

**Audit Trail on the comments received from the GEF Secretariat on the Draft Report of the
STRATEGIC COUNTRY CLUSTER EVALUATION: GEF SUPPORT TO DRYLANDS COUNTRIES, VOLUME 1: MAIN REPORT
28 November 2023**

PARAGRAPH NUMBER	REFERENCE TEXT	COMMENTS	IEO RESPONSE AND ACTION TAKEN
General comment		Overall, the evaluation, including the country case studies, is very informative and contains a lot of knowledge and valuable lessons learned that will be useful for GEF's ongoing and future work in drylands. Main issues to be discussed/clarified are: (1) The evaluation should better take into account the difficult and challenging context of drylands in many respects (e.g., high percentage of Fragile and Conflict States, comparably weak governance structures and capacities, fewer opportunities for private sector investments, etc.). The difficult context largely explains the lower sustainability rating of projects in drylands. However, conflating the achievement of results <i>and</i> sustainability issues should not take place, as the projects largely achieved their intended results (e.g., paragraph 123: "GEF performed well overall and delivered global environmental benefits and associated socioeconomic co-benefits across dryland areas..."). What may not have happened is ensuring the sustainability of these results, which is not entirely the fault of the GEF but rather due to the context of drylands as disadvantaged geographies. (2) The selected portfolio for the analysis appears to exclude several important IW projects and programs working on transboundary watersheds and aquifers in drylands to address water security and resilience to	Thank you. (1) Addressed. Added language to the discussion on sustainability that further references the difficult and challenging context of drylands. Added explanation that sustainability is also challenged by the much higher proportion of FCS in the drylands portfolio than in the overall GEF portfolio. (2) Partially addressed. No action taken to change the evaluation portfolio, because this issue was neither raised at the stage of the Approach Paper review, when the scoping was done, nor in the Reference Group discussions, where additional projects that might have been missed were solicited. Additionally,

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		drought and climate change (e.g., take the Nile as an example with Egypt and Sudan downstream (GEF IDs include 1094 and 2584 as part of the Shared Vision Program; ID 3398 Eastern Nile Watershed project; and the Gedaref aquifer within ID 9912); or the Orange-Senqu with Namibia most downstream (GEF ID 2701 and ID 9054); or the Aral Sea basin countries e.g. ID 10777). If that is the case, the evaluation should take these limitations into account, especially with regard to the conclusions and recommendations that pertain to “water scarcity”. (3) Another limitation that needs to be taken into account is with regard to the selection of LDCF projects. If dryland interventions are considered from a broader scope of land degradation, climate change, water scarcity, landscapes, drought, livelihoods, and related institutional capacities and policy framework, the percentage (7%) financed by the LDCF and SCCF may, in fact, be higher than presented given the fact the biggest GEF intervention in drylands is in Africa where most of the countries are LDCs.	the IW projects referenced are a small proportion of the drylands portfolio (2-3%), and several are out of the evaluation scope, either because they are from earlier than GEF-4 or had project sites in humid zones. To address this comment, in multiple places in the report (see responses to specific comments below), reference has been made to the IW focal area, its identification of water scarcity as a challenge, and its relevance for drylands programming, (3) Partially addressed. Clarified in multiple places in the report that the evaluation portfolio is inclusive of LDCF and SCCF projects, and added language referencing the value of MTF projects for drylands. In terms of the percentage financed by LDCF/SCCF, while it is true that African countries

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			represent a larger proportion of LDCs and dryland countries, the percentage of LDCF/SCCF funding in drylands is roughly comparable to that in the GEF overall portfolio (9%). The evaluation looks at drylands globally, not just in Africa.
General comment		Please be more explicit upfront on the scope of the paper in terms of whether it is of the GEF as a whole or a subset of the GEF's set of trust funds, and if so, which one(s)?	Addressed. Clarified in multiple places that the scope is all GEF trust funds but excludes the SGP.
General comment		The evaluation's focus on policy coherence is meant to be, by the evaluation's own statement in its guiding questions, a forward-looking approach, given that the GEF is only now formally expanding in this area. However, at many points in the Evaluation, there are some statements on the policy coherence of the GEF's drylands portfolio that are quite criticizing in tone – for example paragraph 122 states that <i>“But despite prevalence in design, the evaluative evidence collected on this subject offered limited examples of success in strengthening policy coherence.”</i> This is one example and there are others throughout the report. The Secretariat welcomes the IEO's general guidance on sub-national and local levels as reflected in recommendation 1, but it would be useful if the discussion throughout the report on this angle is amended to be forward-looking, as seems to have been the original intention.	Addressed. Framing language has been added to the bold statement of recommendation 1. See also response to comment on paragraph 130 below.

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1	<i>“The GEF has invested a substantial share of its funding in the sustainable management of drylands, reaching 11 percent of the total GEF-4 to GEF-7 financing.”</i>	Which GEF of the suite/family of trust funds is this referring to here? Please be explicit on the scope by indicating which GEF trust funds are being counted in identifying figures such as this. E.g., is this referring to GEF Trust Fund, GEF LDCF (trust fund), GEF SCCF (trust fund), GEF CBIT (trust fund), etc? This clarity on the scope of the evaluation and the statistics indicated should be consistently clear throughout the paper.	Addressed. This is total funding – i.e., inclusive of all GEF trust funds.
2	<i>“drylands received increased attention in GEF-7 when the Land Degradation Global Benefits Index in STAR was revised to account for the challenge of combating desertification in drylands”</i>	The LD GBI did take from the outset (in GEF-5) the challenge in drylands into account by weighing dryland proportion with 60% in the LD GBI index with the formula: $GBILD = (0.2 * \text{global share of land area affected}) + (0.6 * \text{proportion of dryland area}) + (0.2 * \text{proportion of rural population})$. It was updated twice, in GEF-7 and GEF-8 to use the most up-to-date data available for the indicators contained in the formula. However, the formula remained unchanged throughout the entire period from GEF-5 to GEF-8.	Addressed. Clarified that this formula was introduced in GEF-5.
2	<i>“GEF-8 saw the introduction of the Land Degradation Neutrality concept in GEF programming”</i>	Already in GEF-7, the LDFA strategy was fully aligned with the LDN concept. See: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/GEF-7%20Programming%20Directions%20-%20GEF_R.7_19.pdf	Addressed. Clarified that the strategy was aligned by GEF-7.
12	<i>“Drylands have been part of successive Land Degradation Focal Area (LDFA) strategies since GEF-1 and GEF-2 through Operational Program 12, and featured also in GEF-3, when Land Degradation was established as a separate GEF focal area.”</i>	The Operational Programs in GEF-3 (especially OP 12 and, to some extent, OP 15) were relevant for drylands): https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/OP_12_English.pdf Land Degradation was established as a focal area in 2006, at the start of GEF-4.	Addressed. Corrected the GEF periods.

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14	<i>“Drylands received increased attention in GEF-7. The Land Degradation Global Benefits Index (LD GBI) of the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) was revised to account for the challenge of combating desertification in drylands, including the need for adaptation to drought risks”</i>	Drylands received increased attention already in GEF-6, with LD-2 objective of the LDFA including drylands in the objective statement. https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/GEF_R.6-Rev.04%2C_Programming_Directions%2C_March_31%2C_2014.pdf Drylands achieved increased attention in GEF-7, in particular through the Dryland Sustainable Landscapes IP as one of the main vehicles for the implementation of the LDFA strategy in GEF-7. The statement on the LD GBI is not fully correct (please also see comments on paragraph 2).	Addressed. Corrected the GEF periods.
15	<i>“Drylands continue to feature prominently in GEF programming in GEF-8 with an emphasis on LDN”</i>	While the statement is correct, drylands feature mainly through a dedicated objective LD-3: <i>“Objective 3. Address desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD) issues, particularly in drylands”</i>. https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-04/GEF_R.08_29_Rev.01_GEF8_Programming_Directions.pdf Is this only referring to GEF programming in GEF-8 through the GEF Trust Fund, or also GEF other GEF-managed trust funds?	Addressed. Clarified the emphasis on DLDD.
16 and figure 2	<i>“First, a text search⁸ on the GEF Portal identified 378 projects focusing on drylands all over the world since GEF-4 to GEF-7, across all focal areas and inclusive of all full-and medium-sized projects.”</i>	The footnote indicates a range of search words that should have identified a large number of regional projects supported by IW funds (or MTFs with IW). It is not clear why, therefore, IW projects are not more prominently represented in the list of projects that address, e.g., water scarcity or floods and droughts. Even though rarely an entire watershed is classified as $\geq 50\%$ dryland, some of the downstream countries may be way above that threshold, and transboundary cooperation	See response to general comments.

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		will be essential to address water security and resilience to drought and climate change (e.g., take the Nile as an example with Egypt and Sudan downstream (GEF IDs include 1094 and 2584 as part of the Shared Vision Program; ID 3398 Eastern Nile Watershed project; and the Gedaref aquifer within ID 9912); or the Orange-Senqu with Namibia most downstream (GEF ID 2701 and ID 9054); or the Aral Sea basin countries e.g. ID 10777 and the upcoming PFD ID 11378). Several of the focus countries considered in Volume 2 are also part of IW supported transboundary surface or groundwater projects, such as Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Malawi, Niger and Uzbekistan. Yet, the text of the evaluation does not refer to these interventions as they were not included in the project sample for this evaluation; in fact only very few IW FA projects are (such as the IW funded global project GEF ID 4533 <i>Development of Tools to Incorporate Impacts of Climatic Variability and Change in Particular Floods and Droughts into Basin Planning Processes</i> with one of the pilots in the Volta basin).	
17	<i>"An initial list of 220 projects resulted from the application of the scoping criteria described above... The outcomes of this process yielded a final selection of 195 projects covering 53 countries".</i>	Despite having selected 195 projects in 53 countries, there seems to be an overwhelming focus on Azerbaijan and Niger (to some extent) in the presentation of the cases. The report might have missed important information or lessons from the remaining countries in the Horn of Africa, for example.	The references to the case study countries are already relatively balanced and reflect the size of the drylands portfolio by country – for instance, Niger has the largest number of drylands projects and the most mentions (62), Uzbekistan and Ethiopia follow (52 and 46), and there are fewer case examples from the countries with smaller portfolios (Azerbaijan, Malawi, Chile).

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19	Figure 3	There seems to be very little IW funding in GEF's dryland project portfolio. Were some of the important transboundary IW projects, e.g., Lake Chad, Aral Sea Basin, etc., included in the analysis?	See response to general comments.
37	<i>"GEF programming has addressed priority environmental challenges in drylands, most notably land degradation and desertification, climate change, and deforestation, with increasing attention to biodiversity over time. Attention to water scarcity has been mixed."</i>	This is due to the focus on LDFA and LD/BD MFA projects while largely omitting to consider GEF IW FA support. As this is the case, it may be worthwhile to indicate this here, e.g., "GEF LDFA and LD/BD MFA programming ..." or add a footnote to say "This is to mean: GEF STAR supported programming without IW focal area support ..." or the like.	See response to general comments.
38	<i>"and the proportion of MFA drylands projects with CC focal area funding has decreased significantly from 70 percent in GEF-4 and GEF-5 to just 33 percent in GEF-6 and GEF-7."</i>	This statement should be qualified by the fact that the relative amounts of CC-M focal area funding allocation were significantly reduced in the GEF-6 and GEF-7 replenishments as compared to GEF-4 and GEF-5 (by about 30%).	Addressed. Added suggested qualifying language.
38	<i>"Despite the widely recognized importance of resilience in drylands (Stringer et al. 2022; Global Center on Adaptation 2021), only 7 percent of drylands projects have received climate change adaptation funding through the LDCF or SCCF, slightly less than in the overall GEF portfolio."</i>	If dryland interventions are considered from a broader scope of land degradation, climate change, water scarcity, landscapes, drought, livelihoods, and related institutional capacities and policy framework, the percentage (7%) financed by the LDCF and SCCF may be higher than presented given the fact the biggest GEF intervention in drylands is in Africa where most of the countries are LDCs.	See response to general comments.
38	<i>"Despite the widely recognized importance of resilience in drylands (Stringer et al. 2022; Global Center on Adaptation</i>	This sentence is unclear as to whether it is referring to resilience to current and anticipated climate change impacts only or resilience in a broader sense.	Partially addressed. Changed to climate resilience because references cited specifically refer to climate resilience, although

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	<i>2021), only 7 percent of drylands projects have received climate change adaptation funding through the LDCF or SCCF, slightly less than in the overall GEF portfolio."</i>	Further, it is unclear if this statement is referring to LDCF and SCCF project funding that is mixed with GEF Trust Fund projects through MTFs, or all LDCF and SCCF funding that directly or indirectly contribute to drylands. It is not clear how the number 7% has been calculated. LDCF supports only LDCs, and therefore, the % should be over the total number of LDCs only in drylands.	resilience more broadly is certainly highly relevant in drylands. Clarified that statement refers to all LDCF and SCCF funding (i.e., through stand-alone LDCF/SCCF projects and multi-trust fund projects). See response to general comments.
42 and figure 10 and figure 11	<i>"Attention to water scarcity and drought have been gaps relative to other environmental challenges, although the GEF-8 programming directions now embody a focus on drought issues, particularly in drylands, responding to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP 14 decisions as well as to the UNCCD Strategic Framework (2018-2030)."</i>	A reference to the GEF-8 IW focal area strategy should be added, or a footnote clarifying that this is referencing STAR focal area resources only.	Addressed. Added reference to GEF-8 IW focal area strategy and its attention to water scarcity and support for addressing severe water fluctuations, such as flood and drought.
44	<i>"Interviewees similarly noted that the GEF has struggled somewhat to focus on drought, in terms of aligning it with the GEF's global environmental benefits, and its stronger linkages to climate adaptation than mitigation. The way the GEF approach to climate change is structured, with mitigation the mandate of the CC</i>	This could be better phrased by saying that the GEF TF projects and programs can only address drought mitigation in line with its <i>mandate to create global environmental benefits</i> . Adaptation in the context of drought is being addressed through the LDCF and SCCF. While several multi-trust fund projects combine GEF TF and LDCF/SCCF to address these issues in an integrated way, some challenges for integrated work on drought in drylands remain.	Addressed. Suggested language has been included and last sentence of paragraph 44 revised.

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	<i>focal area and adaptation addressed through the LDCF and SCCF, is further seen as hampering integrated work on drought in drylands.”</i>	The last sentence of paragraph 44 is misleading. LDCF projects are actually enablers to support integrated work on drought in drylands. As LDCF directly addresses drought caused by climate change, it is often combined with LD FA allocation for MTF projects, delivering multiple and integrated benefits.	
44	<i>“The way the GEF approach to climate change is structured, with mitigation the mandate of the CC focal area and adaptation addressed through the LDCF and SCCF, is further seen as hampering integrated work on drought in drylands”.</i>	This statement may not be appropriate to the integrated approach that the LDCF/SCCF adaptation strategy takes when addressing climate change challenges. The LDCF/SCCF has supported projects on agroforestry or those that incorporate solar-powered water pumps for sustainable agriculture. These kinds of projects not only contribute to climate change adaptation but also mitigation by increasing carbon sink through agroforestry practices and reducing GHG emissions associated with the conventional use of irrigation equipment.	Addressed. See response to the previous comment.
45	<i>“In Niger, for example, water management has been increasingly integrated in the GEF portfolio over time, but still received less attention and effective implementation than efforts focused on land degradation and desertification. Drylands also often have significant groundwater (aquifer) reservoirs, some of which are replenishable, and some are not. Their sustainable exploitation is important for livelihoods of pastoralists and agriculturalists, such as in the Sahel or in Ethiopia’s drylands. Groundwater is also</i>	The role of groundwater and conjunctive management of surface and groundwater resources has increasingly been highlighted in the International Waters strategy and portfolio since GEF-6, including the Niger basin-ITTAS-Iullemeden project in the Niger basin; the North-West Sahara and the Nubian Sandstone aquifer and addressing pilots in oases, etc. We are very happy to point to additional IW FA project examples to address groundwater and resilience in arid regions if that would be helpful.	Addressed. Added reference to the IW strategy and its attention to groundwater resources and interactions.

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	<i>critically important for oases, including their flora and fauna diversity, and for livestock watering points in arid areas (Koch and Missimer 2016)."</i>		
57-62	Section - Relevance of Stakeholder Groups	Was there any information that could be distilled on the relevance of NGOs/CBOs as a key stakeholder group and their contributions to GEF interventions in drylands?	NGOs/CBOs did not feature prominently in the interventions examined in depth.
Results Chapter	Results: environmental and socioeconomic benefits of GEF interventions in drylands	The report missed the opportunity to highlight how the LD projects have joined up with LDCF to deliver climate change adaptation and resilience benefits. In addition, the report refers to resilience in several sections. It will be useful to define resilience in this report's context, especially clarifying if it is referred to climate resilience.	Addressed. Added a sentence on MTF projects and the potential for addressing drylands challenges in an integrated way. Also highlighted the multiple projects already featured in the report that are GET/LDCF, including in Ethiopia and Mali. Added definition of resilience.
89	<i>"Interviewees expressed the view that area-based estimates are over-optimistic in the GEF, reflecting more a transformational aspiration than the reality on the ground. Fieldwork and geospatial analysis also point to more localized and fragmented results than hectare reporting suggests."</i>	Please refrain from making far-reaching statements based on anecdotal evidence. Since GEF-6, with the introduction of the core indicators and related indicator definitions, guidelines for monitoring, and scrutinizing area based targets in each project review based on justification, etc, GEF is taking utmost care that these targets reflect the reality on the ground, are feasible, achievable, and based on sound methodologies. GEF has made significant improvements in the estimation of area targets and the gap between achievement of results and targets is clearly narrowing.	Partially addressed. Added reference to these efforts and qualified that this is a view shared by multiple interviewees.
102	<i>"Conflict resolution and land tenure matters have not been</i>	In line with other findings of the evaluation, which found that most issues in drylands are increasingly receiving attention, it is fair to say that conflict resolution and land tenure matters are also increasingly being addressed in dryland projects. Also, land tenure is only recently included in a UNCCD COP	Addressed. Added language to clarify that while there is due attention in the LDFA strategy and COP guidance to these issues, this evaluation's portfolio review

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	<i>adequately addressed in drylands projects”</i>	decision (COP14 in 2019), and the nature of the related guidelines on tenure are voluntary for parties to apply. This all points to the difficult context addressing land tenure in general, and in particular in dryland projects, where such issues may be more prevalent in rangeland & pasture management and in transhumance. At least from a perspective of the GEF LDFA strategy, these matters receive due attention, for example, paragraph 170 of the GEF-7 strategy: “GEF-7 support in this context will focus on (i) decreasing fragility and risks through enhancing governance of natural resources, including, e.g. tenure and access rights (including potential uneven rights across gender and ethnic groups) and/or decreasing resource pressures and enhancing natural resource based employment and livelihoods; (ii) restoring governance and degraded lands and water sources in post-natural disaster and/or conflict prone or conflict affected areas (with special attention to unemployed youth, women and other vulnerable or marginalized groups); and (iii) global early warning to identifying early signs where a combination of environmental risks are contributing to fragility and conflict vulnerability and sharing this knowledge to promote preventive or remedial actions as appropriate.”	suggests that this attention is not yet adequately translating into project design.
110 and Figure 12	<i>“Sustainability is less assured in drylands contexts”</i>	This finding requires more explanation, i.e., by comparing the number/percentage of Fragile and Conflict States (FCS) in the drylands portfolio with the overall GEF portfolio. Are such data available?	Addressed. Added language explaining that sustainability is also challenged by the much higher proportion of FCS in the drylands portfolio than in the overall GEF portfolio.

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Conclusions Chapter		In this chapter, the report may like to reflect views on the greater adoption of integrated programming (IPs) in drylands and also on the role of Multi Trust Fund projects (with LDCF) to deliver both GEBs and adaptation benefits.	Addressed. Added explicit mention of integrated programming and MTFs.
120	<i>“Drylands received increased attention in GEF-7 when the Land Degradation Global Benefits Index in STAR was revised to account for the challenge of combating desertification in drylands (and include adaptation to drought risks). Attention continues in GEF-8, with the introduction of the LDN concept in GEF programming and an explicit focus on drought.”</i>	The overall thrust of the statement holds true. However, as previously mentioned, drylands received attention from the outset of the STAR LD GBI and increased focus as evidenced in the evolving LDFA strategies, e.g., from attention to dryland forests, then dryland landscapes IP, onto drought in GEF-8.	Addressed. See also responses to comments on paragraphs, 2, 12, 14, and 15.
121	<i>“GEF support has been highly relevant to key environmental challenges in drylands apart from water scarcity and, to some degree, drought and has largely embedded resilience as an essential co-benefit.”</i>	While noting that water scarcity and water security are related but not the same, these conclusions nevertheless are contradictory to the recent IEO evaluation on water security (June 2023), which clearly showed attention to water security and DRM by especially the International Waters Focal Area and the LDCF/SCCF. The current evaluation misses to a very large extent to consider IW funded projects in drylands areas (basins and sub-basins), and the conclusion should therefore be qualified to say, e.g., something like: “GEF LD Focal Area support has been highly relevant to key environmental challenges” Is resilience referred here “climate resilience”? It will be useful to clarify.	Addressed. Added reference to LDCF and SCCF attention to water. See also responses to general comments and comments on the Results chapter.

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121	<i>“While attention to water scarcity and drought have been gaps relative to other environmental challenges, these issues are starting to be identified and addressed through GEF-8 programming directions’ focus on drought issues, including in drylands.”</i>	See previous comment: The International Waters Focal area explicitly addresses water scarcity and water security and trade-offs of water uses and users across sectors and countries in shared freshwater ecosystems. This has been part and parcel of the GEF International Waters strategy since the first strategy in 1995. The wording of Water Security in (shared) Freshwater Ecosystems has been explicitly part of the wording of the objectives of the IW strategy in GEF-7 and GEF-8. Furthermore, early entry points for cooperation on water in praxis are often around low-hanging fruit investments and win-win benefits around floods and droughts management and hence explicit in the IW strategy and support to information, institutions, and Nexus investments.	See response to comments on paragraphs 42 and 45, where references to the IW focal area strategy have been added. No changes made here because the reference is to the programming directions more generally and not a specific focal area.
125	<i>“Monitoring, reporting, and evaluation practices insufficiently demonstrate that GEF projects have led to changes in environmental statuses”</i>	This conclusion may be a bit harsh as it fuels the notion that GEF is not achieving its intended results in drylands. However, what the paragraph may be trying to say is that GEF’s (area based) indicators are not fully able to track/monitor such changes.	Addressed. Rephrased bolded language to say that reliance on area-based indicators limit the GEF’s ability to fully track environmental changes.
126	<i>“...conflict and land tenure have received insufficient attention.”</i>	Please see earlier comments on paragraph 102. From the perspective of the LDFA strategy, the attention to those issues is there, and the strategy provides adequate entry points to address them.	Addressed. See response to comment on paragraph 102. Clarified that while the programming directions provide adequate entry points, the portfolio has shown that this has not sufficiently conveyed to project design.
130	RECOMMENDATION 1	As reflected in a general comment above, it would be useful if the narrative to this recommendation makes it clear that the evaluation’s analysis on this topic would admittedly be limited, given that this topic is only now (as of the October 2023 council) receiving formal attention from the GEF	Addressed. Added framing language to clarify that this recommendation is meant to inform the forthcoming policy coherence framework for GEF-8.

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		Secretariat, and therefore any evaluation along this angle would be limited at best.	
131	<i>RECOMMENDATION 2 “...inclusion of land tenure security and conflict resolution for resource management within project and program designs and the underlying theories of change”</i>	Considering that entry points for the inclusion of land tenure and conflict resolution are provided in the GEF strategy, the recommendation may be rephrased to recommend “increased attention” or “special attention”. The way it currently reads, it gives the impression that those issues did not receive attention at all, when in fact, the attention is there, but insufficient, and therefore needs to increase.	Addressed. Rephrased with suggested language of increased attention.
132	<i>RECOMMENDATION 3 “Especially in drylands contexts, Agencies should give special focus during project design and implementation to the potential of water scarcity solutions to deliver short-term socioeconomic benefits, as an incentive to support achievement of medium- and long-term environmental benefits. Ensuring timely and continued delivery of socioeconomic benefits to local communities will support adoption and continuation of sustainable resource use practices.”</i>	The recommendation could acknowledge that International Waters projects, even in foundational stages, regularly implement on the ground investments on community levels that address water scarcity and/or pollution concerns, including, for example, activities such as addressing watershed degradation and improving infiltration and decreased erosion and sedimentation, water harvesting, or improving the siting and maintenance of boreholes, etc. These investments are aimed to lead to visible livelihood and environmental benefits at the local level and are able to be upscaled in later stages in larger subsequent investments. At the same time, these demonstration projects demonstrate early returns from engaging with riparian countries in cooperative processes and projects.	Addressed. Removed language on water scarcity.
133	<i>RECOMMENDATION 4 “When taken alongside the geospatial analysis and field-level data observation that suggested more localized sustainable results than reported hectareage, these findings raise questions about the</i>	While this may be true, it conveys the wrong message that the GEF has not met its intended results in drylands. It largely did. What may not have happened is ensuring the sustainability of these results, which is not entirely the fault of the GEF but rather due to the context of drylands as disadvantaged geographies. Conflating the achievement of results and sustainability issues should not take place.	Addressed. Removed references to sustainability in this recommendation.

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	<i>extent and sustainability of area-based GEBs in drylands.”</i>	We suggest IEO to remove references to sustainability in this recommendation and instead point it more positively toward adding useful lines of evidence that speak to the achieved results. (Also note that the sustainability issue is already mentioned in Recommendation 2).	