To what extent have the roles and needs of women and vulnerable groups been taken into consideration in GEF programming and implementation in Central Asia and with what results?
5. **GEF Country and Regional Engagement.** How effective has GEF country and regional engagement in Central Asia been in supporting country ownership and environmental prioritization processes to help countries make informed decisions on the use of GEF resources, mobilize critical stakeholders, leverage complementary actions and investments, and translate global environmental goals into country-driven actions and impacts? Have there been synergies and complementarities or competition and duplication of effort in the region between: a) GEF interventions; b) GEF Agencies in GEF programming and implementation; c) government-funded activities and GEF support; d) GEF and other donors support (including multilateral, bilateral, vertical environmental and climate funds)?

Approach and Methods

The evaluation will be conducted by applying a mixed methods approach that encompasses both qualitative and quantitative data and information gathering and analyses. These include document and literature reviews, key informant interviews, geospatial analyses, portfolio analyses, in-depth case studies.

The evaluation will identify three to four countries to analyze projects and engagement in greater depth. Selected countries and projects will reflect variety in GEF Agency, implementation status, intervention focus and activities.

² Transformational change is a deep, systemic, sustainable change with a large-scale impact in an area of a major environmental concern (GEF IEO 2018. Evaluation of GEF Support for Transformational Change.

<https://www.gefio.org/en/types/evaluations/transformational-change>).

Responsibilities and Accountabilities

The following is a list of indicative tasks associated with this assessment:

1. Prepare an inception report detailing the review, design, and approach (including a detailed evaluation matrix), and a detailed work plan with clearly identifiable deliverables and milestones.
2. Conduct literature and document reviews, quality at entry and portfolio analyses using tools and templates developed in collaboration with GEF IEO.
3. Conduct interviews using interview guidelines developed in collaboration with GEF IEO.
4. Perform geospatial data analysis as determined necessary in discussion with GEF IEO.
5. Conduct case studies through field observations and interviews on select countries and projects.
6. Actively contribute to the systematic triangulation sessions led by GEF IEO at the end of the data gathering and analysis phase, to extract main findings from all the quantitative and qualitative data and information gathered and perform subsequent gap filling and any other eventual additional analyses as needed.
7. Report writing based on the synthesis of evaluative evidence.

The GEF IEO invites expressions of interest from qualified firms to support the office in the conduct of this evaluation. The evaluative work will be undertaken from April 2026 to March 2027.

Qualifications

The firm should have the following qualifications:

- Experience in the evaluation of international environment and development interventions, including a track record of conducting high level, complex evaluations.
- Demonstrated skills and experience in the analysis of environmental and socio-economic dynamics and challenges in Central Asia and similar contexts.
- Practical, policy, and/or academic expertise in key GEF focal areas of the projects and programs under analysis (i.e., land degradation, desertification and drought; climate change adaptation and mitigation; biodiversity; sustainable forest management; international waters; chemicals and waste; food systems; ecosystem restoration).
- Availability of a network of local consultants to be mobilized in the case study countries.
- Familiarity with the policies, procedures and operations of the GEF and its Agencies and knowledge of the GEF and external information sources will be considered an added advantage.
- Experience working with and processing global environmental geospatial datasets such as land use/land cover change, vegetation indices, water level changes, drought indices, key biodiversity areas, etc. is an advantage.

Submission requirements

Interested firms are invited to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested firms must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc. for firms; CV and cover letter for individuals). Please note that the total size of all attachments should be less than 5MB. Firms may associate to

enhance their qualifications unless otherwise stated in the solicitation documents. Where a group of firms associate to submit an EOI, they must indicate which is the lead firm. Based on the initial expression of interest, the shortlisted firms will be invited to prepare and submit a more detailed proposal.

Expressions of Interest should be submitted, in English, electronically [through WBGeProcure RFX Now](#).

More information about WBGeProcure RFX Now:
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/corporate-procurement/announcements/WBGeProcure-RFXNow>.

The application deadline is April 2, 2026.

NOTES

Following this invitation for EOI, a shortlist of qualified firms will be formally invited to submit proposals. Shortlisting and selection will be subject to the availability of funding.

Only those firms which have been shortlisted will be invited to participate in the RFP phase.

No notification or debrief will be provided to firms which have not been shortlisted.

If you encounter technical difficulties while uploading documents, please send an e-mail to the Help Desk at corporateprocurement@worldbank.org prior to the submission deadline.